

# Managing your stress

*A guide for nurses*





Royal College  
of Nursing

This guidance has been developed by the  
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The idea for this booklet arose from two sources. Firstly, the concerns of RCN counsellors at the increasing numbers of nurses contacting the RCN Counselling Service with stress-related difficulties, and secondly, from the discussions of the RCN Working Well Initiative on stress.

This booklet is one of a number of initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the impact of occupational stress on nurses in today's society. It is hoped that this easy-to-read guide will help nurses understand how to manage personal stress and the responsibilities of employers in relation to occupational stress.

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## Contents

	page
1 <b>Introduction</b>	2
2 <b>Stress and nursing</b>	2
3 <b>Stressed? Who, me?</b> <b>Signs and symptoms</b>	3
4 <b>Reducing and managing stress</b>	5
5 <b>Occupational stress: what employers should be doing</b>	8
6 <b>Taking legal steps</b>	11
7 <b>Key points to remember</b>	13
<b>Appendices:</b>	
1 References and further reading	14
2 Useful contacts and websites	15

1

# Introduction

Stress has become a more recognised term over the past decade and is a major cause for concern for many nurses at work. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”.

It is important to understand the impact on nursing staff because:

- ◆ the psychological and mental harm caused by stress can adversely affect the delivery of patient care
- ◆ it can cause a great deal of distress to the employee concerned
- ◆ it can affect an employee’s health and attendance record

As a nurse, by tradition and training, you are good at spending a great deal of mental, emotional and physical energy on caring for others. Taking time to think about caring for yourself can be daunting and difficult.

However, this booklet is designed to encourage you to do exactly this by getting you to look at your particular responses to stressful situations and events. There is advice on how you can reduce stress and manage these responses more effectively, and ways of managing occupational stress.

Stress is a term that is difficult to define and yet, we can all identify with the physical, mental, emotional and behavioural responses that signal to us that we are stressed. The word itself is from a Latin root meaning hardships. The stress response may be the result of a slow build up of different events over a long time period

– a chronic reaction, or it may be a series of rapid events over a short time period – an acute response. It may also be a combination of the two in your personal and/or professional life.

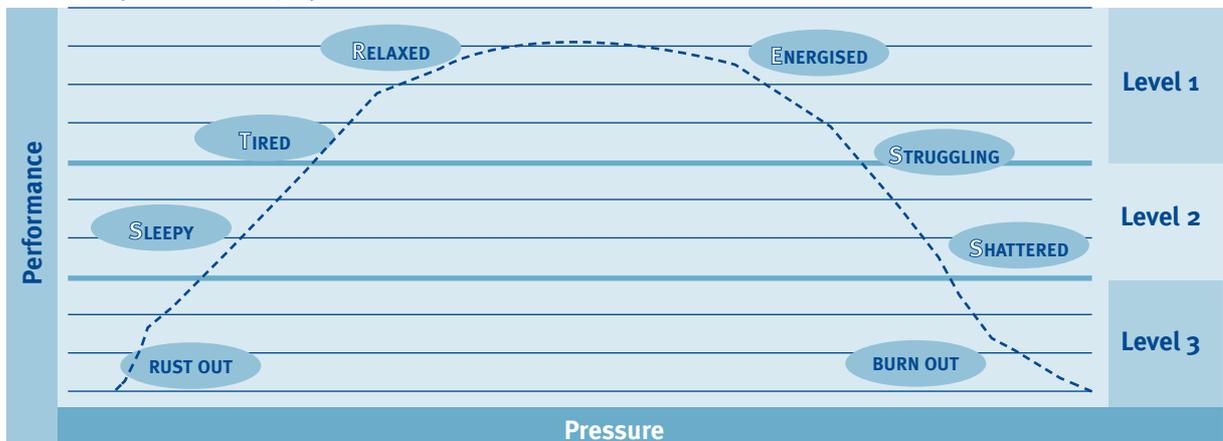
The stress response is also uniquely experienced and perceived – one person’s stress is another person’s stimulus! And vice versa. Just as your fingerprint has a lot in common with the fingerprint of another, it is also unique to you, likewise with your response to stress. Hence, there is no single solution, but there are a number of ways to reduce and manage stress, some of which you’ll already be using and finding that these work well for you.

2

# Stress and nursing

There is no doubt from research and anecdotal evidence that nursing is a stressful profession. It is a job that requires expenditure of energy on many levels. Physically, the job can be demanding with high levels of muscular-skeletal stress, culminating in many aches and pains. Mentally, you are required to be ‘on the ball’, making calculations for medication and responding to

**Pressure/performance graph**



## 3

# Stressed? Who, me?

important questions from patients and relatives. It often feels like many balls are being juggled in the air at the same time. Emotionally, the impact is felt when you empathise and help people, and from the toll of working in an environment where there is pain and sadness. The context of your work may be characterised by resource constraints, poor staff support and organisational change, which add to the energy expended.

