

A proactive, systems-based approach to preventing and managing work-related stress

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What is stress?

- ▶ Stress is a normal part of everyday life
- ▶ Stress refers to a heightened level of energy and arousal
- ▶ Not all stress is bad
 - eustress
- ▶ Stress becomes a problem when.....

When is stress a problem?

- ▶ when external demands and conditions
 - don't match a person's needs, expectations or ideals, or
 - exceed their physical capacity, skills, or knowledge for comfortably handling a situation

STRAIN

Health consequences

- ▶ Studies have shown that high levels of perceived stress are associated with:
 - poor psychological health
 - ▶ anxiety and depression (Caplan et al 1975; Hakanen 2008)
 - ▶ lower concentration, impaired problem solving capacities & poor decision making (Cox, Leather & Cox 1990)
 - ▶ Reduced wellbeing (Noblet et al 2001)
 - low levels of emotional health
 - ▶ low job satisfaction and low life satisfaction (Karasek 1979; Noblet et al 2003)
 - ▶ reactions of anger (Hodapp et al 1988)
 - reduced social harmony
 - ▶ high levels of work/family conflict (Haines et al 2008)
 - ▶ low levels of life & marital adjustment (Greenhaus et al 1987)

Health consequences (cont.)

- ▶ Studies have shown that high levels of perceived stress are associated with:
 - poor physical health
 - ▶ self-reported symptomatology , CVD (Tyler et al 1991)
 - ▶ musculoskeletal disorders (Carayon et al 1999, Devereux et al 2002)
 - adverse behavioural responses
 - ▶ increased substance abuse, sleep disorders & poor eating habits (Chen & Cunradi 2008)
 - ▶ Poor safety behaviour and high accident risk (Glasscock et al 2006)
 - reduced organisational effectiveness
 - ▶ absence frequency & turnover intention (Nielsen et al 2004; Widerszal-Bazyl 2008)
 - ▶ declining organisational commitment & employee engagement (Noblet et al 2009; de Lange et al 2008)
 - ▶ impaired job performance (Yagill, 1998)

OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS

INTRINSIC FACTORS

Work conditions (noise, chemicals, etc.)

Technology (pacing, cycle time, etc.)

Work load

Responsibility

Underutilisation

Lack of autonomy

Role conflict & ambiguity

Support from boss, colleagues & subord's

Organisational climate/structure

Career factors

Job mobility

EXTRINSIC FACTORS

MODERATORS/ MEDIATORS

PERSONALITY

eg. Type A

SATISFACTION
MOTIVATION
etc.

DOMESTIC/
SOCIAL
FACTORS

STRAIN SYMPTOMS

PHYSIOL. 'RISKS'

Heart rate

BP

Cholesterol

ECG abnorm's

Immune sup'n

DEPRESSION/
ANXIETY etc.

