

10 Essential Strategies to Help Prevent Stress in Your Employees

SARSEN HEALTH
Workplace Health Management

The Facts

Stress and mental health problems are among the most significant causes of long-term sickness absence. We all need some stress to make us productive and get things done, known as *eustress*, however - when stress tips over into distress it can result in clinical conditions, anxiety or eventually depression.

Most cases of work related stress involve other factors that have impacted on the person to cause stress. These can range from personal problems, an underlying medical problem impacting on performance, to personality type.

Once at work, additional work-related factors can increase stress levels:

- Work overload, or expectations to perform at optimum levels at all times
- A lack of control over the work situation
- Poor working relationships with colleagues or management
- Change of any kind
- An unclear role, or unclear expectations

The cost of sickness absence due to poor mental health is approximately £7.9 billion, so the question to ask is: **what can employers do to help?**

What Does Stress at Work Look Like?

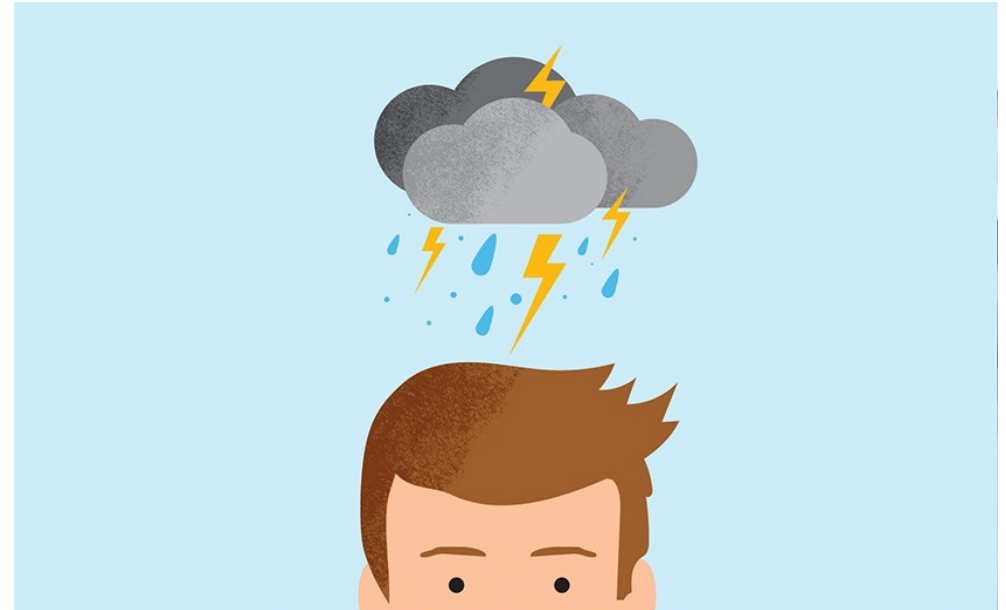
Identifying the signs of stress at work is key. Stress is very individual and can manifest itself in any of the following ways:

Physical

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Muscle tension
- Stomach problems
- Sleep problems
- Constant fatigue

Behavioural

- Drinking more than usual
- Smoking more than usual
- Comfort eating
- Crying or feeling numb
- Being over sensitive to criticism, not coping
- Not being able to see the funny side of things
- Being angry
- Becoming withdrawn
- Not enjoying things as much as usual
- Presenteeism: at work but not achieving anything



Psychological

- Feeling anxious
- Poor concentration
- Feeling low or depressed
- Inability to concentrate
- Becoming withdrawn
- Blowing things up out of proportion

10 Essential Strategies to Help Prevent Stress in Your Employees

- 1 Assess the areas of work that lead may lead to stress at work:** look at control, demand, manager support, working relationships, change and role.
- 2 Talk to employees about the specific factors that make their job stressful.** These may be easy to resolve, for example: malfunctioning equipment, lack of resource, understaffing, lack of management feedback.
- 3 Communicate with your team,** one to one and listen attentively, reflecting back to them to show that you have understood, even if you cannot change things immediately.
- 4 Give employees the opportunity to be involved in decisions that affect their work.**
- 5 Ensure as far as possible that the workload is suitable and reasonable given individual ability and capability.** Avoid unrealistic deadlines.
- 6 Involve employees in rules that affect the way they work,** they will be more committed if they feel involved.

- 7 Deal with workplace conflicts positively and swiftly.**
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- 9 Make management actions fair and consistent.**
- 10 Praise often for work well done.**

And finally –

When an employee is clearly not coping, and is showing any of the signs or symptoms above, get help.



Working with Occupational Health Professionals

Managers are not trained or qualified to understand complex mental health problems. It always pays to refer to the professionals for advice.

- Occupational health support provides clear advice on how to manage an employee in work by understanding both the cause of stress and the medical issues.
- We can provide robust and defensible advice on a Workplace Stress Risk Assessment. This means we will work with you on how to conduct the assessment, and review progress and control measures in a written action plan.
- We will also write a rehabilitation plan to bring an employee back to work, so that the return is successful. In doing so, we will provide clear advice on adjustments under Disability Discrimination legislation and how long these might be expected to last.

About Sarsen Health

Sarsen Health deliver flexible services from ad hoc Management Referrals to managed health surveillance services, directly delivered by qualified and experienced occupational health professionals.

We have been around for a while now and enjoy long standing relationships with our clients. We demonstrate the value we add by focusing on building a cost-effective, risk-based and relevant service for the business need of each client.

We believe that a high level of commitment is required to meet client expectation of service delivery and quality, and is integral to building successful business relationships. Sarsen Health treats all engagements as an opportunity to work in partnership with the client and to take active steps to reach the best possible outcomes.

The benefits of working with the Sarsen Health team –

- Scalable and flexible service
- A multi skilled, multi disciplinary approach
- A mix of Occupational Health Specialist and administrative functions
- Cost efficient access to scarce skills
- Cross industry experience
- A commercial service based approach employing best practice and industry metrics