

The Cost of Stress

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Abstract: *A wise person once said that life is a series of losses. Some losses can be devastating, such as the loss of a child, but devastation can also come from the loss of a dream or the loss of health. However, there are tools can help us cope better with loss and stress. Job stress comes with a heavy price tag, costing American businesses more than \$300 billion a year. That's according to reports from the American Psychological Association. Stress impacts our ability to perform, leads to workplace turnover, and is a direct contributor to medical and insurance costs. According to the Center for the Advancement of Health, studies indicate a significant correlation between on-the-job stress and mental, emotional, and physical problems, such as heart disease and mental, immune, and musculoskeletal disorders. The present case attempt to realize these conditions that would impact an organizations' health costs as well as its workers' ability to conduct their jobs. The present case deals with the occupational stress and work-life balance issues. It serves as a guideline for the employers to understand the the causes and effect of stress on the employees performance and the organizational overall goals and take initiatives for individual skill building to manage life pressures more effectively.*

The Case:

Mr John Thomas was a fairly good student, especially in mathematics. He worked harder than most of his friends, and somehow he ended up going steady with Emily his, class-mate. He had a lot of fun in high school. He worked summers for a local surveyor, Mr.De Souza. When he graduated Mr. De Souza offered him a job as operator in his chemical factory. The pay wasn't very high, but Thomas already was good at the work, and he believed all he needed was a steady job to boost his confidence to ask Emily to marry him. Once he did, events unfolded rapidly. He started work in June, he and Emily were married in October, Emily took a job as a Office Assistant in a local company, and a year later they had their first child.

The baby came as something of a shock to Mr.Thomas. He had come to enjoy the independence his own paycheck gave him every week. Food and rent took up most of it, but he still enjoyed playing basketball a few nights a week with his high school buddies and spending Sunday afternoons on the Cricket field. When the baby came, however, Mr John Thomas' brow began to furrow a bit. He was only 20 years old, and he still wasn't making much money. He asked , Mr.De Souza for a raise and got it—his first.

Two months later, one of the crew chiefs quit just when , Mr.De Souza's operator had more work than they could handle. , Mr.De Souza hated to turn down work, so he made Thomas Plant a chief Operator, giving his crew some of the old instruments that weren't good enough for the precision work of the top crews, and assigned him the easy title surveys in town. Because it meant a jump in salary, Mr. Thomas had no choice but to accept the Operator chief position. But it scared him. He had never been very ambitious or curious, so he'd paid little attention to the training of his former chief operator. He knew how to run the instruments—the basics, anyway—but every morning he woke up terrified that he would be sent on a job he couldn't handle.

During his first few months as a chief Operator, Mr Thomas began doing things that his wife thought he had outgrown. He frequently talked so fast that he would stumble over his own words, stammer, turn red in the face, and have to start all over again. He began smoking, too, something he had not done since they had started dating. He told his two subordinate members that smoking kept his hands from shaking when he was working on an instrument. Neither of them smoked, and when Mr Thomas began lighting up in the truck while they were waiting for the rain to stop, they would become resentful and complain that he had no right to ruin their lungs too.

Mr John Thomas found it particularly hard to adjust to being "boss," especially since one of his workers was getting an engineering degree at night school and both crew members were the same age as he. He

felt sure that Mr. Edwin, the scholar, would take over his position in no time. He kept feeling that Edwin, was looking over his shoulder and began snapping any time they worked close together.