However, some stress is good for you. Research since 1908 has shown that for peak performance there is an optimal level of pressure/stress denoted by a healthy tension between feeling relaxed and energised (see the pressure/performance graph below). Not enough pressure/stress and we feel sleepy, tired, – we ‘rust out’. Too much pressure/stress brings the discomfort of finding ourselves struggling – we ‘burn out’.

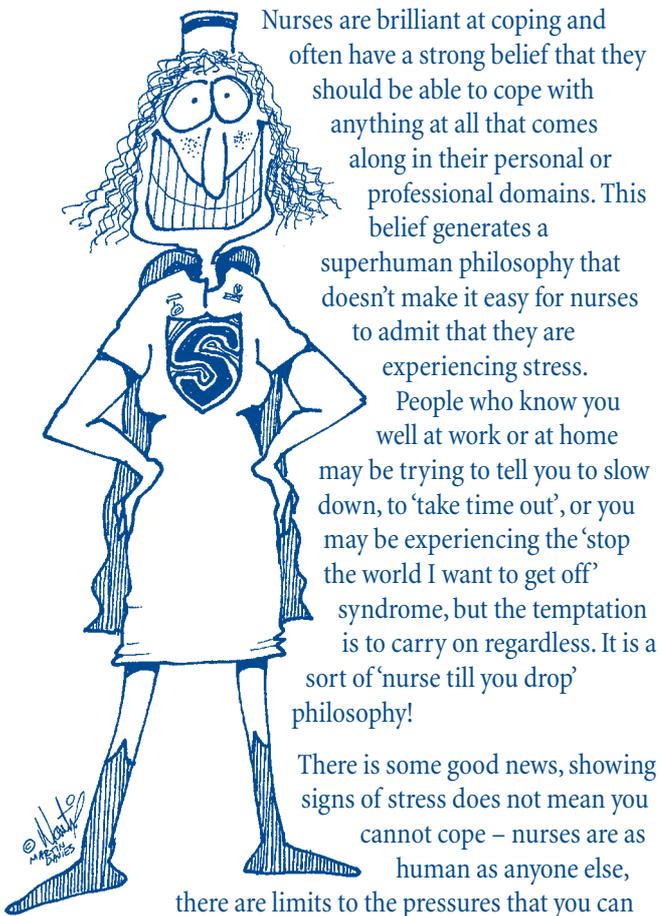
## Signs and symptoms

It is important to understand what is happening on a physiological level when you are feeling stressed. When you are feeling stressed your brain perceives a threat and the fight or flight response is triggered. In a potentially threatening situation this response is invaluable and may save your life or the life of another. However, living in this state of heightened arousal (which short or long-term stressful events can generate) is not good for you and your body may begin to signal this to you in a variety of ways.

### Physical

Physical symptoms experienced include:

- ◆ a pounding heart
- ◆ elevated blood pressure
- ◆ sweaty palms
- ◆ tightness of chest
- ◆ aching neck, jaw and back muscles
- ◆ headache
- ◆ chest pains
- ◆ abdominal cramps
- ◆ nausea
- ◆ trembling
- ◆ sleep disturbance
- ◆ tiredness
- ◆ susceptibility to minor illness
- ◆ itching
- ◆ easily startled
- ◆ forgetfulness.



Nurses are brilliant at coping and often have a strong belief that they should be able to cope with anything at all that comes along in their personal or professional domains. This belief generates a superhuman philosophy that doesn't make it easy for nurses to admit that they are experiencing stress.

People who know you well at work or at home may be trying to tell you to slow down, to 'take time out', or you may be experiencing the 'stop the world I want to get off' syndrome, but the temptation is to carry on regardless. It is a sort of 'nurse till you drop' philosophy!

There is some good news, showing signs of stress does not mean you cannot cope – nurses are as human as anyone else,

there are limits to the pressures that you can endure. To admit to being stressed does not equal not coping (although it can feel that way), quite the opposite, knowing and owning your limitations enables you to look for ways of coping more effectively so enhancing the range of coping mechanisms that you already have. If you can take care of yourself the more effective you will be in your capacity to care for others.

## Thoughts

You may experience:

- ◆ your mind racing or going blank
- ◆ not being able to 'switch off'
- ◆ a lack of attention to detail
- ◆ your self esteem and confidence plummeting
- ◆ disorganised thoughts
- ◆ a diminished sense of meaning in life
- ◆ a lack of control or the need for too much control
- ◆ negative self statements and negative evaluation
- ◆ difficulty in making decisions
- ◆ a loss of perspective.

You may be:

- ◆ making 'mountains out of molehills'
- ◆ driving yourself too hard with 'I must do this, ought to do that, should do the other' or demanding too much of others as well as yourself.



## Behaviours

You may:

- ◆ become withdrawn and not want to socialise
- ◆ increase your alcohol, nicotine or drugs intake
- ◆ under eat or over eat
- ◆ become accident prone and careless
- ◆ become impatient, aggressive or compulsive – pacing, fidgeting, swearing, blaming, throwing and hitting!
- ◆ work longer hours – not take breaks, take work home, procrastinate with important projects, take the 'headless chicken' approach when under pressure, and manage time poorly
- ◆ no longer have time for leisure activities.

