

Stress at a glance

Types of Stress:

1. **Eustress** is associated with positive experiences, and is a process of exploring new experiences and potential.
2. **Distress** is the response to normal “bad things” that happen in life.
3. **Critical Incident Stress** is the common reactions to abnormal events.
4. **Cumulative Stress/Burnout** is ongoing distressing events or numerous critical incidents that exceed our normal coping abilities.

Tips for Managing Stress

- Develop support structures
- Talk it out – you probably aren’t alone in your feelings
- Prioritize
- Slow down
- Just say “no” to excessive demands
- Be objective – don’t jump to conclusions or take things personally
- Take breaks!
- Recognize the impact of change
- Leave work on time
- Exercise

Working Americans report that work is a significant source of stress despite reporting greater satisfaction with their jobs. In fact, 51% of employees report some amount of lost productivity attributable to stress while at work, and 41% say they typically feel tense or stressed out during the workday.

While a certain amount of stress is part of daily life, cumulative and ongoing stress can impact our work, our health and our relationships.

Symptoms of Stress: Fatigue; Disturbed sleep patterns; Irritability; Mood swings; Insensitivity to others; Cynicism; Depression, Inability to concentrate; Disruption in sleeping or eating pattern; Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness; Decreased self-esteem.

Impact of Stress on Family: Chronic and often non-specific illnesses; Increased reliance on alcohol, controlled substances, gambling or eating; Irritability; Domestic violence; Relationship problems/promiscuity; Risk-taking behaviors; Emotional withdrawal.

Impact of Stress on Work: Chronic tardiness; Increased use of sick leave; Problems with peers, supervisors or co-workers; Concern expressed from colleagues; Disciplinary/corrective action.

Stress is a real part of most jobs, but for corrections professionals in particular, it can result in:

- Inappropriate relationships with offenders
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Higher suicide rates
- Depression

Creating Work and Life Balance Using A.C.T.S.

A. Ask Three Key Questions

1. “What matters most to me or gives me most satisfaction at work & home?” Create a list of 5 things.
2. “Which of the answers above replenish my energy?”
3. “How can I eliminate or reduce doing things that are not on my list?”

C. Commit to Establishing Boundaries

Make a personal commitment to put the right things first. Schedule and protect time for the items on your list.

T. Take Steps to Achieve Personal Balance

Only you can make changes needed to achieve balance. Be aware of what gives you energy and what takes it away. Schedule rewarding activities into your day.

S. Stay the Course

Get support for your new routine by discussing with significant others at home and at work.

Remember: Boundary management increases satisfaction & decreases stress.

References:

Hastings, R. R. (2009). Find the right balance between stress and results. *Society for Human Resource Management*.

