

How Work Stress Affects Most

Stress affects people in every type of work setting.

People at the top of organizations suffer from stress because of excessive workloads, unrealistic expectations, and isolation. The phrase “it’s lonely at the top” has some truth to it.

Middle managers often experience stress because they have responsibility for the people who report to them, but lack the control to execute what is expected. With the recent epidemic of corporate downsizing, middle managers have also been given greater and greater workloads. Managers who manage to keep their jobs often feel like they are living in the shadow of termination.

Professionals suffer from their own brand of stress caused by monotony. Doctors, lawyers, and other professionals often perform the same kind of work for many years, resulting in boredom and desperation.

Workers at the lower levels of today’s organizations often feel stress caused by boredom and the frustration of dealing with the public. They also may feel less successful than their coworkers in higher-level jobs and may feel stressed by their lack of status.

Why Workplace Stress Has Increased

1. The nature of work has changed. The fight-or-flight responses to stress are ineffective in response to the stresses of today’s life.
2. The workplace has become decentralized. In many places, people no longer work together in one place, but may be scattered around the world or work from home, connected by technology.
3. People change with each generation. Baby Boomers differ from Generation Xers in terms of their values, work ethic, and their definitions of success. These generational differences can contribute to stress at work.

How Stress Affects Women

Both genders experience stress. It affects women in some unique ways, however. Here are a few of them:

1. Overall, women are still paid less than men for the same work.
2. Women still face a glass ceiling as they climb the corporate ladder
3. Women who choose to have children are usually responsible for the logistics of childcare.
4. Women with children often do more housework when they get home than their husbands do.
5. Compared with men, women with children also tend to experience more guilt feelings about leaving their children to go to work.

Suggested Reading

Jeff Davidson, *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Managing Stress*. New York, NY:Alpha Books, 1997.

J. Barton Cunningham, *The Stress Management Sourcebook*. Los Angeles, CA: Lowell House, 1997.

Peter G. Hanson, *Stress For Success*. New York, NY:Doubleday, 1989.

Peter G. Hanson, *The Joy of Stress*. Kansas City, MO:Andrews &McMeel, 1985.