



# 2017 ONPHA Conference and Trade Show

Shaping  
OUR  
Future

202

Staying power: Moving  
from workplace stress to  
workplace wellness

PRESENTED

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# Understanding stress

## Mental disorder vs stress

# Stress is caused by a trigger

- Whether you feel stress depends on how you **interpret** the trigger/situation
- The defining feature of stress is **feeling overwhelmed**
- Whether you feel able to cope with the stress has a lot to do with things that have nothing to do with the trigger itself
  - **your physical state, your experiences, your thinking style, your genetics, your social support/environment**

A stress response can look similar to symptoms of a mental disorder;  
The difference is that the disorder may not have a trigger and does not go away when the trigger is removed



# Traumatic stress vs common stress

## Common stress:

A response to a situation that someone **perceives to be overwhelming**:

- Fear
- Frustration
- Conflict
- Strain
- Loss or change

## Traumatic stress:

Is defined by the **intensity of the stressor** and **how overwhelmed the individual feels**.

The stressor is more likely traumatic if it:

- Is **unexpected** or the person was **unprepared** for it
- Made the individual feel **powerless to prevent** it
- Is **repeated**
- Is due to someone being **intentionally cruel**
- Happened in **childhood**
- Is **life threatening** to the person or others



# Employees with **High work or personal stress** are more likely to report taking a mental health absence in previous 2 years



Employees report taking a mental health absence  
**HIGH WORK STRESS** **LOW WORK STRESS**

**1** in **4**  
employees

**26%**  
of employees

**6%**  
of employees



Employees report taking a mental health absence  
**HIGH PERSONAL STRESS** **LOW PERSONAL STRESS**

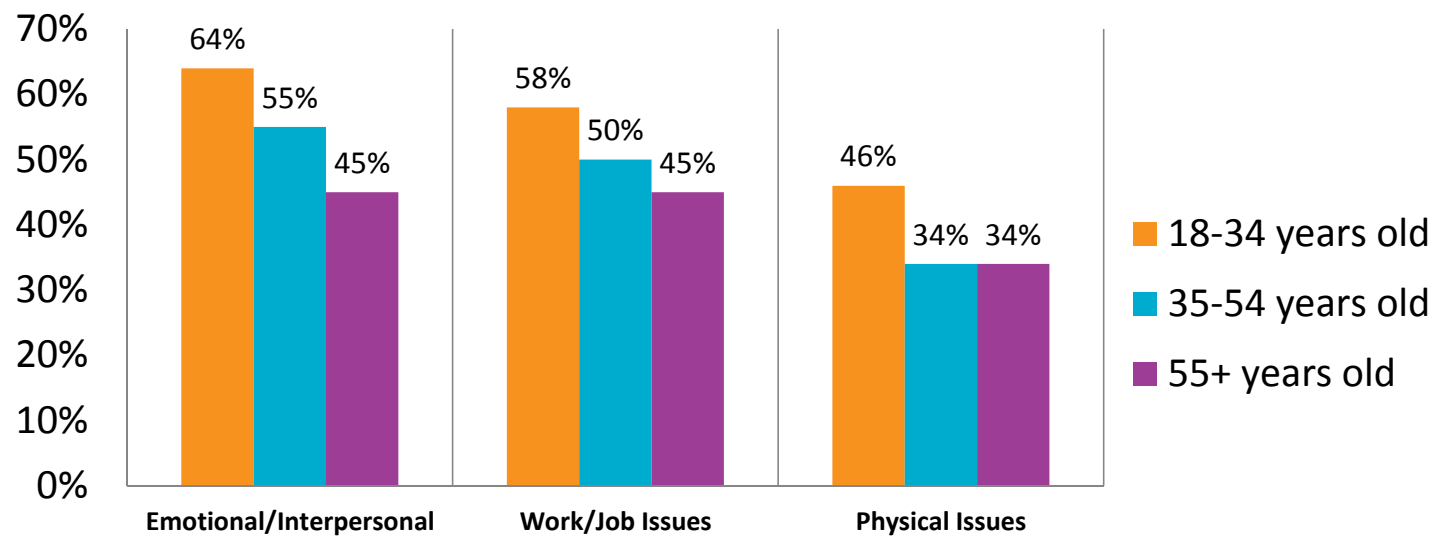
**1** in **4**  
employees

**25%**  
of employees

**8%**  
of employees



# Interpersonal issues are a major cause of workplace stress



The youngest employees are most likely to report every type of workplace stress



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# Organizational change is an increasingly common stressor

Impact of organizational change	Positive impact	Negative impact
Job performance	28%	30%
Perception of the company	27%	43%
My health and well-being	26%	40%



