

What is stress and how can we cope?

How to support your employees:

Individual:

- Talk to a trusted friend or loved one about stressors
- Get enough sleep, exercise, eat healthy foods, and hydrate
- Keep up with health screenings

Environmental:

- Offer healthy snacks in your breakroom vending machines
- Keep a clean and organized work environment
- Provide standing desks

Organizational:

- Engage and recognize your employees at work
- Partner with a local or onsite clinic to offer free checkups for blood pressure/cholesterol
- Insurance premium discounts for meeting a step goal

Stress is a natural response to physical, mental, or emotional pressure. This can be caused by good or bad changes in life. All of us experience stress in every aspect of our lives, including work, family, home life, and in our social circles. The longer stress affects you, the harder it is to recover. Left unaddressed, it can take a long-term toll on your physical well-being and ability to bounce back. The key to handling stress is developing skills to cope with the variety of stress that we experience.

Acute vs. chronic stress

Acute stress can happen after an unexpected crisis at work or home. Symptoms like anxiety, chest pain, and low mood can develop in minutes or hours and can sometimes last days or weeks. These are caused by the release of stress hormones to the rest of the body.

Chronic stress happens when you feel pressured or overwhelmed over a long period of time. Symptoms of chronic stress could include physical aches and pains, insomnia, and a change in appetite, just to name a few. The risks of chronic stress can emerge as significant health issues that have greater impacts. Hypertension, heart disease, irritable bowel syndrome, and mood disorders are all possible long-term effects of stress.

Take action (Complete one or more activities as a team)

- DISCUSSION: Share an idea about how to create a less stressful workplace or a healthy stress coping mechanism that you use.
- BREATHE: Try a breathing technique! Breathe in through your nose for four counts. Breathe out through your mouth for four counts and let your body relax.
- TIDY UP: What is something we can clear out in a workplace to reduce stress? Cleaning your environment can declutter your mind!

Workplace stress

Stress at work can occur when requirements or demands of the job and resources, capabilities, or needs of the employees are not in balance. Injuries and illness can be caused by high stress levels in the workplace.

What you can do at your workplace

Organizations can reduce workplace stress by encouraging breaks and time off, remaining open to employee feedback, empowering employees to make decisions about their work and schedules, and fostering a work culture that provides support for when they experience stress (flexible scheduling, employees assistance programs, etc.). Another way to create a low-stress (or supportive) work environment is to carry out programs that encourage physical activity and provide rewards.

Helping employees

Here are a few ideas for individuals to reduce stress at home:

- Take a relaxation break with SAIF's YouTube playlist ([saif.com/relaxation](https://www.saif.com/relaxation)).
- Use breathing techniques to relax
- Find a good coloring book
- Take a walk in nature
- Use fidget and stress relief toys



Safety talk sign-in sheet

Record your attendees for compliance.

Instructor's name: _____

Date of training: _____

ATTENDEE NAME (Print)

ATTENDEE SIGNATURE

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