SMOKING/
DRINKING etc

ABSENTEEISM
LABOUR-
TURNOVER
INDUSTRIAL-
RELATIONS

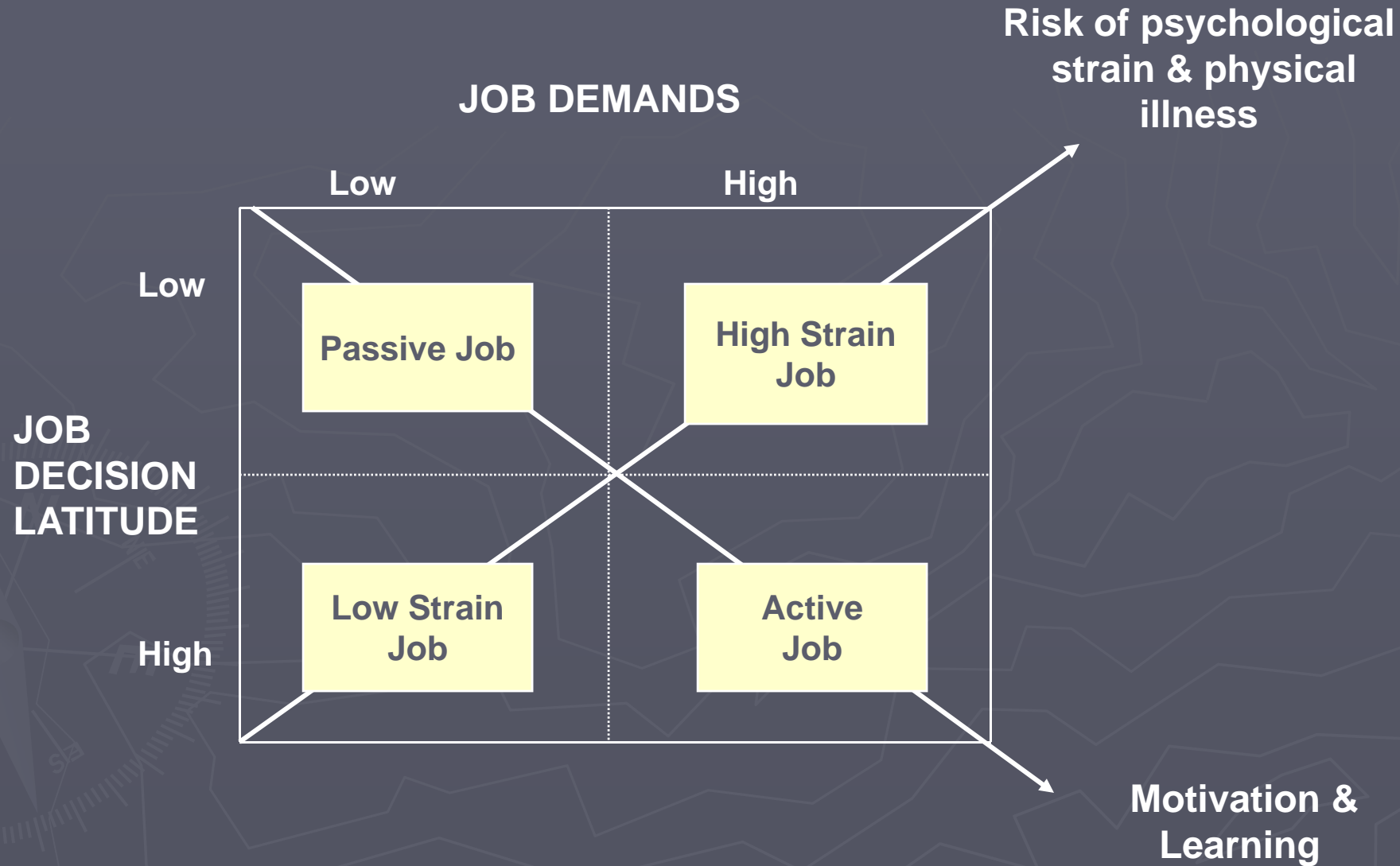
DISEASE

CHD

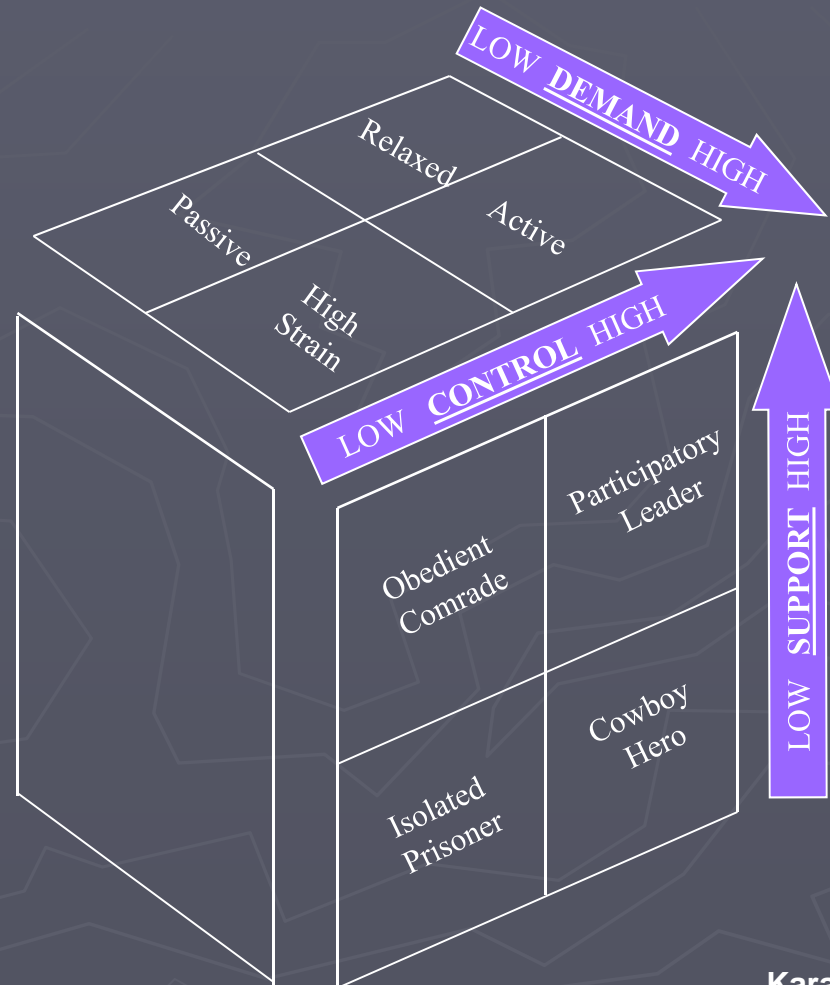
MENTAL
ILL-HEALTH

IMMUNE
DISORDERS