- Although there was some positive impact, the negative impact outweighed it
- Perception of the organization had the highest negative impact

# Increased absenteeism is common following organizational change

40%

saw more **co-worker absenteeism** following an organizational change

17%

Indicated that they took **more time off themselves**



- Almost 1 in 5 employees indicated taking more time off work following an organizational change
- 4 in 5 observed this in others



# Job redesign has the greatest impact

Type of organizational change	% of employees who experienced the change	Increased likelihood for physical health sick leave	Increased likelihood of mental health sick leave
Team restructuring	39%	High	High
Downsizing/layoffs	35%	High	High
<b>Job re-design</b>	35%	<b>Very High</b>	<b>Very high</b>
Office move/re-design	29%	High	No relationship
Merger	15%	Moderately High	No relationship
None	34%	No relationship	No relationship



- Job re-design has a direct personal impact
- Change as a result of mergers are somewhat “expected” and typically includes more social support

# Managing the risks of change starts well before the change actually starts

Report of **positive/**  
**supportive**  
**workplace culture**



Organizational change = More likely **positive impact** on:

- **Job performance**
- **Perception of company**
- **Health and well-being**

Report of **negative**  
**workplace culture**



Organizational change = More likely **negative impact** on:

- **Job performance**
- **Perception of company**
- **Health and well-being**

5 factors impact your personal  
response to stress

# 1. Your general biology

- Genetics (predisposition to risk)
- Exposure to toxins (e.g. excessive alcohol, drugs)
- Brain injury (e.g. pre-birth trauma, concussions)
- General biology (e.g. hormone levels, general physical health)

These are risk factors which may require that additional attention to self-care social support and resilience building



## 2. The type of stress

- **Traumatic stress** almost always requires professional support
  - Post-traumatic stress disorder can be mild, not easily detected, but still life changing, or it can be incapacitating
- **Constant stress** changes one's pattern of thinking and behaviour, and typically also needs professional support
  - The response to constant stress often looks like burn out / emotional exhaustion

The longer either goes unaddressed the more likely it is that a mental disorder will develop and the difficult it is to regain full quality of life



### 3. Sleep

- **Lack of sleep makes your brain more vulnerable** to excessive responses to stress
- Those with a history of insomnia were **four times as likely to develop major depression** three years later.
- **Sleep problems developed before major depression** 69% of the time and before anxiety disorders 27% of the time.

The symptoms of chronic lack of sleep are similar to depression and can have long term impact on physical health, mental health and relationships



## 4. Social support

- Strong and positive relationships with one or more people **can protect you from negative impact of stress**
- **Isolation has the opposite effect** in making you more vulnerable to the negative impact of stress

The quality of relationships versus the number of relationships is most critical as a protective factor for stress and general mental health



## 5. Thinking style

- Over time, we learn and develop ways of perceiving situations and thinking about them that are **helpful or harmful to us**
- Catastrophizing, anxious, angry, hopeless and conflicting **thinking styles can create unproductive behaviours and mental health challenges**
- **Realistic reframing and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)** get to the source of negative thinking patterns

Even serious mental health issues including PTSD respond well to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy





What can you do?

# Reduce your vulnerability to stress

## Build and maintain resilience

- Ensure adequate **sleep**; lack of sleep increased proneness to anxiety and depression
- Maintain a **healthy lifestyle** with regular physical activity
- **Simplify your life** to include only things that are necessary and things that give you pleasure or positive challenge (make sure to include things that give you pleasure)
- Maintain **meaningful relationships** with other people



# Manage your response to stress

## Balance your thinking

- Maintain **realistic** vs catastrophic thinking
- Focus on **all parts of the situation**, not just the negative parts
- Think of **a plan with options** to reinforce your control
- **Talk it out** – seek support from people you trust
- Get **professional counselling early** whenever things seem too much



