

Symposium for Research Administrators

Dynamics for Tomorrow's Research Administration



Stress Management and the Research Administrator

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Factors associated with stress vulnerability
Long term impact of stress
Strategies to help you better understand and cope with stress

SESSION TOPICS

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Stress Vulnerability Models

- Demand/control model (Karasek, 1979)
 - High demands
 - Low control
 - Job strain



Stress Vulnerability Models

- Effort/reward imbalance (ERI) model (Siegrist, 1996)



Stress Vulnerability Models

- Work & family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985)
 - Work/family conflict
 - Family/work conflict

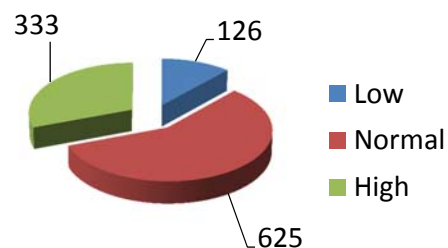
Perceived Work Stress

In the last month how often did you

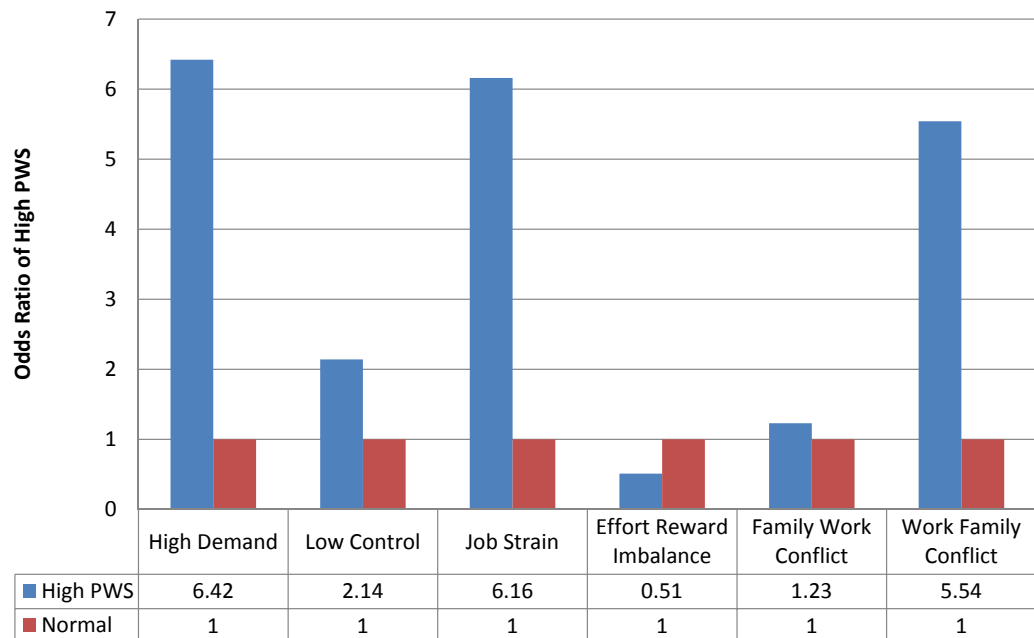
1. Feel you have too much stress at work?
2. Get upset over something unexpected?
3. Have to deal with irritating hassles?
4. Have to deal with stressful events at work?
5. Have to deal with ongoing problems that never seem to go away?

Results (N = 1,084)

Perceived Work Stress



Stress Vulnerability and PWS



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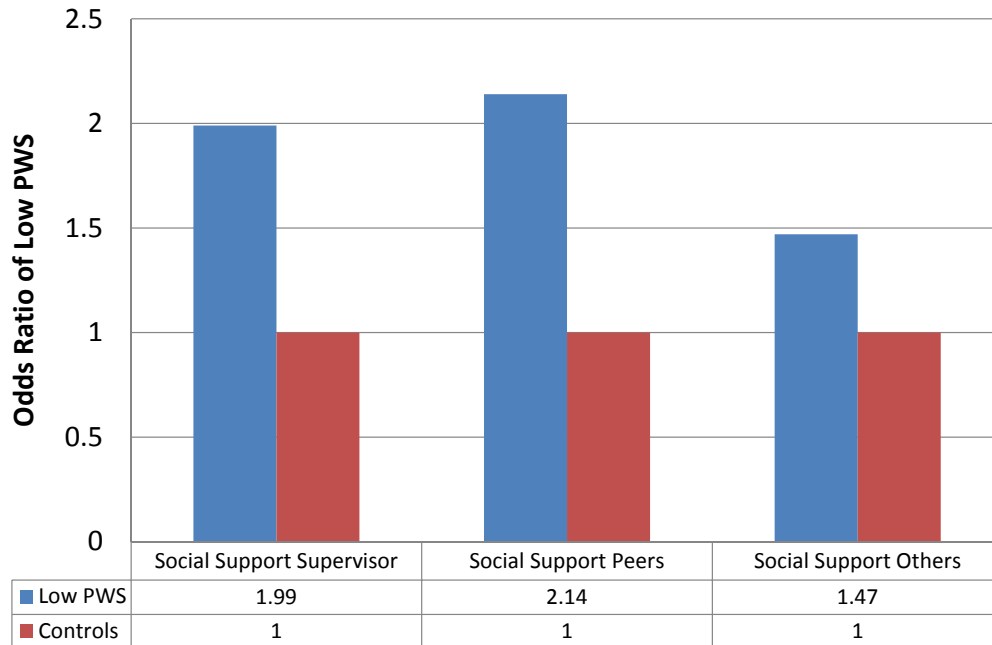
Long term impact of stress

- Detrimental to physical health (CDC list)
 - Heart disease (1)
 - Cancer (2)
 - Stroke (3)
 - Accidents (5)
- Detrimental to mental health
- Strain on relationships
- Overall lessening of quality of life

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Social Support and Stress Resilience



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Coping and Stress Profile®

- **WHAT DO STRESS BALLS REALLY DO ANYWAY?**
- ***DO NOT*** spend your precious time on this earth hoping for a stress free day or waiting for a magical time when everything falls perfectly into place.

