

Reduce chronic stress

Signs that stress may be an issue at your workplace:

Individual:

Declines in productivity or quality

Anxiety or irritability

Absenteeism and high turnover

Caregiver concerns

Low control over the work

Environmental:

Difficulty finding tools or material

Unkept or crowded work areas

Noise

Too low or too bright lighting

Poor housekeeping

Faulty equipment

For more information, including guides on other workplace health and safety topics, visit: saif.com/twh.

Chronic stress costs U.S. employers \$300 billion a year, lowering productivity, increasing absenteeism, and leading to medical and insurance costs. It also can lead to “presenteeism” (being physically present, but not mentally engaged), which can cause workplace injuries. More importantly, stress can significantly impact personal health, and has been linked to heart disease, depression, obesity, and other illnesses.

With organizational changes and support, you can reduce employee stress. Here’s what has worked well at other organizations:

Address workplace safety.

Employees worried about their safety are less able to focus on the task at hand.

Remove or reduce annoyances.

Irritating sounds, smells, lighting, and temperatures may seem small but cause unnecessary stress.

Support increased engagement by promoting:

Purpose. Employees want to know that what they are doing is worthwhile.

Autonomy. As much as possible, allow employees to make decisions about their work, such as when to take a break and how to perform tasks. Seek their input on decisions,

which may result in productivity gains as well as reduced stress

Learning. Provide opportunities for skills development, new experiences, and training.

Value. Make sure your employees know you care about them beyond their ability to impact the bottom line.

Support resilience. Encourage social connections, fun, physical activity, and recognition, which help us cope with stress.

Focus on management.

Effective management requires learning and skills development, not just advanced technical expertise. Make sure leaders know how to communicate with employees and seek feedback.

Support work-life balance.

Consider benefits such as health care access for family members, flexible schedules, and telecommuting.

Positive changes require the commitment and engagement of both leaders and employees. Tap into your workers for more ideas about reducing chronic stress.

