

CORPORATE STRESS LEADS TO MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

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According to the American Psychological Association, more than three-quarters of adults suffer from symptoms of stress such as headaches, fatigue, or sleeping issues. While stress is highly prevalent, it is not a disease, but can have grave repercussions on an individual's mental and physical health. The APA defines stress as "the physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors". It is critical to understand stress in order to truly see the implications of stressful patterns in our lives, the recurring experiences that form these patterns, and the consequences of dealing with them on a regular basis.

The WHO explains work-related stress as "the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope". Various studies have shown that work-related stress and the mental health issues that result from it have a devastating effect, causing premature morbidity and mortality; thus, understanding how this form of stress can affect us is essential.

To begin to comprehend the role of corporate stress in the deterioration of mental health, it is necessary to know what corporate stress consists of. This could include issues with the task's design, such as the pace, deadlines, work hours, insufficient training, etc. It could also be caused by the organization requiring too many roles to be played or expecting too much from the individual, as well as factors such as under-promotion, job insecurity, inadequate career development plans, and so on. Aside from this, an important factor that contributes to corporate stress is the individual's interpersonal relationships at work, the work-life balance, the overall environment, etc as well.

One of the most fundamental issues caused by stress is the exacerbation of pre-existing mental health conditions, which simply impairs the individual's ability to cope in daily life situations. Stress is essentially the body's "fight-or-flight" response to a potentially dangerous situation. This causes the release of hormones that help an individual become more alert, cause the muscles to tense, the individual to begin sweating, and an increase in pulse. Because the hormones released by stress usually fade away quickly, stress does not always increase/cause anxiety. However, in situations where the person is already anxious or where stress is a frequent occurrence, there is a long-term increase in the amounts of cortisol and corticotropin in the body. This rise further deteriorates the individual's mental health.

Chronic stress can also lead to depression in unfortunate circumstances. Stress and depression have a causal relationship; stress can cause depression, and depression can cause stress that can often make it hard to understand which came first. In a corporate setting, depression may be manifested as a desire to isolate from others in order to reduce stress, which creates a barrier in engaging in activities that the individual previously enjoyed. Depression is a serious concern since it can give rise to suicidal ideation or suicide. It also increases the likelihood of addiction and deteriorates relationships and work performance.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) discovered that the effect of chronic stress on the brain is very similar to that of drugs, and thus it is possible to develop addictions while suffering from chronic stress. The majority of stress-ridden people who engage in addictive behaviors do so as a way of coping with the situation. Drugs assist these individuals in coping with their circumstances by alleviating pain, distracting them, or even blocking out the thoughts that cause stress or pain. The drug's effects provide temporary relief that is relatively easy to return to in their highly stressful life.

Chronic workplace stress has been linked to the development of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). PTSD is commonly thought to be caused only by extreme events such as war, sexual assault, traumatic accidents, and so on, but corporate stress can also contribute to the development of PTSD. Exhausting work schedules, experiencing traumatic incidents at work, difficult interpersonal relationships, trauma of another coworker, and other factors can all contribute to PTSD.

Stress and sleep, like depression, have a causal effect on each other, and it can be difficult to determine which causes which. High levels of stress cause a conspicuous delay in falling asleep because the individual is constantly engaged in attempting to deal with the stressful incident or environment. Adults with low stress levels have also reported having better sleep than adults who are typically stressed.

At the organizational level, introducing mental health awareness and assistance, incorporating psychologists, incentives, adequate breaks or paid time off, and partaking in recreational activities as

a team, among several others, will significantly aid in lowering corporate stress.

Individuals can also practise deep breathing exercises, improve interpersonal relationships and communication, and maintain physical and mental health by seeking help when required and engaging in valuable activities such as exercise or meditation, among many other things.

Authored by: This article has been written by Karen Wilfred Coelho as part of the internship assignment

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