Stress Management Guidance

Stress can be defined as **"The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them."**

These excessive pressures can come from either one main or many differing sources. When a person feels that they cannot cope with the pressures, and there is a resulting adverse impact on their performance or ability to cope, then it can be said that stress occurs. Prolonged or repeated periods of such pressure can lead to stress related illnesses such as depression or anxiety.

Controlling pressure and preventing stress related illnesses in the workplace is a two-way process, requiring cooperation between managers and employees, as neither is likely to be able to resolve a situation on their own. However, by working together and, where necessary with the support of Human Resources, the optimum resolutions can be found. See also "Guidance on how to deal with instances of stress".

What steps should be taken when managing stress:

It is extremely important that discussions regarding stress are undertaken at the earliest opportunity as, resolving stress where possible is likely to be beneficial and prevent impact to; health, wellbeing, productivity and performance. It is recommended that when an employee reports stress management discuss this further with the individual to understand concerns and, whether it is work or personal/home life related stress. Where there is a breakdown in the relationship guidance from HR should be sought.

After local discussion and identifying the root cause of stress managers should utilise relevant Policies, Procedures and Guidance to assist with resolving stress related concerns where possible.

The University has a range of policies, procedures that are designed to tackle various issues that can have an impact on stress and work-related stressors:

1. The University of Warwick Stress Policy which defines how work-related stress is managed and what actions can be taken to prevent stress at work, and the Stress Management Review Questionnaire should be used by an individual and their line manager/HR Adviser when they are struggling with a stress related matter or when they return to work after a stress-related absence. There is also guidance on how to complete the Stress Management Review Questionnaire.

2. A risk assessment of potential stress factors within a department (i.e. factors not specific to an individual) should be carried out by departmental managers using the Stress Risk Assessment Form, which is based on the HSE's Stress Management Standards. This is a specialist risk assessment.

3. Annual Review: Every member of staff is entitled to an Annual Review with their line manager. This provides an opportunity to discuss achievements, career aspirations, objectives for the coming year and development needs as well as any issues being experienced by the individual. The Talking Toolkit produced by the HSE may be useful to read in advance of any member of staff's annual review. Whilst there should be multiple opportunities to raise issues with a line manager, the annual review does provide a good opportunity, if there has not been opportunity to do this beforehand.

4. Our 'Dignity Principles': Set out our expectations of how we behave as a community, both as individuals and as an institution, and inform our approach to taking appropriate action when these expectations are not met. These principles facilitate an environment with the ability to voice ideas at its core, a place in which staff and students operate with mutual respect, with the confidence that equality of opportunity is accessible to all. Dignity can be defined in many ways, for example, being valued and respected, an acknowledgement of our equal worth as human beings.

5. Management of Performance: This procedure aims to support individuals to reach their full potential within their roles. It provides a framework for managing those whose performance does not reach, or has fallen below, the standard expected. The aim is to provide whatever coaching, training, guidance and support necessary to enable individuals to achieve and maintain a good, or higher level, of performance and to provide managers with guidance and support in such circumstances.

6. Sickness Management: This policy and other procedures related to sickness absence aim to promote a positive attitude to minimise absence from work and raise awareness of the effects of sickness absence on colleagues and service delivery.

7. Grievance Procedure: Provides a framework for the consideration of grievances in a fair, consistent, timely and effective manner. Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints that employees raise with their employer. Employees are encouraged to carefully consider the nature of their grievance and wherever possible to explore resolution informally prior to commencing the formal procedure.

8. [Carers Policy/Passport](#) Provides guidance and support for those who have difficulty with balancing their working responsibilities alongside caring commitments.

9. [Menopause passport](#) Is an optional support tool to assist with discussions between management and employees and, to identify appropriate support where required.

10. [Flexible working](#) May be beneficial to consider for those who have difficulty with managing their work life balance.

There are also a range of other sources of support:

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) are able to provide support with both work and personal stress. They also have a wide range of resources to assist with wellbeing and healthy living which may be beneficial for managing symptoms of stress.

Leadership and Management Development provide a portfolio of training and self-development courses that are relevant for managing the risks of stress including, but not limited to: Assert Yourself, Handling Difficult Conversations, Making teams work, Stress Less, Doing the Right Thing, and Managing the Stress, as well as Coaching & Mentoring. There are also a selection of video resources on the Leadership & Management Development webpages available to you. There are also a number of programmes and short courses, which are available for new and existing managers: Programmes and Short Courses (warwick.ac.uk).

[Linkedin Learning](#) has a vast array of resources to assist with personal development and skills. There are a range of courses which may be beneficial to assisting with stress management.

MS Teams Viva Insights helps to find ways to focus on wellbeing and using time efficiently. There are resources available within the application to set focus/quiet time, review communication habits and meditate utilising the headspace tabs.

[Staff Wellbeing Hub](#), [Staff & Student Wellbeing](#) and [Wellbeing](#) all provide further guidance and links to further resources with managing wellbeing.

[Report & Support](#) Is a service accessible through Warwick and available to everyone. A secure and confidential online platform to report incidents of; sexual misconduct, bullying, harassment, discrimination or hate crime.

[Trade Union representatives](#) Can help provide support and guidance to employees with work related matters.

Occupational Health Are able to provide guidance and recommendation on medical matters. Occupational Health cannot, for example, directly resolve work-related stress matters as these are generally management concerns that can only be addressed by managers themselves. It is important all initial steps to resolve stress where possible is undertaken prior to referring to OH.

Further links to external sources which may also be beneficial:

CALM

Cruse (Bereavement Support)

Relate

Mind

Samaritans

NHS Stress Every Mind Matters