Beyond Breathing: Controlling workplace stressors and taking care of your health & well-being

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CPH-NEW: Who We Are

- University of MA Lowell
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- Epidemiology
- Biostatistics
- Economics
- Nursing

- University of CT Health Center
- Ergonomics
- Medicine
- Health Policy

- University of CT Storrs
- Psychology
- Health Promotion
What is Total Worker Health?
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This material is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of NIOSH.
Training Objectives

• Explain the pathways from work stressors to symptoms to illness.
• Understand the range of workplace features that can contribute to job stress.
• Understand root causes contributing to key work-related stressors impacting their health and well-being.
• List three strategies for controlling and preventing work stressors.
Before we begin

• How is this topic relevant to you and your workplace?

• What are you hoping to get out of the session today?

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Part 1

STRESS IN OUR LIVES
Survival skill or survival threat? Or both?
Stress Terminology

• **Eustress (good stress)**
  – Not all stress is bad. Mild stress levels can act as motivation needed to overcome a task, such as meeting a work deadline.

• **Distress (bad stress)**
  – Chronic or ongoing stress that can affect your everyday life and hinder you from completing tasks. Can harm health if not relieved.
Stress Vs. Stressor

Stress is how our bodies react to demands and change. Stress is an automatic physical reaction to a danger or demand (whether real or perceived).

Stressors are the things in our environment that we are responding to, such as noise or going on an interview.
What is Job Stress?

• “The harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker.” (CDC, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health)

• **Mismatch** of the demands and control (with decision-making, skill level) of the worker. (Robert Karasek, Job Demand-Control model)

• **Imbalance** between efforts and rewards (Johannes Siegrist, Effort-Reward Imbalance Model)
The model of effort-reward imbalance (J. Siegrist 1996)

Extrinsic components
- Demands/obligations

Effort

Motivation

- Job income
- Job stability
- Esteem, respect

Reward

Intrinsic component

Motivation
Job Stress Vs. Job Strain

Job stress generally refers to the demands at work that we experience as stressful.

Job strain refers to the negative physical and psychological toll that job stress takes on us when our jobs involve high demands and we have little decision-making power.
Job stress matters to health

Job strain can lead to:
- Cardiovascular disease (CVD)
- Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)
- Psychological disorders
- Injury

Reducing job strain can lower the risk for CVD and other chronic diseases!
Ripped from the Headlines…

• **Stress Is Linked To Heart Attack And Such Problems As Diabetes And Depression**
  
  Study finds women with high-stress jobs were 67% more likely to have a heart attack
  
  *Washington Post, Dec. 2012*

• **Stress 'damages health as much as secondhand smoke exposure'**
  
  60% of Americans reporting work as a main cause of stress.
  
  *Medical News Today, Sept. 2015*

• **Study Sees Job Stress as Heart Risk to Women**
  
  Women equal to men in an area they wish they weren’t,
  
  *AP, Nov. 2010*
The Changing World of Work

- Increased use of technology
  - 24/7 phenomenon
- Increased demands
- Job insecurity
- Downsizing
- Aging Workforce
  - Retirement concerns
- Health status of workers
- Healthcare costs
- Work-family-recreation balance

Nearly 60% of employees report work as their main source of stress

APA, 2015
“On the bright side, ever since the layoff and my divorce it’s been much easier to balance work and family.”
## Workload in America 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workload Trends</th>
<th>Decreased</th>
<th>Stayed About the Same</th>
<th>Increased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers’ workloads</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees’ workloads</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee stress</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The speed at which tasks are expected to be completed</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The demands of managing globally</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee productivity</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of products and services</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The size of the organization’s workforce</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee motivation</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee morale</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee energy and endurance</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 2

IMPACT OF WORK STRESS ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
Job Stress Pathway

STRESSOR

STRESS

STRAIN (Sustained)

SYMPTOMS
• Headache
• GI problems
• Low mood
• Distracted

ILLNESS
• Heart disease
• MSDs
• Depression
• Injuries

Behavior
• Smoking
• Low exercise
• Poor diet
• Alcohol
The Body’s Reaction to Stress

**Internal Stress Events** (Cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, nervous sys., immune sys.)

**Stress Reaction** (hypothalamus, pituitary, adrenals)

**Internalization** (inhibition of the stress reaction)

**Maladaptive Coping**

**Dependency** (drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, caffeine, food)

**Self-Destructive Behaviors** (overworking, hyperactivity, overeating)

**Breakdown** (exhaustion, loss of drive, depression, heart attack)

**External Stress Events** (stressors)
How Does Job Stress Affect Our Health?

Early warning signs of job stress

• Headache, sleep disturbances, upset stomach,
• difficulty concentrating, short temper, job dissatisfaction, and low morale

Long-term risks for sustained job stress:

• **Cardiovascular diseases**, diabetes, weakened immune function,
• musculoskeletal disorders, and depression.
The Road We’re On….

