

live.work.well.

A wellness newsletter from your local EFAP.

ISSUE

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Stress in the Workplace

While some workplace stress is normal, excessive stress can interfere with your productivity and performance, impact your physical and emotional health, and affect your personal relationships. You can't control everything in your work environment, but that doesn't mean you're powerless, even when you're stuck in a difficult situation. Whatever your ambitions or work demands, there are steps you can take to protect yourself from the damaging effects of stress, improve your job satisfaction, and bolster your well-being in and out of the workplace.

Moderate stress levels can help you stay focused, energetic, and able to meet new challenges in the workplace. It's what keeps you on your toes during a presentation or alerts you to prevent accidents or costly mistakes. But in today's hectic world, the workplace too often creates high stress levels. Long hours, tight deadlines, and ever-increasing demands can leave you feeling worried, drained, and overwhelmed. When high stress levels exceed your ability to cope, it stops being helpful and starts causing damage to your mind and body—as well as to your job satisfaction.

If stress on the job is interfering with your work performance, health, or personal life, it's time to take action. No matter what you do for a living, or how stressful your job is, there are many strategies you can implement to reduce your overall stress levels and regain a sense of control at work. This issue of *live.work.well.* explores some of the steps that you can take to pinpoint the causes stress and to relieve it.

Excerpts taken from <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-in-the-workplace.htm/>

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We are excited to announce that starting in May we will have a Counselling Intern joining our team!

Cheryl Close is in the final stages of completing her Master of Arts Degree in Counselling Psychology from Yorkville University. She will be joining us 3 days per week and seeing clients from May till December 2019 in order to complete her clinical practicum requirements. Cheryl enjoys the outdoors and has a passion for nature.

Welcome to the team Cheryl!

Work Stress tips...

- Identify your stress triggers (where were you? Who was involved? How did you react? How did you feel?)
- Evaluate your stress inventory (is it daily and repetitive stress? Is it random and unpredictable?)
- Tackle your stress triggers, and work to change the circumstances that are causing them.
- Sharpen your time management skills (make a priority list, set realistic goals, protect your time).
- Keep perspective (talk with others, take a break, have an outlet, focus on self care).
- Know when to seek professional help from your doctor and/or counsellor.

- Mayoclinic.org

Self-care Towards Reducing Work Stress

Scenario:

Janice* is a manager in a large company for over 30 years. Janice has very high energy and regularly works overtime. She works on the weekends too, from her home. She values her employees and lets them know it in various ways. She buys them gifts, she tells them how much she appreciates them. Occasionally she brings food, candy, and other treats to share. Her staff look up to her, in awe of her ability and stamina.

What they may or may not know is that Janice is afraid to take a lunch break. She fears her work won't get done and she's also well aware that her bosses work as many or more hours as she does. They don't take lunch breaks and when they take a vacation they bring their laptops and work phones with them. Is it any wonder that the people who report to her don't take breaks either?

Janice fuels herself on caffeinated beverages and sugar throughout the day, making her jittery and prone to high anxiety when the already high demands of her job increase. She needs knee replacement surgery but feels she cannot take the time off work. As a result, she takes more pain medication than her doctor wants her to. Janice is at risk of burnout and more and more health complications.

Janice does not have a healthy work-life balance and the demands of her job (real or imagined) are unreasonable. The same is true of most of her colleagues. They are all compensated well but the costs and benefits are misaligned. True she feels valued and respected but she's also terrified of retiring because she doesn't know how she will fill that void – work has been everything to her.

What steps can Janice take to improve her workplace stress? She can:

- begin to take better care of herself.
- start to take her vacation days.
- take her lunch break, modelling to her staff that "if she can do it, they can too".
- set boundaries on working from home.
- reduce caffeine and sugar intake while increasing water and healthy food intake.
- assess the ergonomic impact of her work area on her body.
- move, walk and stretch between tasks.

With increased awareness of how much she is damaging her mental and physical health (not to mention her family relationships), Janice is starting to shift her perspective and her behaviour.