## Feelings

You may feel:

- ◆ irritable
- ◆ angry
- ◆ depressed
- ◆ jealous
- ◆ restless
- ◆ anxious
- ◆ unreal or hyper alert
- ◆ unnecessarily guilty.

You may experience:

- ◆ panic
- ◆ mood swings, crying easily.

Thank goodness you won't experience all of these symptoms all of the time! Individual responses to stress vary, so you may experience some of these some of the time. This will be your body's way of saying that you are overdoing things and it is time to reflect and take action in order to reduce and manage the stress response.

## 4

# Reducing and managing stress

It is widely acknowledged that there are three levels of response to alleviate stress. If you think back to the pressure/performance graph, level 1 responses will help to maintain a relaxed/energised balance. Level 2 responses occur when you feel yourself struggling because the pressures are mounting and affecting your performance. Level 3 responses are there to help when you are approaching burn out, when the pressures seem so overwhelming that your performance is suffering significantly.

## Level 1

### Lifestyle management

Maintain a balance between work and play. Do you live to work or work to live? Use leisure time to recharge your batteries. Plan regular holidays and

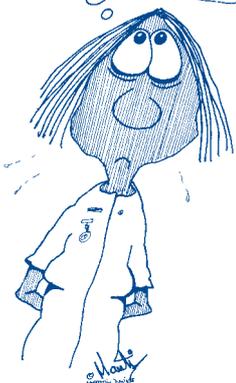
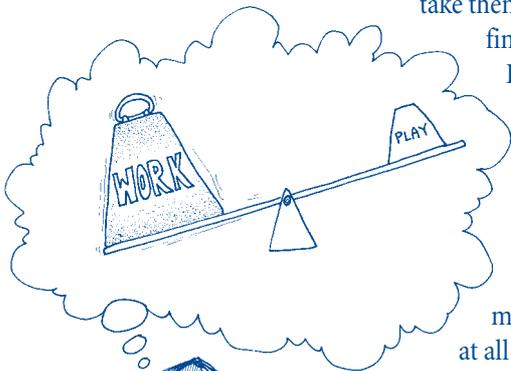
take them (from home if finances are tight).

Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy diet.

Alcohol, caffeine and nicotine intake should be in moderation or not

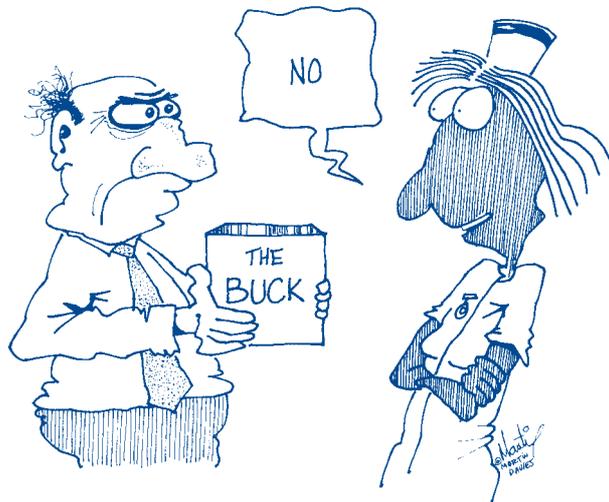
at all (these are all stimulants and exacerbate

the stress response). Build and maintain your support networks.



### Become your own expert

Identify your main sources of stress, assess how effective your current coping strategies are and think about any new or different strategies that can be applied. Try anticipating when stressful periods are going to occur and plan accordingly. You can do this as a paper and pen exercise. Write down the main stresses and ask: 'How can I control the situation?' And if you cannot control ask: 'How can I influence?' And if you cannot influence ask: 'How can I accept?' The essence is to take time out and to be as objective as you can.



### Managing your personal work environment

Again, take time to regularly review and plan. Practice effective time management especially by avoiding overload. Use 'no', 'not now', and delegate, especially when you sense that other people are trying to offload their work onto you. Take meal and other breaks. Learn to recognise your needs and be assertive in stating them. Do not feel pressured into overtime that you know you cannot do or do not want to do.

### Thinking skills

Be aware of unhelpful thinking when stressed, for example, 'I must be perfect/I must never make a mistake'. Find ways of thinking more realistically, for example, 'I am doing the best that I can in difficult circumstances'. Challenge the inner pressures by turning the musts, oughts and shoulds into likes and preferences, from 'I must complete this task today' to 'I'd like to complete today and I will do what I can, but it is not the end of the world if I don't'. Learn to identify what you can and can't control and to accept the inevitable. Why waste energy banging your head against a brick wall that is not going to give way? Much better to invest the energy into finding a way under or around the wall! Avoid mind reading and jumping to conclusions, likewise avoid generalisation, for example, 'this always happens to me'. Ask yourself 'where's the evidence, what are the facts?'

