

## Signs and Symptoms of Work-Related Stress

### Individual effects of stress

Some of the signs and symptoms of work-related stress to look out for in the workplace, which may indicate you or someone is stressed, include:

Physical	Thoughts
<p>Physical symptoms may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a pounding heart</li> <li>• elevated blood pressure</li> <li>• sweaty palms</li> <li>• tightness of chest</li> <li>• aching neck, jaw and back muscles</li> <li>• headache</li> <li>• chest pain</li> <li>• abdominal cramps</li> <li>• nausea</li> <li>• trembling</li> <li>• sleep disturbance</li> <li>• tiredness</li> <li>• susceptibility to minor illness</li> <li>• itching</li> <li>• easily startled</li> <li>• forgetfulness.</li> </ul>	<p>You may experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your mind racing or going blank</li> <li>• not being able to 'switch off'</li> <li>• a lack of attention to detail</li> <li>• your self-esteem and confidence plummeting</li> <li>• disorganised thoughts</li> <li>• a diminished sense of meaning in life</li> <li>• a lack of control or the need for too much control</li> <li>• negative self-statements and negative evaluation</li> <li>• difficulty in making decisions</li> <li>• a loss of perspective.</li> </ul> <p>You may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making 'mountains out of molehills'</li> <li>• driving yourself too hard with 'I must do this, ought to do that, should do the other' or demanding too much of others as well as yourself.</li> </ul>

Behaviours	Feelings
<p>Behaviour symptoms may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• become withdrawn and not want to socialise</li> <li>• increase your alcohol, nicotine or drugs intake</li> <li>• under eat or over eat</li> <li>• become accident prone and careless</li> <li>• become impatient, violent, aggressive or compulsive – pacing, fidgeting, swearing, blaming, throwing and hitting!</li> <li>• work longer hours – not take breaks, take work home, procrastinate with important projects, and manage your time poorly</li> <li>• no longer have time for leisure activities.</li> </ul>	<p>You may feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• irritable</li> <li>• angry</li> <li>• depressed</li> <li>• jealous</li> <li>• restless</li> <li>• anxious</li> <li>• unreal or hyper alert</li> <li>• unnecessarily guilty.</li> </ul> <p>You may experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• panic</li> <li>• mood swings, crying easily.</li> </ul>

**Team effects of stress:**

Work-related stress can impact a whole team in a number of ways. Some of the signs and symptoms to look out for in the workplace, which may indicate a team is stressed, include:

<b>Staff attitude and behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of motivation and commitment.</li><li>• Staff working increasingly long hours but for diminishing returns.</li><li>• Erratic or poor timekeeping.</li><li>• Poor morale and a lack of engagement.</li><li>• Increased intentions to leave job.</li></ul>
<b>Staff turnover</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase in staff turnover, staff don't stay in the job for as long as is normal in the sector and may leave to take up jobs at the same grade or lower just to move on.</li></ul>
<b>Sickness absence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase in overall sickness absence, in particular, frequent short periods of absence.</li></ul>
<b>Presenteeism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased levels of presenteeism, with staff coming into work when they are unwell.</li></ul>
<b>Relationships at work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tension and conflict between colleagues and teams.</li><li>• Poor relationships with clients/patients</li><li>• Increase in industrial relations or disciplinary problems.</li></ul>
<b>Work performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduction in output or productivity.</li><li>• Increase in incidents and error rates.</li><li>• Poor decision making.</li><li>• Deterioration in planning and control of work.</li></ul>

(Royal College of Nursing, 2005), (Ellis, 2017)