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A Tool for Assessing Stress

- “I can’t wait until I can retire.”
- How many of you enjoy when the leader is away? **DE** Days are great!!!!
- A Coping and Stress Profile® can help identify issues and provide some options for learning to deal with stress.



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What a C&SP measures

- Stress Level and Coping Mechanisms in your personal and professional life
- Higher the score the greater the stress
- What coping skills do you possess? – 1. Problem Solving, 2. Communication, 3. Closeness, and 4. Flexibility



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Coping Skills

- **Problem-Solving:** The ability to directly address difficult situations and make **positive** changes to resolve them. It builds upon **creative skills**, and it results in new solutions to issues.
- **Communication:** The **act of sharing ideas and expressing emotions** to other people in order to promote mutual understanding . It means that opinions and feelings are expressed fully so that people know where they stand.
- **Closeness:** The **degree of mutual support** that people have with their peers. It means that individuals can open up to one another without fear of judgment.
- **Flexibility:** The ability to **adapt to changing** circumstances . It refers to the degree that people are willing to change their approaches to tough situations.



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“A Whack on the Side of the Head” & “The Creative Whack Pack”



“Knowing many things doesn’t teach insight.”

A creativity teacher invited a student to his house for tea. They talked for a while, and then it was teatime.

The teacher poured some tea into the student’s cup. Even after the cup was full, **he continued to pour**, and soon tea flowed onto the floor.

“Stop pouring; the tea isn’t going into the cup.”

The teacher replied, “The same is true with you. If you are to receive any of my teachings, **you must first empty out your mental cup.**”

His point: without the ability to forget, our minds remain cluttered up with ready-made assumptions, and we’re not motivated to ask the questions that lead our own thinking to new ideas.

As the novelist Henry Miller put it: “My ‘forgettery’ has been just as important to my success as my memory.”

Indeed, **forgetting what we know** — at the appropriate time — can be an important means for gaining insight.

— **What conventional wisdom are you relying on?**

— **What would happen if you forgot the obvious answers that spring to mind and searched for new ones?**

— **What assumptions can you let go of?**



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Develop Problem Solving Skills

Define the issue. Ensure that what you perceive to be the problem is really the source of your stress and not just a symptom of it.

Identify your desired outcome. What is your goal in addressing the issue? What would it look like if you solved the problem?

List a variety of solutions. Emphasize creative ideas and then pare them down into solid, practical answers. Avoid getting trapped into thinking there is only one solution, which is rarely the case.

Attack problems, not people. It is easier to lash out at someone instead of looking for the root cause of your stress. Unfortunately, this usually fails to solve the problem and succeeds only in harming relationships.

Resist letting your emotions cloud your judgment. Resolving a stressful situation often requires a cool head and logical thought. You will get better results from analyzing your options and acknowledging when your emotions are getting the best of you.

Act rather than procrastinate. There will almost always be things that you would rather be doing than dealing with stress. However, simply wishing for your problems to solve themselves sets you up for more stress in the long run.



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Developing Closeness

- **Make relationships a high priority.** Letting people know that you value them should be as important as anything on a to-do list. If we do not pay attention to others' needs, a gulf opens between us.
- **Share your feelings.** Expressing your true emotions to someone can build trust. Taking private time to analyze issues or make decisions is understandable, but keeping a wall between ourselves and others can lead to social isolation.
- **Focus on the positive.** Maintaining an optimistic attitude can have beneficial effects on the degree of closeness you feel with others. This is also true if you freely compliment others and offer them praise.
- **Work on common goals together.** Emphasizing mutual objectives will do more to build closeness than will dwelling on differences. In addition, it increases the odds that you will achieve those goals, further alleviating stress.



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Developing Flexibility

- **Consider original ideas and fresh approaches.** Setting aside our notions of how certain tasks are done can open us up to better methods. In contrast, a refusal to look at new proposals can lead to stagnation, more problems, and increased stress.
- **Avoid judging people and ideas before giving them a chance.** A strong indicator of inflexibility is dismissing potential solutions out of hand. Concepts that initially seem far-fetched could turn out to be breakthroughs . Allow time for people to explain their ideas before you judge them. CREATIVITY AGAIN
- **See things from another person's perspective.** You may not always have the best solution. Accept the fact that other people may come up with a better answer to a problem.
- **Make a sincere effort to adapt to changing situations.** There is a fine line between staying resolute and being stubborn. The ability to change course can be the difference between success and continued tension .



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What Coping Techniques Will You Commit to Developing?

Problem Solving

Communication

Closeness

Flexibility



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Parting Thoughts

- “when you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change”

Dr. **Wayne W. Dyer**, author of "The Power of Intention"

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