### Managing your personal perceptions of stress

Use constructive self-talk and avoid putting yourself down. Give yourself 'a pat on the back' regularly. Maintain a sense of proportion and remember that you have survived difficulties before. Think about what helped you to survive a previous difficulty – how did you do that? It may give you some clues and hope for this difficulty. Remember too that you are not superhuman!

## Level 2

### Relaxation

Learning to relax is a key to managing the stress response. Relaxation tells your brain that the threat has diminished and the flight or fight response can be switched off.

Think of the things that you enjoy that have a relaxing effect on you. For example, a particular piece of music, a long soak in the bath, aromatherapy, a good book, a walk in a favourite place, a hobby. Plan to treat yourself with more of these simple pleasures that may have been squeezed out of your normal routines. There are many relaxation tapes available which, when used regularly, can have a significant impact on helping you to learn relaxation skills. These skills can then be transferred and used in all sorts of places when you feel yourself becoming tense. There are also meditation skills and



complementary alternatives – massage, hypnotherapy, reiki, yoga, reflexology. Relaxation can also help you sleep more easily

### Physical outlets

Exercise is another key to managing the stress response. Exercise will burn up the excess adrenaline and release endorphins – the feel good hormones. If you are used to exercising and this area of your life has been squeezed out, make time for this again. If you are not used to exercising start small with what you enjoy – regular walks, swims, a gentle work out in the gym or with a class, and build up to a level that suits you. Recreational sports that you can take up again – squash, badminton, football, tennis can be good for the camaraderie as well as the sport. Gardening, housework and walking the dog can be energetic too!

### Emotional outlets

Talk about how you are feeling with supportive friends, family and colleagues as this will help you offload and gain a fresh perspective. Crying to express the hurt, allowing yourself to feel angry and expressing this in a safe way, can be extremely therapeutic. If you are not a talker or feel quite isolated, write your feelings down in the form of a diary or letters to remain unposted.

## Level 3

### Counselling

Counselling is often helpful as a way of giving yourself a regular space to reflect on what is happening emotionally, mentally and physically, and to have support for any changes you want to make.

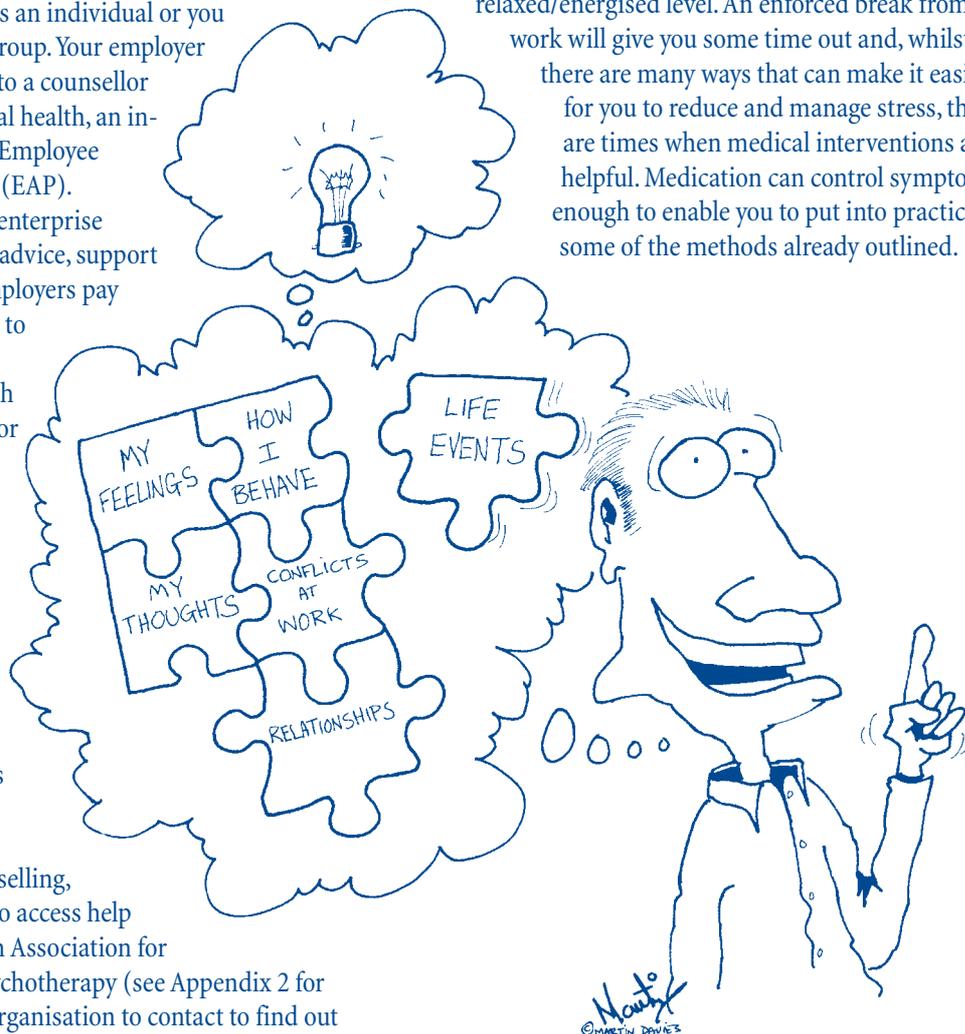
You may have feelings that seem out of control that you need help with. Feeling as though you are struggling is frightening. This may be a new experience for you, which you are keen not to have repeated, so there will be the opportunity to understand what is occurring. There may be new skills to learn which a counsellor can help you with, such as relaxation, assertion, time management and thinking skills. You may decide to see a counsellor as an individual or you may wish to join a group. Your employer may provide access to a counsellor through occupational health, an in-house service or an Employee Assistance Provider (EAP).