Human beings are social creatures. We are impacted by the behaviour of those around us. Even if we hear "you're allowed to take your lunch break, or vacation", those words are hollow when we don't see others doing the same. We want to fit in, we want to be validated. Seeing healthy behaviour in action promotes healthy behaviour. It has to be more than a poster or a presentation. We need to see people walking the talk at work and role modeling healthy choices so that can ripple out to others.

~Tara A. Hope, MA, RCC

"Mental health is a state of well-being in which a person understands his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. A mentally healthy workplace is a high-functioning, respectful and productive environment."

- Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety



High Work Engagement & Work Stress

High work engagement refers to viewing one's job as very important, taking one's job seriously, and applying a great degree of effort toward the successful execution of one's job. Being highly engaged with work is often touted as an ideal way for workers to be on the job and as the best approach for achieving career success and satisfaction. Indeed, being highly engaged with work *can* lead to career success and satisfaction. However, if other work-related factors are not present, then high work engagement can also be related to serious mental health challenges.

Work stress refers to an experience of mental disturbance that directly stems from one's work life, which can include workplace environment, roles and duties, interpersonal relationships, compensation, job security and perceptions of personal competency and value. There are many possible symptoms of work stress, but some common ones include feelings of exhaustion, depression, anxiety, irritability, and/or low motivation.

No one is immune to work stress, including those who are highly engaged with their work. In fact, being highly engaged with work *can* contribute to experiences of higher work stress. For instance, working long hours (such as extensive over-time or work-related travel), or working variable hours (such as being on call or working rotating shifts), are issues related to high work engagement that are also linked to high work stress. In addition, the interference of work with personal life is also a leading factor in the development of high work stress. This often involves working "off the clock," such as taking work-related phone-calls and replying to work-related emails when no longer technically at work.

Highly engaged workers also tend to perceive themselves as at greater risk of liability than their less engaged counterparts. Workers who perceive the consequences of their actions as greatly impacting workplace outcomes are found to experience a higher degree of work-related pressure and, therefore, more work stress. In general terms, high work stress is felt when workers perceive their performance as poor and also as having serious consequences on their co-workers, the workplace environment, and/or company profits.

Managers and supervisors can also be at increased risk of high stress due to the inherent sense of responsibility and high engagement that comes with those types of positions. As discussed previously, issues such as working extensive over-time, work-related travel, and working "off the clock" tend to lead to increased stress, and each of these issues can be present in managerial and supervisory positions.

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Online Resources

For more tips and information on stress in the workplace:



<https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/stress.html>

<https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-in-the-workplace.htm/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/coping-with-stress/art-20048369>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-deal-with-stress-at-work-3145273>

<https://www.headsup.org.au/healthy-workplaces/workplace-stressors>

https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/Workforce_Employers_Guide_ENG_1.pdf

High Work Engagement & Work Stress (cont'd)

In summary, high work engagement can be related to either positive or negative mental health outcomes, depending on certain other factors. Provided that workers feel a sense of control in their work, perceive their responsibilities and work hours as manageable, have a sense of job security, and perception of separation between work and home life, then high engagement with work can be a source of life meaning and satisfaction. However, if any of these other factors are significantly lacking, then that same high engagement with work can lead to detrimental levels of work stress and potentially other mental health challenges.

Therefore, being highly engaged with work is, generally speaking, a worthwhile endeavor because doing so is often associated with career success and satisfaction. But, it is also very important to make sure that one's work environment is healthy and supportive of good mental health and well-being. Because being highly engaged with work that is detrimental to our well-being is likely a recipe for trouble.

~ Graham Walker, MA, RCC

EMPLOYEE TRIFECTA



CMHA - May 6 to May 12 is Mental Health Week

Mental health is a state of well-being, and we all have it. We might have a mental illness, and we might not. Either way, we can all feel well. We can all have good mental health. It is about having a sense of purpose, strong relationships, feeling connected to our communities, knowing who we are, coping with stress and enjoying life. And it's never too early or too late to get there. But it's not just about what you do for yourself, by yourself—everyone needs healthy and supportive places to work, live and learn.



**KNOCK ME DOWN AND I'LL
GET BACK UP
AGAIN.**

#GetLoud about

WHAT MENTAL HEALTH REALLY IS.



CMHA Mental Health Week

May 6-12, 2019

Visit mentalhealthweek.ca
for info and tools!