Job Strain Model



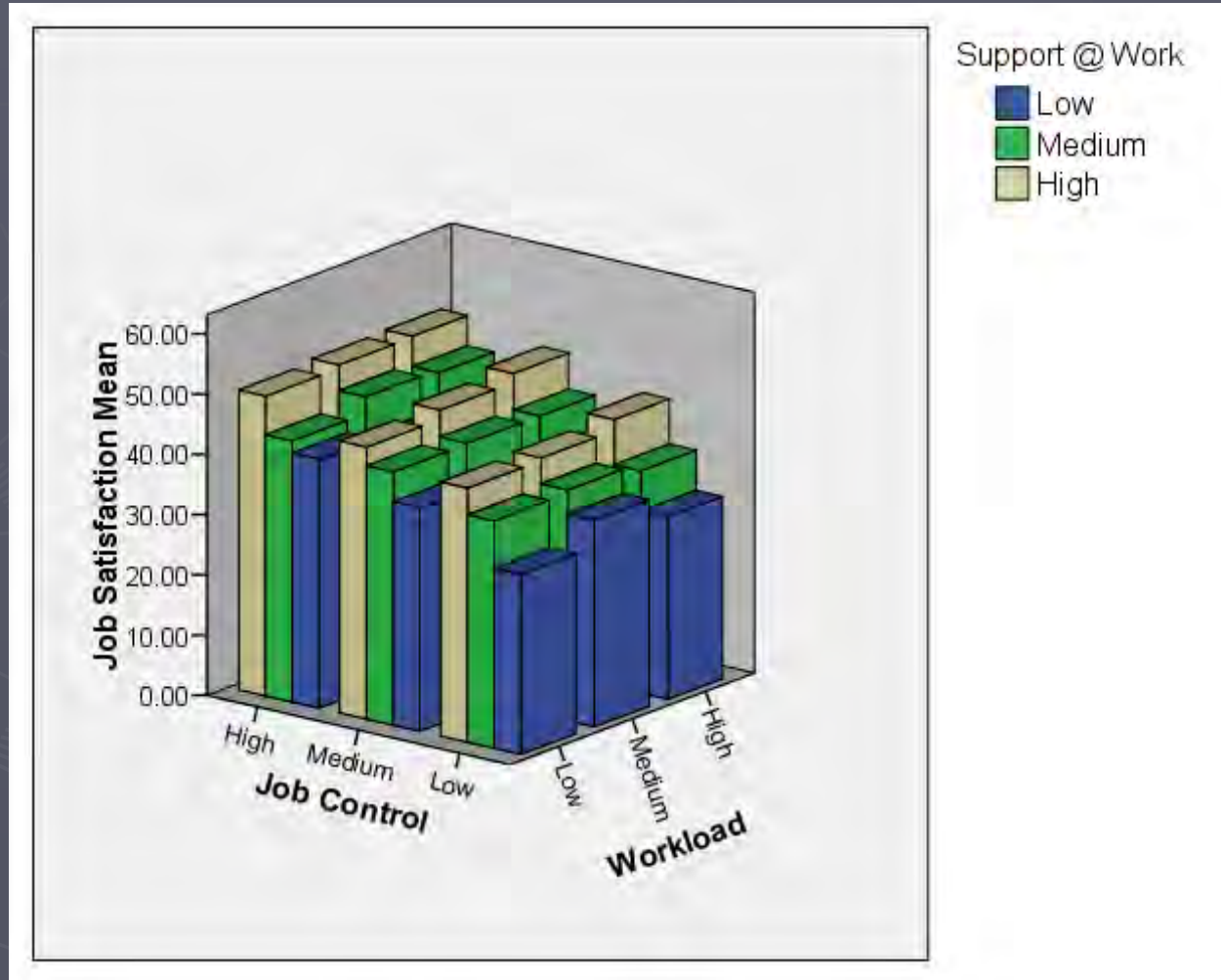
Full JSM

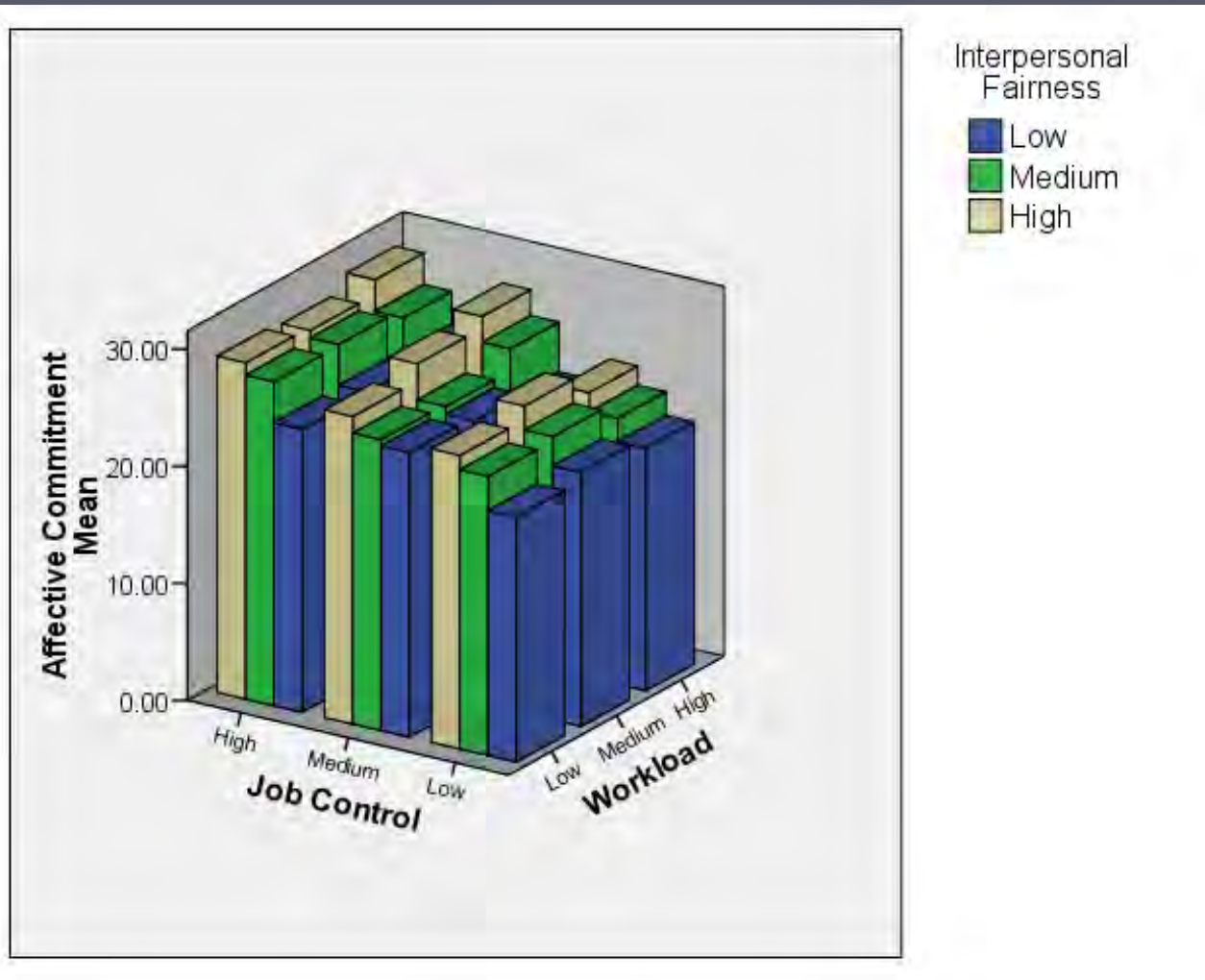


Organizational Justice

- ▶ Organizational justice refers to people's perception of fairness in organisations (Greenberg 1988)
- ▶ Four dominant forms of org fairness
 - Distributive
 - ▶ Evaluation of the fairness of resource distributions
 - Procedural
 - ▶ Fairness of processes for making decisions
 - Informational
 - ▶ Extent to which clear rationale for decision was provided
 - Interpersonal
 - ▶ Extent to which decision makers treat employee with respect and dignity
- ▶ All can have direct and indirect effects

