

UNDERSTANDING STRESS

Stress

There are many definitions of stress and as many theories about its causes. When we consider work and its role in contributing to stress, we are speaking of an individual's perception and/or awareness that they are not able to manage the demands of their work. The result is a negative response and diminished productivity.

Stressors

These are the situations, events or people that put pressure on an individual. The reaction to stressors is highly personalized and different people may react differently to the same stressor/s. In other words, what is a stress factor to one person may not be a stress factor for another.

Two Types of Stress

Acute

This is an immediate, automatic coping response to an event. Similar in all mammals, a survival mechanism kicks in and causes nearly instantaneous changes to every body system. In many ways acute stress can be very useful.

Acute stress can be a positive force in that it may provide motivation to deal with situations, to prove ourselves capable and up to the challenge. This type of stress is short in time duration.

- Energized in the moment
- Feeling activated at the time
- Wanting to succeed/survive
- Knowing we have the capacity to deal with the situation
- Moving towards a goal in a helpful manner

Chronic

This is the long-term effect of on-going stress in our lives. It may be the result of a particular event or multiple events. When the pressures of home or work offer no reprieve and we have poor coping skills, the symptoms of chronic stress appear. With chronic stress, often we are not aware that we are manifesting symptoms.

- Sleep problems
- Digestive problems
- Aging process is accelerated
- Emotional agitation
- Social isolation