

Stress in the workplace: signs and causes Checklist for managers

This checklist helps you, as a manager, identify where negative stress is impacting your area of management and the reasons for it, as well as facilitate the planning and implementation of first-level measures for stress reduction and/or stress prevention.

In this checklist, stress is understood to exclusively refer to a negative phenomenon that is experienced by the stressed person as inescapable, unrelenting pressure that hampers productivity, gives rise to tension and anxiety and severely impacts well-being and health in the long term. Challenges and high expectations that serve to motivate high-level performance (e.g. confronting challenging but solvable problems) are not included in this definition.

Source: stressnostress.ch/Version 04.2014

Signs of stress

States of stress give rise to clearly perceptible signs in a person at the physical and behavioural level and should above all be taken seriously if they persist or arise often. Certain signs may be indications of debilitating stress.

Which of the listed signs of stress have you seen in employees in your area of management/responsibility over the last three months? Make a note of any individuals or groups in whom these signs of stress stand out.

In the last three months, I have noticed the following signs of stress among my employees:

They complain of health issues, such as headaches, stomach problems etc.

They appear listless, uninvolved.

They isolate themselves from others.

They are impatient or irritable.

They behave in an openly aggressive way.

They behave in a passive-aggressive way.

They do not work well with others.

They do not act like team players.

Their performance is substandard.

They are using drugs (e.g. alcohol, soft drugs, hard drugs).

	1	2	3	4	5
	Almost never	Rarely, i.e. about once a month	Sometimes, i.e. about once a week	Regularly, i.e. several times a week	Continuously
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Continued overleaf

They are absent from work due to illness.

They are involved in accidents or near-misses.

They cause operational disruptions.

They cause customer complaints.

They are quitting.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The greater the number of scores in columns 3, 4 or 5, the stronger the indication that stress levels are high. If the human and material cost of stress is something you are not willing to accept, consider taking the measures suggested on the right:

- Pay particular attention to possible signs of stress over the next several weeks.
- Discuss the subject of stress with colleagues, line managers and employees.
- Work through the next section of the checklist with an eye to identifying the possible causes of stress experienced by your employees.

Causes of stress

There are various potential reasons for stress, which sometimes interact and influence each other. Below is a list of factors related to work and the working environment that have been shown to cause stress and may be damaging both in human and material terms.

Please rate the following statements on a scale of “disagree” to “agree entirely”.

Possible causes of stress for employees at work

	1	2	3	4	5
	Disagree	Mostly disagree	Agree to some extent	Mostly agree	Agree entirely
The volume of work is overwhelming (not just lots of work).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees do not have enough time to plan and organise their work properly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees lack the expertise for the targets and tasks they have been assigned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees find their work boring.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work does not correspond with the actual interests and preferences of employees.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees have too much routine and not enough challenges in their work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees have no influence on how their work is planned and structured.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employees' work consists of isolated steps and is not a well-rounded whole.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Continued overleaf

Employees do not have enough decision-making independence.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Employees do not receive support when they need it.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

There are unresolved tensions and conflicts.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Line managers only communicate with employees using a top-down approach. Employees' proposals, suggestions and criticisms are not taken seriously.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Employees do not get any real feedback (lack of recognition and constructive criticism).

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Employees do not have influence over their development/career.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Employees work under poor external working conditions.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Employees are often interrupted when working.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Consequences

Now go through the checklist again, review your assessments regarding signs of stress and potential causes of stress, and then please answer the following questions.

How much is your current area of management/responsibility affected by negative, debilitating stress?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Not affected	Only slightly affected	Partially affected	Quite affected	Very affected
--------------	------------------------	--------------------	----------------	---------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

If you have identified negative stress: how important are measures to reduce stress in your area, in your opinion?

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Not important at all	Not very important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important
----------------------	--------------------	--------------------	-----------	----------------

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

If measures to reduce stress are important to you: what do you think should be the top priority? WHO should do WHAT, HOW and WHEN?

For more information visit: helsana.ch/sme-toolbox