An EAP is a private enterprise geared to providing advice, support and counselling. Employers pay annually for an EAP to provide a helpline phone number which employees can use for advice, support and counselling, on a number of issues – personal or work related. EAPs all offer slightly different services. The RCN provides a counselling service for members (see Appendix 2 for details). Many GP surgeries offer counselling, or you may choose to access help privately. The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (see Appendix 2 for details) is a useful organisation to contact to find out what is available to you locally.

Career counselling may be useful if you are stressed and frustrated with your career development. Career guidance can help you gain greater awareness of your career values, interests and needs. You can learn to take control of your working life by making choices that meet your needs, not just the organisation you work for. You can also gain confidence from being able to describe your skills, competencies and personal attributes more accurately and understanding how these can be matched to a variety of career options. For more information about career guidance contact RCN Nurseline (see Appendix 2 for details).

### Medical interventions

Visiting your GP is not an admission of weakness, it can be a courageous first step towards the relaxed/energised level. An enforced break from work will give you some time out and, whilst there are many ways that can make it easier for you to reduce and manage stress, there are times when medical interventions are helpful. Medication can control symptoms enough to enable you to put into practice some of the methods already outlined.



## 5

# Occupational stress

## – what employers should be doing

There are a variety of ways to manage pressures at work, and the good news is that not all the responsibility for reducing workplace stress rests on your shoulders. Although there is no specific legislation that covers stress at work, your employer can deal with stress as an occupational health and safety hazard, and take action to control factors in the workplace that contribute to stress. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on employers to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, workplaces are safe and healthy environments. It can be argued that occupational stress is a health and safety issue if stress is caused, or made worse, through work. Under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999, employers must consider hazards in the workplace and assess the level of risk that the hazard poses for employees. Once the degree of risk has been assessed, action must be taken to control the risk and eliminate the likelihood of employees being harmed.

## Warning signs

The Health and Safety Executive offers the following list of warning signs as indicators of work-related stress.

### Staff attitude and behaviour

- ◆ Loss of motivation and commitment.
- ◆ Staff working increasingly long hours but for diminishing returns.
- ◆ Erratic or poor timekeeping.

### Sickness absence

- ◆ Increase in overall sickness absence, in particular, frequent short periods of absence.

### Relationships at work

- ◆ Tension and conflict between colleagues.
- ◆ Poor relationships with clients/patients.
- ◆ Increase in industrial relations or disciplinary problems.

### Work performance

- ◆ Reduction in output or productivity.
- ◆ Increase in wastage and error rates.
- ◆ Poor decision making.
- ◆ Deterioration in planning and control of work.

Addressing these areas can be good for your employer, resulting in increased performance at work, a decrease in sickness absence, and an improvement in staff morale and relationships at work. There is a real cost benefit in both human resource and financial terms.

