

MINIMISING STRESS

NINE LIVES CONSULTING 

Career Navigator



Stress is an insidious negative force that comes in many forms. It manifests itself as physical symptoms such as lack of sleep and eating disorders, mental symptoms such as confusion, anxiety and anger and a whole array of symptoms which are a combination of these. Any of these symptoms are debilitating at worst and obstructive and discouraging at best.

Typical sources of stress

- Stress is addictive making it even more insidious and difficult to deal with. It's not unusual for people to be experiencing stress in their lives from one or more sources including:
- Domestic disharmony, isolation
- Teenagers or other family challenges
- Ill health in the family
- Managing a building activity such as renovating or building a house
- Financial insecurity triggered by many difference causes, not the least being insecure employment and income
- Work role inherent dangers, poor OH&S or inherently dangerous roles
- Workplace culture misfit. If the culture and ethics are not a good fit with yours, then you feel compromised and unable to provide a full commitment to your role

What can you do to minimise stress?

The first action is to admit you are under stress, possibly by using the symptoms guide as starting point and then seeking to rectify the situation through a combination of self-awareness and appropriate professional help. Suitable responses can include professional intervention using, on a private basis; GP, EAP, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Psychiatrist or similar skilled individuals.

Employer organisations can also minimise their contribution to employees' stress levels. These actions fall broadly into three categories:

Board of Directors: Ensure there is clarity and focus on the organisation's Culture and Ethics and a clear, admirable Corporate purpose.

Human Resources: HR is best placed to instigate and evangelise on improvements to the workplace environment. HR can monitor and enhance awareness of inherent risks in each type of role. HR can promote and enforce mitigating HR policies to minimise inherent risk and remove unnecessary corporate processes which enhance the stressors.

Managers: Managerial levels carry a heavy responsibility in the task. Each functional manager should ensure that each of their employees is in a compatible role and position with respect to their:

- Values the employee's values must match those required by the role and the Board of Directors.
- Role the tasks and operational style required must suit the employee's personality otherwise they will be operating under extreme stress to the detriment of the employee and the function and the organisation.
- Personality of each employee must be compatible with the style and personal interaction habits of the others in the team and the supervisor. Mismatch results in lack of respect in all directions, disharmony and destruction of self- confidence.

Three aspects that must be aligned to our needs for us to thrive

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced rapid and radical change to the management of employees. While many adapted in the short term, the new remote configuration is here to stay as it has many benefits, enabled by IT capabilities and an independent mindset of employees. Managers now need to judge performance on output quality and timeliness, not the hours worked or the sycophantic abilities of their employees.

What were previously appropriate roles and position descriptions could be becoming inappropriate roles and performance requirements, these will set up new stresses as they highlight deficiencies in people selection and selection criteria. Redesigning roles based on new and different criteria will be essential to selecting the right people to work as a team. An employee's dysfunction usually stems from one or more of the following being out of alignment:

- Values
- Role
- Personality Fit

When creating a role description, ensuring you have an insight into these characteristics of the leader and the candidates will enable a match up to create an effective, cohesive and productive workgroup.

This means we need clarity about

- who we are and our most suitable work environment,
- what we enjoy and are good at,
- what we have to offer to prospective employers or clients.

Our values

Our values must match those demonstrated by the dominant party.

The role

- our track record indicates whether we can perform the role
- our career stage and aspirations dictate the personal purpose of the role.
- our personality dictates the style and key focus of the role

Our fit with the team

If we are clear on these issues, we can select roles and work environments that suit us personally; our particular skills, interests and attributes.

We need to know what we need in our environment so that we can thrive

Our personality and style cannot change significantly; we need to know what we need in our environment so that we can thrive. By knowing what we need, we can ensure we accept roles that suit us and hence we will be successful. For example, if you like working in an environment that has few surprises, then don't join an organisation that is poorly organised. If you like to work with a boss who respects you, don't get involved with a micro manager style of supervisor.

If you know who you are, then others will know who you are.

The information provided in this article is of a general nature only and not intended to be advice