- 31.7% has high blood cholesterol levels
- 29% have hypertension
- 34.9% are obese
- 49% do not meet physical activity guidelines
- 17.9% smoke
- In the next 20 years, the proportion of the population ages 65 and older will increase from 13% to 19.6%.

Healthy People (2013)
CDC (2015)
Part 3

UNDERSTANDING THE WORKPLACE INFLUENCE ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
Work-life Balance

- 42% of working Americans say they take care of personal or family needs during work.
- 26% regularly bring work home with them.
- 25% allow work to interfere with time spent with family and friends.
- 25% work during vacations.

Work-life Survey, APA 2015
Work organization and stress

Company/Organization Level
Structure, culture, organizational practices

Division/Department level
Resources, relations with other departments

Individual Job Level
Work pace, supervision, work flow

Exposures: Chemicals, dust, biological, noise, temperature, radiation safety hazards, ergonomic hazards
How does work organization affect health and behavior?

**Working Conditions**
- Physical hazards and exposures
- Mental and Social exposures

**Health Outcomes:**
- Cardiovascular
- Mental Health
- Musculoskeletal

Encourages Health Behavior
Coping with Stress

- Jobs in human services can be stressful! You are “human” too!
- Managing stressors from work and your personal life is essential for your health.
- Being aware of the sources of key stress is a first step to deal with them.
What is an integrated approach to Total Worker Health?

Well-being

On the Job

Workers

Safety

Off the Job

Management

Coordinated planning

All levels participate
Types of Job Stressors: Physical

- Poor indoor air quality
- Ergonomic stressors
- Hazardous waste exposure
- Inadequate equipment
Types of Job Stressors: High Demand

- Heavy workload
- Unrealistic deadlines
- Conflicting demands
- Inadequate amount of time to complete tasks
- Repetitive Tasks
- Excessive/mandatory overtime
Types of Job Stressors: Low Control

- Responsibility without authority
- Job skills not used
- Dead-end jobs
- Job insecurity
- Lack of input in decisions
Types of Job Stressors: Low Social Support

- Poor relations with co-workers
- Poor relations with management
- Lack of family support
- Racial/sexual discrimination
- Lack of recognition
Reflection

What are the main stressors in your job?
Part 4

HOW DO WE INTERVENE?
Levels of Prevention

• *Primary prevention* seeks to prevent the onset of stress from occurring by targeting the source of stress.

• *Secondary prevention* aims to help individuals develop the knowledge and skills to better recognize and manage their reactions to stress.

• *Tertiary prevention* strategies aim to treat workers after they have experienced adverse health outcomes related to stress.
Examples of Primary Prevention

Eliminate or reduce job stressors

Organizational Policies and Systems

- Management/supervisor training standards
- Work-life balance policies
- Career ladders and job design initiatives
- Discrimination and grievance policies

Work Processes and Labor policies

- No mandatory overtime policy
- Ergonomics and work/environmental design standards
- Participatory quality programs
- Participatory decision making for employees
Examples of Secondary Prevention

Change how individuals respond to job stressors
Screen for early symptoms

Organizational Strategies

- Supervisor training programs
- Worker education and training
- Incentives for exercise

Individual Strategies

- Assertiveness Training
- Social Outlets
- Mindfulness training
- Healthy lifestyles
Examples of Tertiary Prevention

Treat and rehabilitate employees with stress-related illness

Organizational Strategies

- Modified duty, job reassignment
- Employee Assistance Programs

Individual Strategies

- Leave the job
- Medical care and Treatment
- Psychological Counseling/therapy
Personal Stress Management

- Engage in regular exercise.
- Reach out to friends and family.
- Avoid any unnecessary stress.
- Alter the situation if possible.
- Make time for fun and relaxation.
- Accept the things you cannot change.
- Practice mindfulness.
Organizational vs. Individual

- Organizational changes -- TOP priority!
- Also offer programs for individuals— we cannot eliminate stressors *completely* for all workers.

- **GOLD STANDARD**
  Combining organizational AND individual stress management approaches for best results.
Part 5

ACTION PLANNING
WHAT STRATEGIES MIGHT BE EFFECTIVE IN YOUR WORKPLACE?
Barriers

What barriers do you anticipate?

How can you overcome them?
What can a wellness champion do?

- Support stress management:
  - Consider designating an unused space for relaxation or de-stressing.

- Host wellness related events:
  - Health fairs, educational seminars, fitness campaigns, “lunch and learn” seminars.

- Help gain management support:
  - Talk with management about the importance of supporting employee health and well-being.
Conclusion

• Job stress is an important factor in chronic diseases, mental health, and work performance.

• Organizational approaches coupled with individual strategies are the most effective way to address job stress.

• Try to introduce one idea you thought of today when you go back to work.
References


General Social Survey (2010)


CPH-NEW Website
www.uml.edu/cph-new
CPH-NEW Tools You Can Use...

- All Employee Survey and Focus Group
- Participatory Health Promotion Toolkit
- CPH-News and Views

www.uml.edu/research/centers/cph-new

Please join our mail list!
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