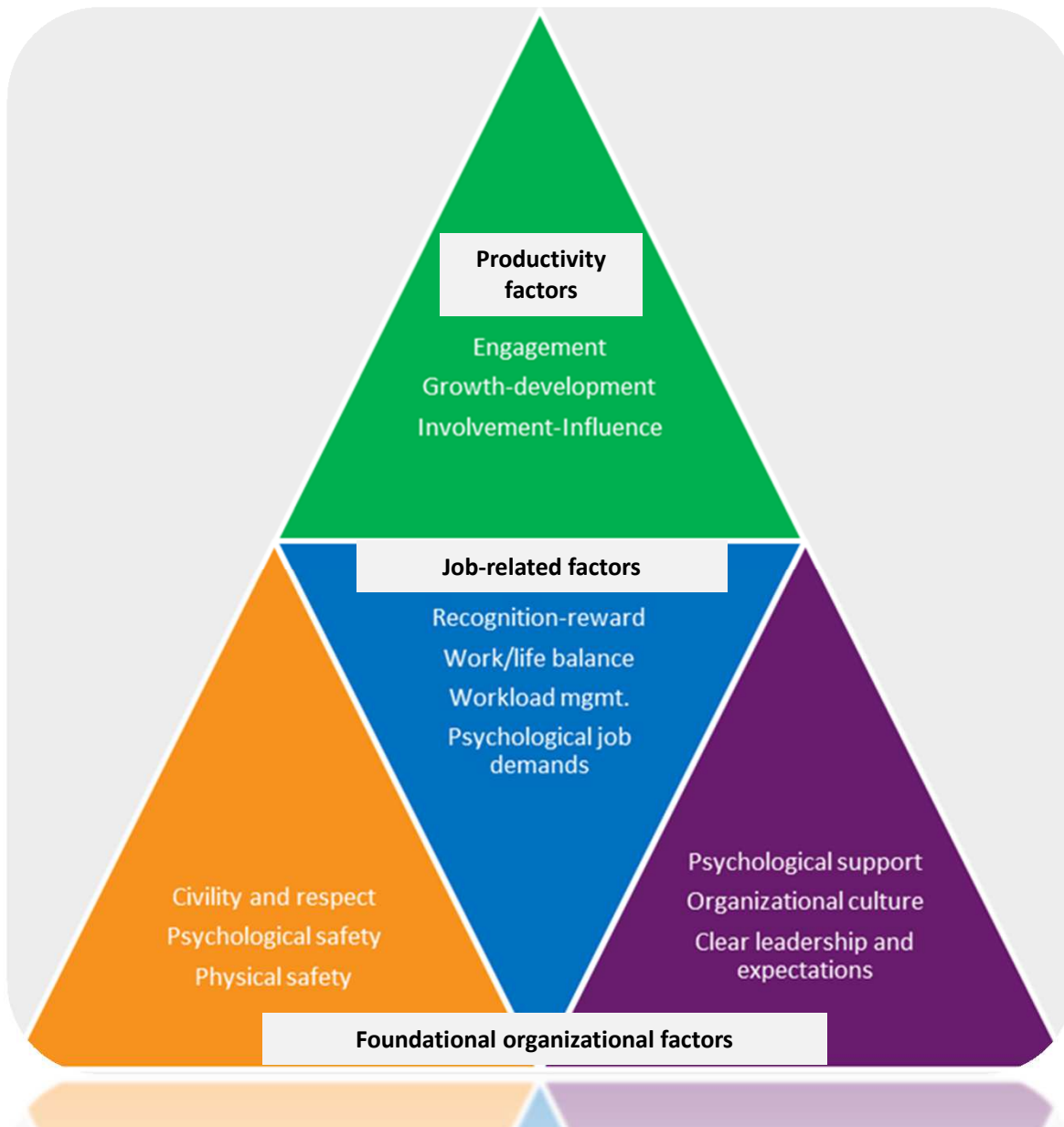
# Never ignore traumatic stress

## Seek support from others

- Immediately **tell your supervisor** about the incident
- **Seek support** – a peer / a personal relationship and your EFAP
- **Talk about what you experienced** to put it in context
- Continue getting **professional help** as long as needed
- Traumatic stress can result from something major that happens once, or several less major but still disturbing incidents over time **never ignore either one**



# What can the workplace do?



**The 13 psychological health and safety workplace factors provide a framework to build support resilience and reduce undue strain**

*All are aligned to the **supportive workplace** that predicts a more productive response to stress*

# Ensure practical knowledge and support

## Train managers

- How to identify and respond to behaviour change in employees
- How to support mental health without being a counsellor
- How to identify workplace mental health risks

## Promote supportive resources

- EFAP (employee and family assistance programs)
- Employee health and well-being programs and services
- Peer support
- Information, resources, and videos

# Address Stigma - stigma impacts whether or not people are willing to seek the support they need

**1 in 5** employees believe that whether someone becomes mentally ill is fully within their control.

<b>71%</b>	Indicated concerns of <b>workplace stigma</b>
<b>65%</b>	Indicated <b>self-stigma</b>
<b>53%</b>	Indicated concerns of <b>stigma from their physician</b>

Stigma remains a critical issue, co-worker and self-stigma warrant unique attention in the workplace



# Thank you!

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? Questions?