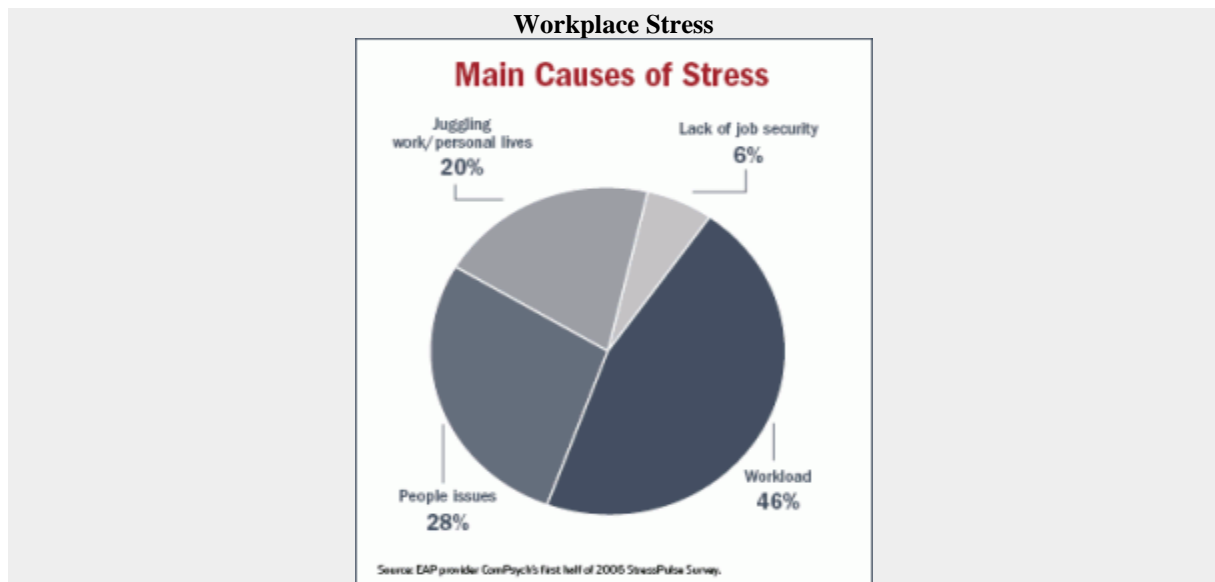
Things were getting tense at home, too. Emily had to give up her full-time day job to take care of the baby, so she had started working nights. They hardly ever saw each other, and it seemed as though her only topic of conversation was how they should move to California or Alaska, where she had heard that Operators were paid five times what Mr Thomas made. He knew his wife was dissatisfied with her work and believed her intelligence was being wasted, but he didn't know what he could do about it. He was disconcerted when he realized that drinking and worrying about the next day at work while sitting at home with the baby at night had become a pattern.

Questions

- What signs of stress was Mr. John Thomas exhibiting?
- What was the basic causes behind Mr. John's stress ?
- How was Mr. John Thomas trying to cope with his stress? Can you suggest more effective methods?
- As an HR Manager of the Company design a wellness strategy programme to deal with the problem .

Appendix:

As the U.S. economy continues to struggle for the third year, findings from the 2010 Stress in America survey paint a picture of an overstressed nation. Feeling the effects of prolonged financial and other recession-related difficulties, Americans are struggling to balance work and home life and make time to engage in healthy behaviors, with stress not only taking a toll on their personal physical health, but also affecting the emotional and physical well-being of their families.



Causes of Stress in the U.S.		
	Cause	Factors
1	Job Pressure	Co-Worker Tension, Bosses, Work Overload
2	Money	Loss of Job, Reduced Retirement, Medical Expenses
3	Health	Health Crisis, Terminal or Chronic Illness
4	Relationships	Divorce, Death of Spouse, Arguments with Friends, Loneliness
5	Poor Nutrition	Inadequate Nutrition, Caffeine, Processed Foods, Refined Sugars
6	Media Overload	Television, Radio, Internet, E-Mail, Social Networking
7	Sleep Deprivation	Inability to release adrenaline and other stress hormones
U.S Stress Statistics		Data

Percent of people who regularly experience physical symptoms caused by stress	77 %
Regularly experience psychological symptoms caused by stress	73 %
Feel they are living with extreme stress	33 %
Feel their stress has increased over the past five years	48 %
Cited money and work as the leading cause of their stress	76 %
Reported lying awake at night due to stress	48 %
Stress Impact Statistics	
Percent who say stress has a negative impact on their personal and professional life	48 %
Employed adults who say they have difficulty managing work and family responsibilities.	31 %
Percent who cited jobs interfering with their family or personal time as a significant source of stress.	35 %
Percent who said stress has caused them to fight with people close to them	54 %
Reported being alienated from a friend or family member because of stress	26 %
Annual costs to employers in stress related health care and missed work.	\$300 Billion
Percent who say they are "always" or "often" under stress at work	30 %
People who cited physical symptoms experienced the following	
Fatigue	51 %
Headache	44 %
Upset stomach	34 %
Muscle tension	30 %
Change in appetite	23 %
Teeth grinding	17 %
Change in sex drive	15 %
Feeling dizzy	13 %
People who cited psychological symptoms experienced the following	
Irritability or anger	50 %
Feeling nervous	45 %
Lack of energy	45 %
Feeling as though you could cry	35 %

Source: American Psychological Association, American Institute of Stress, NY (2013)