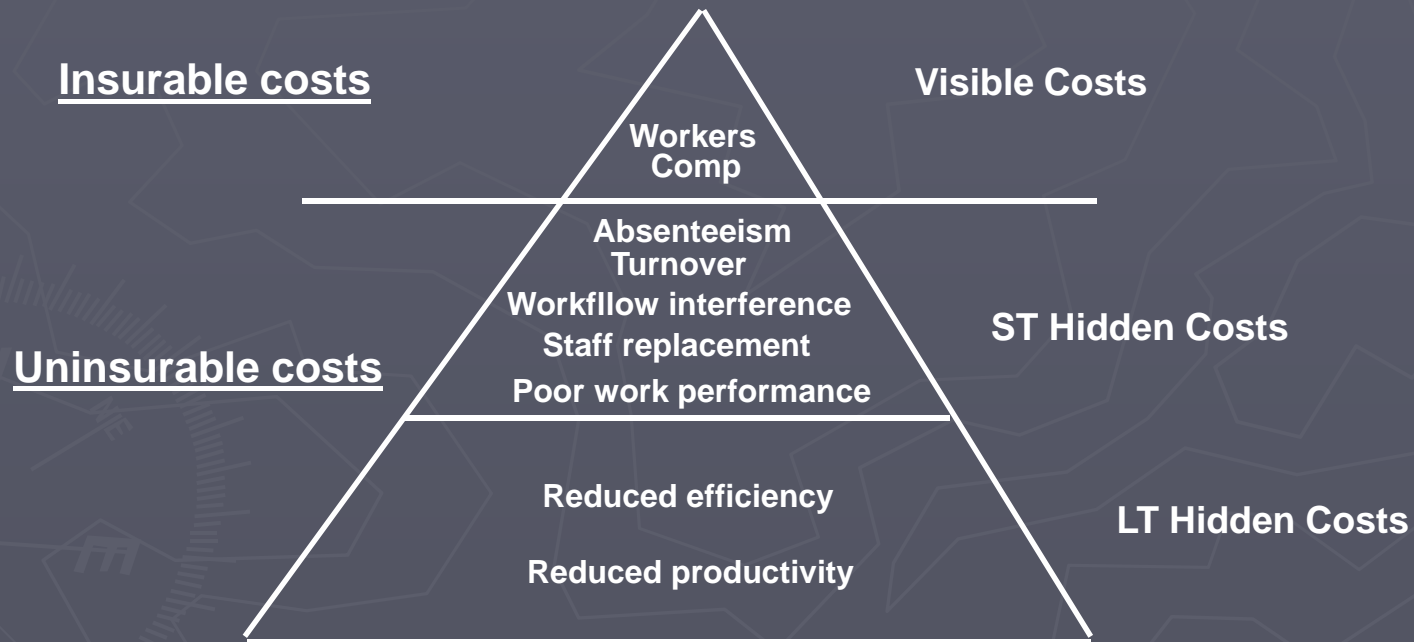
Case Study: Public Sector Agency







Cost of \$tress



Comcare Australia 1993

Typical organisational responses (1)

- ▶ Do nothing
 - Most common reaction
- ▶ Worker-directed responses
 - Focus on behavioural risk factors
 - Adopt medical, behaviour change and education approaches
 - ▶ Screening for risk factors
 - ▶ Awareness raising programs
 - ▶ On-site programs that facilitate behaviour change

Giga et al 2003; Caulfield et al 2004

Typical organisational responses (2)

- Often based on superficial needs assessment (if any)
 - A review of workplace health promotion programs revealed that
 - ▶ only 25% were implemented in response to employees' explicit needs
 - ▶ 14% included employees as partners in planning and implementing programs

Harden et al 1999

Stress Reduction Program

▶ Audit

- gather information about sources & effects of stress (see following)

▶ Analysis

- review information gathered
- identify primary concerns, problem areas & possible actions

▶ Feedback

- share results of 1 & 2 with employees
- everyone involved in developing action plans

Stress Reduction Program

- ▶ Strategy development
 - everyone involved in developing strategies
 - use three-tiered approach as guide (ref following)
- ▶ Action
 - employees & change agent implement actions to overcome/minimise problems
- ▶ Evaluation
 - initial data used as reference point for evaluation
 - evaluate effectiveness of action
 - ▶ consider process, impact & outcome evaluation

