

Help Workers Manage Stress

by

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In today's world, we deal with a multitude of stressors... the economy, uncontrollable world events, our work, and personal or financial pressures, etc. When the stress-defense response is continually activated without recovery downtime, it could have negative consequences on an individual or in the workplace. Feelings of stress can lower morale, reduce productivity, and increase accidents, injuries, health problems, or violent outbursts – all of which can affect the safe and efficient operation of the workplace. Individuals can't control all the stress-producing elements in their lives but they can learn to balance those stresses and control how they respond to them.

Make sure stress awareness is part of your employee-training program. Acknowledge that it exists in everyone's life and that individuals vary in their stress thresholds and recovery rates. Let employees know that although some stressors can be controlled and managed, some stressors cannot be changed. But, also let them know what resources are available to them should their stress become a condition they're unable to manage on their own.

Keep communication lines open by talking to employees. Periodic staff meetings may provide a forum where employees can air their frustrations or share their ideas and perhaps develop stress reduction solutions. If changes in employee attitudes are observed, talk about what's going on. Keep employees informed of job changes and allow them to participate in decision making, where possible. Make sure your compliments on work practices outnumber your criticisms. It helps if the employee is a good match for the job. Encourage employees to adopt a healthy personal lifestyle including practicing relaxation techniques, establishing good eating habits, monitoring alcohol or drug consumption, exercising, and developing a personal support network.

Stress management is about balance. Balance stress with relaxation, compliments with criticisms, work with play, problems with rewards, and positives with negatives. Negative workplace stress takes a toll on employees and employers but constructively managing it can have significant payoffs to employee productivity and business profitability! ••