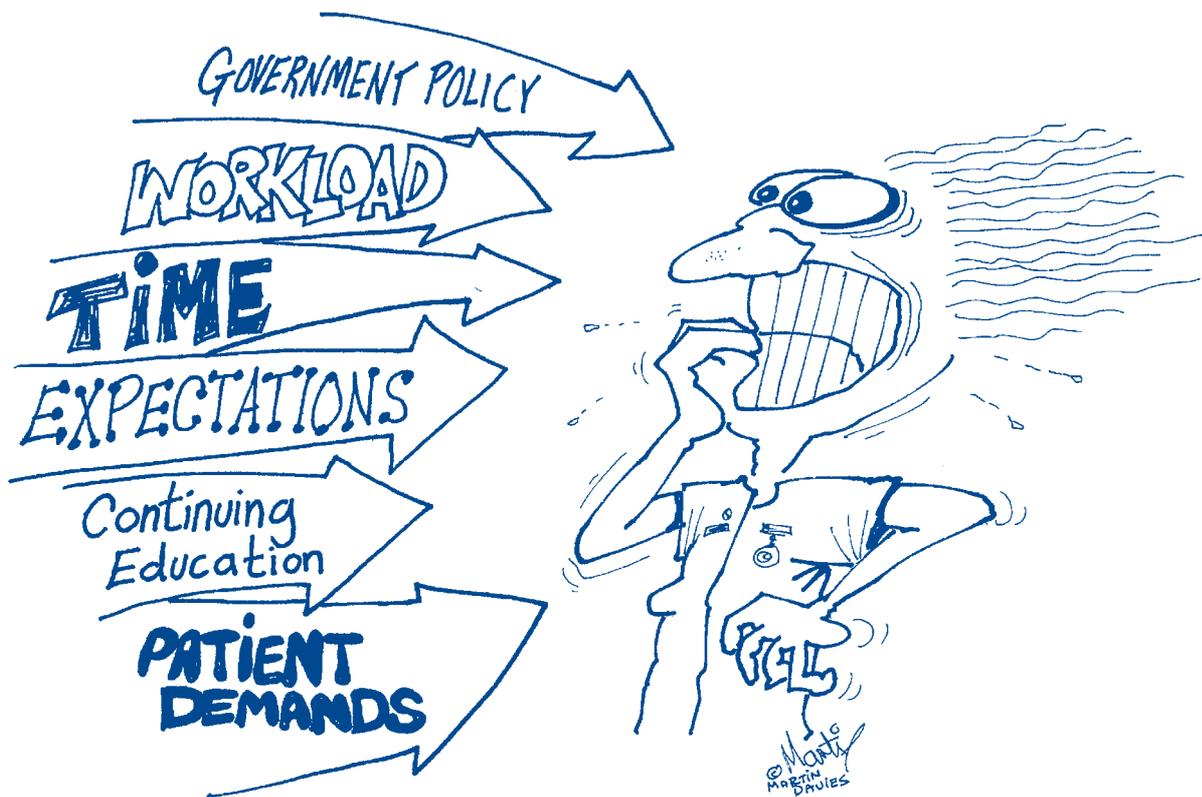


## Ways your employer can reduce stress in the workplace

Some of the ways your employer can begin to tackle the factors that contribute to stress as a health and safety hazard include:

### Risk assessment

Unlike risk assessment of physical hazards, it is likely that the risk assessment on stress will be carried out at departmental or organisational level. The factors that contribute to occupational stress can be identified through management information systems, such as sickness absence records. Employees can also be asked



about aspects of their work which place unacceptable demands on them. This can be done using questionnaires or by discussions in small groups. The assessment should include a measure of staff health to try to demonstrate which of the workplace factors are having an impact on health. The employer can then decide on the measures needed to reduce the harmful effect of the stressors.

Your employer can conduct regular risk assessments on the subject of stress. There are tried and tested models available as to how this can be done (Health Education Authority, 1995; 2000). The results of a risk assessment can be evaluated and turned into practical stress-reducing measures of the proactive and reactive kinds. These measures can themselves be evaluated and so the risk assessment cycle continues as an ongoing process in the reduction and management of occupational stress. Communication is important and a stress audit will highlight the major stresses.

### Taking action

Ideally any factors that are causing harm should be eliminated entirely. The results of the assessment may lead to organisational change, for example, implementing new policies on bullying and harassment, re-organising jobs, introducing new shift patterns. Another approach could be to train managers so that they are able to identify problems in their own areas and take appropriate action before staff experience adverse effects. Arrangements need to be in place to

provide help to staff affected by stress, such as occupational health, an in-house counselling service, or via an independent counselling service. The counselling must be on an assured confidential basis.

### Staff support

Your employer also has responsibility for ensuring that staff support systems are available to you. These may include formal or informal groups, either for clinical or other supervision, or mentoring, which is another method of professional support.

### Stress policy

Your employer may want to think about introducing a stress policy if this is not already in place. These are guidelines for managing stress in the work environment and should include: recognising stress at work as a health and safety problem; access to counselling; assessing the causes of stress in the workplace; introducing measures to reduce and prevent stress, and arrangements for employees suffering the results of stress.

### Stress management training

Your employer may want to provide regular in-house training events or to encourage staff to attend stress management training events that are available locally. Many people know what it is that stresses them at work and having the opportunity to voice and explore these concerns may be a valuable aspect of a training event.

## Publications

There are many publications that acknowledge the occupational stress hazards in the nursing profession. These can offer employers ways of significantly reducing occupational stress.

- 1 A Kings Fund report, *The Last Straw*, (2000) recommends that employers do not rely on staff loyalty but find ways of recruiting and retaining staff. The report further recommends that consideration is given to pay and conditions, particularly accommodation, leisure, transport and flexible family-friendly employment practices. Recommendations are made for staff development, the tackling of discrimination in the workplace and an integrated approach to the issues that lead to stress in the workforce.
- 2 There are recommendations available called *The Provision of Counselling Services for Staff in the NHS* (NHSE, 2000) Information is given on setting up a service or buying in a service. Recommendations are given for audit, monitoring and evaluation, as well as examples of good practice.
- 3 *The Improving Working Lives Standard* (2001) is an NHSE document which recognises that improving the working lives of staff contributes directly to better patient care. The way NHS employers treat staff will be part of the core performance measures and linked to the financial resources that they receive. It is a commitment to invest in NHS staff.
- 4 The RCN has produced three publications on counselling for staff in health service settings, aimed at employers and managers, RCN representatives, and RCN members (2002a, 2002b, 2002c). These contain guidance on the role and positive benefits of staff counselling services, how they should be provided in the workplace and what nurses should expect from their health service employers.

