



Coping with Workplace Stress and Fatigue

INTRODUCTION

Workplace stress and fatigue can place immense demands on employees' physical and mental health and affect their behaviour and performance, including their relationships with work colleagues. Stress, depression, and anxiety are the second biggest cause of work-related ill health in the construction industry. It's also a major cause of long-term absence from work and knowing how to manage the factors that can cause work-related stress is key to managing people effectively. The earlier this problem is tackled, the less impact it will have on your workers and your business.

Taking positive action can help to create a more engaged workforce, boost productivity and save money. The purpose of this guidance sheet is to help identify simple methods which can be utilised to support workers to cope with stress and build resilience to enable them to handle the challenges they face at work.

Workplace stress and fatigue

Stress and fatigue in the workplace can reduce productivity and increase the likelihood of mistakes, which in turn, can lead to other workplace incidents or accidents. Workers can often be at their limits of both physical and mental abilities during a working day, so it's essential that they are able to keep their focus, handle stressful situations, pay attention to details, and remain calm under pressure, all of which are difficult to do when suffering from stress and fatigue.

How to manage stress and fatigue

Starting a conversation is an important first step in preventing work-related stress in construction. If you need help getting conversations started, **HSE's construction talking toolkit¹** aims to help managers talk with workers as part of their overall approach to preventing and managing work-related stress.

Resilience is the ability to withstand and perform well under pressure without compromising your health and wellbeing, therefore we must support our workers in building resilience to the challenges being faced by the current material and skills shortages to promote the wellbeing of our staff and workers. Get started with five simple steps from the **HSE's Working Minds campaign²**:

1. **Reach out** and have conversations
2. **Recognise** the signs and causes of stress
3. **Respond** by agreeing relevant action points between employer and worker
4. **Reflect** on the actions taken—have things improved?
5. Make it **Routine** to check back in on how things are going

Tips for building resilience

- **Control the Controllable**—concentrate your energy into areas you can do something about.
- **Evaluate and review:**
 - What went well?
 - What didn't go well?
 - What do I need to do differently next time?
- **Focus on the solution and opportunity.**
- **Learn something positive and move on.**
- **Connect with friends and colleagues.**
- **Manage your energy levels.**

Manage your energy levels

- **Use food to fuel the body and brain to function effectively and to sustain energy.**
- **Reduce sugar and refined carbohydrates.**
- **Eat good fats for sustained energy.**
- **Add protein to each meal.**
- **Eat three regular meals daily.**
- **Get fit to cope with the mental and physical demands of your work.**
- **Try and walk more by building walking and exercise into your daily routine.**
- **Acknowledge and respect that your brain and body need good rest and recovery.**
- **Make getting seven to eight hours of sleep a priority.**
- **Have a digital detox—less screen time.**
- **Take regular breaks away from the workplace.**

How can I support a work colleague?

If you notice that work colleagues are becoming more stressed or fatigued whilst at work than they would normally be, there are simple things you can do to reach out and provide support:

- Take them for a coffee and ask how they are?
Ask more than once.
- Listen without judgement and be careful not to offer opinions on how they should manage their wellbeing.
- It is good to be aware of relevant personal issues affecting staff such as illness, bereavement and other stress related factors that may contribute to a colleague struggling to cope in the workplace.
- You don't have to know all the answers, but you can explore some of the options they might have.
- Share what's happening with your own work and life too. It's amazing how much better we feel when we talk about the real stuff affecting all our lives.



Further mental wellbeing support

There are many places to signpost an employee to for expert help. The Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity is dedicated to the welfare of all workers and their families in the UK and Ireland. They have a wide range of support, initiatives and signposting and a FREE 24/7 helpline available by phone and text.



Further information

¹ HSE's construction Talking Toolkit:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/talking-toolkit-construction.pdf>

² HSE's Working Minds campaign:

<https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/working-minds/>

³ The Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity:

<https://www.lighthouseclub.org>

Published by

NFRC

020 7638 7663

info@nfrc.co.uk

nfrc.co.uk

@TheNFRC

February 2023


LEADING ROOFING EXCELLENCE

Note: Although care has been taken to ensure, to the best of our knowledge, that all data and information contained herein is accurate to the extent that they relate to either matters of fact or accepted practice or matters of opinion at the time of publication, NFRC, the authors and the reviewers assume no responsibility for any errors in or misrepresentations of such data and/or information or any loss or damage arising from or related to their use. Data and information are provided for general guidance only and readers must always take specific advice in relation to the use of materials, techniques and/or applications.