



## the portage path behavioral health reference guide to: **Stress in the Workplace**

**W**orkplace stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that can happen when there is a conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the workplace is the greatest single source of stress, no matter what you do or how much you earn. In fact, researchers at Northwestern National Life found that one fourth of American employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives.

In today's uncertain economy many employees live with the constant fear of being downsized, laid-off, or fired, along with the more traditional stressors of budget cuts, deadlines, colleague relationships and shrinking health and retirement benefits.

### **Signs & Symptoms**

- Constant fatigue
- Changes in mood
- Changes in behavior
- Irritability and anxiety
- Absenteeism
- Reduced performance
- Anxiety and/or depression
- High blood pressure
- Back pains
- Too much or too little sleep
- Poor memory or concentration
- Increase in destructive behaviors
- Deteriorating relationships with colleagues
- Changes in eating habits (either too little or too much)
- Gastrointestinal Problems (e.g. stomach and bowel)
- Complaints about poor health such as frequent colds or headaches
- Miscellaneous Minor Illnesses (e.g. colds, headaches, rashes, earaches, mouth ulcers, etc.)

Although the causes of work-related stress vary from person-to-person, the American Psychological Association reports that a feeling of powerlessness is the most common universal cause of job stress, with positions such as secretaries, waitresses, middle managers, police officers, editors and medical interns among those most affected. these types of highly-stressed occupations are marked by the need to respond to others' demands and timetables, with little control over events. Also common to work-related stress are complaints of too much responsibility and too little authority, unfair labor practices, and inadequate job descriptions.

"Stress has a powerful effect on a person's thoughts, feelings, physical health, behavior, and overall functioning in and out of the workplace," says Sara Stein, M.D., medical director at Portage Path Behavioral Health in Akron.

"Symptoms often include anxiety, back pain, diarrhea, depression, fatigue, frustration, headaches, insomnia, impatience, irritability, skin rashes, sweating, and tension."

The [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org) web site offers the following tips on preventing job burnout:

- *plan and rehearse for difficult conversations.*
- *clear up communication problems with employees and co-workers.*
- *set realistic goals*
- *learn to delegate responsibilities*
- *learn time management skills*
- *change your physical position often (stand, sit, walk, stretch)*
- *lighten up - remember to see the humor in daily situations*
- *if your work position is unmanageable, look for a different position*



## Ways To Manage Stress

Perhaps the best way to identify whether or not you're suffering from stress is to ask yourself if your stress level is in any way negatively affecting your enjoyment of life. If the answer is yes, you may want to explore treatment options.

Stress management can be complicated and confusing because there are different types of stress - each with its own characteristics, symptoms, duration, and treatment approaches. Licensed, qualified behavioral health professionals can help people address the causes of work related stress and teach them effective ways to cope in the professional world, as well as explore other occupations more fitting to their personality. It is recommended that before the treatment process begins a person should have a complete physical examination and a medical history review to rule out any other possible causes for their symptoms being experienced.

Practices like exercise, meditation, deep breathing, aromatherapy, progressive muscle relaxation, and yoga have all proven to be effective stress-busters. Keep in mind that your diet can effect the way you feel.



## Are You Experiencing Job Burnout?

- adapted from *Monster.com*

- Do you have difficulty getting up in the morning?
- Are you always tired?
- Do you forget things?
- Have you experienced more headaches, stomachaches, rashes, chest pains, and illnesses?
- Have you begun to wonder why you're doing what you're doing career wise?
- When at work, do you look at your watch constantly to see how long you've been there and how much longer you have left?
- Are you going through the motions just to get through your shift?
- Have you lashed out at coworkers, patients, or your family?
- Do you feel like you have less control over things at work and at home?
- Have you lost interest in things that used to excite you?
- Do you have unexplained aches and pains?
- Are you overwhelmed most of the time?
- Are you stressed most of the time?
- Are you irritable at work and at home?
- Do you feel angry at work and at home?
- Do you lose your temper easily?

If you have identified with the issues discussed in this flyer and you're ready to take the next step toward feeling better, visit our web site or call Portage Path and find out how we can help:

**Web Site** [www.portagepath.org](http://www.portagepath.org)

**Appointments** 330-253-3100  
800-828-4508

If you feel you're in emotional crisis and you need someone to talk to, call our free 24-hour, 7-day crisis hotline:

**Support Hotline** 330-434-9144  
888-434-8878



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