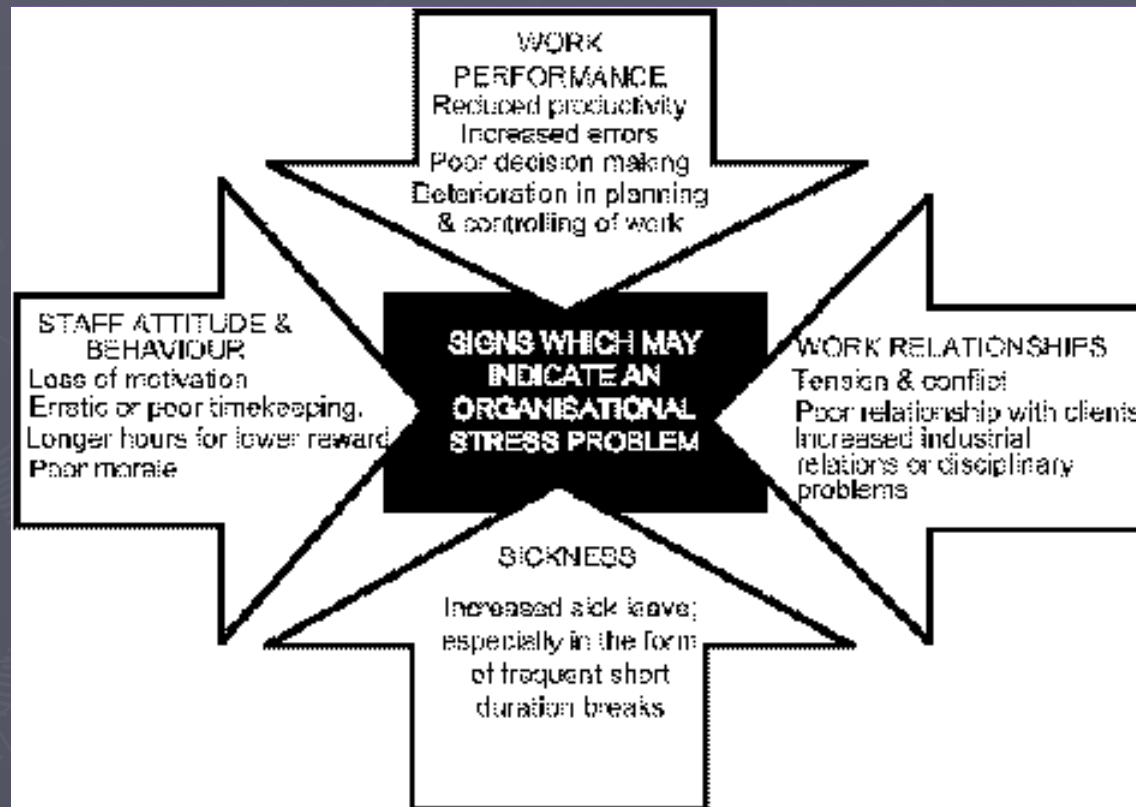
Stress Audit

- ▶ Sources of information
 - records of injuries, near misses & incidents
 - rates of sick leave, absenteeism, turnover, tardiness
 - quality and/or productivity parameters
 - surveillance to detect and monitor risks
 - consultation with employees
 - ▶ group discussions, interviews
 - ▶ questionnaires
 - observed changes in behaviour
 - exit interviews

Stress Audit (Cont.)

- ▶ Signs of strain
 - Organisational
 - ▶ poor productivity
 - ▶ high staff turnover
 - ▶ high rates of sickness, accidents
 - ▶ lower quality of performance
 - Individual
 - ▶ mood changes
 - ▶ increased sick leave
 - ▶ apathy
 - ▶ withdrawal
 - ▶ lack of concentration

diagnosed:



Strategy Development

- ▶ Three-tiered approach
 - Organisational
 - ▶ address specific source of stress (eg. role ambiguity)
 - ▶ job design
 - ▶ selection and placement
 - Individual/organisational
 - ▶ Co-worker support
 - ▶ Participation
 - ▶ Autonomy
 - Individual
 - ▶ goal-setting, time-management
 - ▶ cognitive approaches
 - ▶ meditation, exercise

DeFrank & Cooper (1987)

Critical success factors

- ▶ Strong support from senior personnel
 - willingness to treat stress as a key management issue
- ▶ Accurate needs assessment and issue analysis
 - recognition of positives & negatives
 - broad-based participation
- ▶ Processes that engage & create joint ownership
 - capacity building
 - high-level communication that promotes two-way dialogue
- ▶ Multi-level interventions
 - although effectiveness ultimately hinges on extent to which interventions match needs
- ▶ Ongoing evaluation
 - process, impact and outcome
- ▶ Cyclical program design
 - Using prior experiences and new knowledge (internal & external) to guide future strategies
 - Adopting an organisational development approach

For further information

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