## Examples of good practice

Some employers have developed recognised 'care for the carers' policies. These may include a variety of options including:

- ◆ social events at lunchtimes (in a culture where it is OK to have a lunch break)
- ◆ once a month head and neck massage free of charge, or access to complementary treatments at a reduced cost
- ◆ ongoing stress management training events

- ◆ readily accessible counselling with no stigma attached
- ◆ Access to leisure facilities for exercise and pampering whether free or at a reduced cost.

Successful programmes have seen marked reductions in sickness absence and staff turnover, which is good news for employer and employee alike. Staff morale improves, people feel valued and the overall result is a healthier and safer working environment.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has produced management standards on work-related stress that are available on the HSE website, [www.hse.gov.uk/stress](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress) (HSE, 2004).

## To conclude

Occupational stress can be reduced and managed by your employer playing a proactive and reactive role, as well as by you doing what you can on a personal level in your sphere of influence in your work situation. You may want to talk to colleagues about your concerns. If colleagues share similar concerns a collective approach may be taken to address issues to bring about changes that are beneficial.

There are things you can do as an individual, such as acquiring new skills in assertion, time management, communication, management of people, relaxation or stress management. Maybe further training would be helpful in specific professional areas where you feel ill prepared.



## 6

# Taking legal steps

If you are experiencing stress at an unacceptable level in your workplace, there are a number of legal remedies that you can pursue with the RCN to prevent a stressful state of affairs continuing, or to obtain redress if you have suffered illness caused by occupational stress.

Taking legal action does not always mean a successful conclusion, and should only be considered when other methods (such as undertaking a risk assessment with your employer and taking other action to reduce stress) have failed, and it is clear that you or your colleagues are still experiencing excessive occupational stress.

## Legal steps can come in the form of:

- ◆ claims that the health and safety of employees is compromised
- ◆ employment claims
- ◆ personal injury claims.

## Breach of health and safety

Your employer has a duty to ensure your health and safety at work - and that includes the psychological wellbeing of employees. If you have concerns about stress, you must raise these with your manager as soon as possible, preferably in writing and ask for remedial action to be taken. Make sure that a risk assessment of stress has been undertaken and, if not, that one is done straight away. It is also important that your employer implements a stress policy if they do not already have one - and that it is being followed.

In the first instance you should speak to your RCN Safety Representative.

If the situation does not improve, talk to your RCN officer about whether it is appropriate to involve the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). The HSE can intervene in a variety of ways which include taking criminal action against the employer. For example, the HSE can serve an improvement notice requiring a risk assessment to be carried out which it has done in a recent case involving an NHS trust.

Employers are not allowed to take retaliatory action against a member of staff who raises health and safety matters; staff are protected by the 'whistle-blowing' legislation in Part IVA of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (The Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order 1998) (see the RCN guidance, *Blowing the whistle*).

## Employment claims

Other actions you may wish to consider if you are suffering from a clinically recognisable psychiatric illness due to occupational stress, but are still employed, include:

- ◆ **taking out a grievance.** This could be against your manager or a co-worker, for example, in a situation where bullying has occurred
- ◆ **a discrimination claim** through the Employment Tribunal on the grounds of sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religious (and political opinion in Northern Ireland) beliefs or trade union membership/activities against the employer and/or discriminator
- ◆ **a civil action and/or injunction** through the courts, or **a complaint to the police** that can lead to a prosecution using the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (Protection from Harassment (NI) Order 1997) on the grounds of harassment
- ◆ **a claim of unfair dismissal.** In some cases, it can be argued that your employer's treatment is a breach of contract serious enough to justify your resignation - you then claim unfair dismissal through the Employment Tribunal on the grounds of constructive dismissal. Because these cases are very difficult to win, you should never take any steps towards such an action without first consulting an RCN Officer.

## Time limits

Note that time limits are tight for applications to the Employment Tribunal. They may be as short as three months from the date of dismissal or act of discrimination. So, always contact your RCN Steward or regional office as soon as possible.

## Personal injury claims

Personal injury claims on the grounds of psychiatric injury are hard to prove. The ordinary principles in personal injury cases also apply to stress claims, and these are as follows:

### The employer's duty

Your employer has a duty:

- a) to take reasonable care for the safety of its employees, including their mental welfare
- b) to provide and maintain a safe place and system of work
- c) to make a risk assessment under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and implement any protective or preventive measures identified including health surveillance (Regulation 6) (Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000)
- d) to deal quickly and thoroughly with complaints about working conditions and/or workloads causing stress and make efforts to reduce the risk.

### The employee's claim

What will you have to prove to be successful in a personal injury claim against your employer?

- a) **Foreseeability.** Your employer must have been able to foresee that you would suffer psychiatric injury including certified sickness absence due to stress or depression which will then put your employer on enquiry.
- b) **Injury.** You must have suffered an injury to health - that is, suffered from a clinically recognisable psychological or psychiatric condition, not mere stress.
- c) **Negligence/fault.** Your employer must be in breach of a duty (see *The employer's duty* above). A court is likely to ask:
  - ◆ what could and/or should the employer reasonably have done and when?
  - ◆ would any steps taken by the employer have done any good, that is, prevented the harm from occurring?
  - ◆ did the employer offer a confidential advice service with a referral to appropriate counselling or treatment?

If the employer did offer counselling, it is unlikely to be found in breach of duty - providing the service offered is appropriate. The RCN feels that just because an employer offers counselling does not give it a green light to inflict excessive stress on its employees.

- d) **Causation.** The employer's breach of duty must be the main cause of your harm - and it is not enough that there was merely occupational stress. In trying

to prove this, your medical records and private life are likely to be examined closely by the court.

### Time limits

The time limits for bringing a personal injury claim are strict. Legal proceedings must be begun **no later than three years** from the date when you knew you were suffering from stress as a result of work. A late claim will be time barred and you will not be able to sue for compensation without special permission of the courts, which they do not readily give.

### Alternatives to trial at court

Having a case decided by a judge is not necessarily the best way of resolving a dispute involving stress. The courts actively encourage the parties (the employer and employee) to try alternative dispute resolution or mediation instead, although they cannot force the parties to follow this route.

### Record keeping

If you are suffering from stress at work, you should keep accurate records and seek help as soon as possible. You should:

- ◆ keep a record of all dates, events and symptoms suffered and copies of any relevant documentation
- ◆ keep a personal record of all working hours, including those outside the normal place of work
- ◆ make complaints in writing to your employer about unfavourable conditions and keep copies
- ◆ seek medical advice from your doctor and occupational health department, and make sure that a clinical diagnosis is noted in medical certificates (rather than describing the symptoms as 'stress')
- ◆ when a particular incident has occurred (for example, serious bullying or harassment), complete an accident report form and ensure the incident is recorded as an industrial accident by completing Form BI95 from the Benefits Office. Keep copies of these completed forms.

## 7

The Royal College of Nursing offers a number of resources that can help you combat stress:

- ◆ RCN Welfare Service – when the unexpected occurs, such as ill-health, a family break-up or a dispute with your employer, financial hardship can follow. The RCN Welfare Adviser can provide practical advice to help alleviate financial difficulties, and also provide long term solutions to difficult financial situations.  
Telephone: 0845 408 4391
- ◆ RCN Career Service – are you thinking about a change of direction within nursing, but don't know where to start? Do you need help with job applications or interview skills? The RCN Career Service offers telephone guidance on the above.  
Telephone: 0845 408 4391
- ◆ RCN Direct is a service that is available to you 24 hours a day for advice and information.  
Telephone 0845 772 6100
- ◆ RCN stewards or safety representatives are available if you have professional or work related concerns. (Contact your local RCN office for more details)
- ◆ RCN Counselling offers you a confidential and professional short-term service, either face to face or by telephone, for any work-related or personal issues. An appointment with a counsellor can be made for you when you call.  
Telephone: 0845 769 7064.

## Key points to remember

- ◆ Some stress is good for you!
- ◆ Aim for the healthy tension between being relaxed and energised.
- ◆ Regularly assess your stress response and the current stresses as stress can creep up unawares.
- ◆ Plan ahead for expected increases in stress.
- ◆ Find out what works best for you in terms of reducing and managing your stress.
- ◆ Try out new ideas that may work well for you.
- ◆ Remember, feeling stressed does not equal not coping.
- ◆ It is OK to seek help when stressed.
- ◆ Remember that your employer carries a responsibility for your health and safety at work, which includes your emotional/mental health as well as your physical wellbeing.

HAPPY STRESS BUSTING on an individual and organisational level!

## Appendix 1:

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### Relaxation tapes

Contact the Centre for Stress Management (see Useful Contacts for details).

## Appendix 2:

### Useful contacts and web sites

#### The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy

BACP House  
35-37 Albert Street  
Rugby  
Warks CV21 2SG

Telephone: 0870 443 5252

Fax: 0870 443 5160

Email: [bacp@bacp.co.uk](mailto:bacp@bacp.co.uk)

[www.counselling.co.uk](http://www.counselling.co.uk)

#### RCN Counselling Service

20 Cavendish Square  
London  
W1G 0RN

Telephone: 0845 769 7064

Email: [counselling@rcn.org.uk](mailto:counselling@rcn.org.uk)

[www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)

**RCN Direct:** 0845 772 6100

**RCN Careers and Welfare Service:** 0845 408 4391

#### Centre for Stress Management

156 Westcombe Hill  
London  
SE3 7DH

Telephone: 020 8853 1122

[www.managingstress.com](http://www.managingstress.com)

#### Stress News web site:

<http://onlinestressnews.bizland.com>

#### Health and Safety Executive:

[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

Telephone: 08701 545500



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[www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)

**RCNDIRECT**  
[www.rcn.org.uk/direct](http://www.rcn.org.uk/direct)  
**0845 772 6100**

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promotes excellence in practice and shapes  
health policies

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