

Work related issues

On average we spend almost a quarter of our adult life at work. It can give us a sense of purpose, structure and satisfaction – and enables us to finance our daily living. Sometimes however, work can cause stress and frustration and our health and self-esteem suffers.

Work-related stress accounts for six million days of sick leave each year and can be a cause of despair. Work-related problems can also undermine our relationships. Sometimes, established earlier roles such as being overlooked or being a scapegoat can re-emerge in the workplace leaving us feeling powerless and doomed to failure as we succumb again, in a different setting. Sometimes such feelings are overwhelming and can limit us from realising our full potential.

Symptoms

Dread of going to work
Depression and /or anxiety
Poor work/life balance
Headaches or muscular tension
Feeling overwhelmed and unable to plan
Inability to sleep /loss of concentration
Bullying or being bullied

Often at work we re-enact earlier patterns and find ourselves locked in certain ways of behaving. The beliefs we hold about ourselves can put us under extreme pressure in the workplace. If we need to please others or to be perfect we may be susceptible to stress, and unable to protect ourselves in the face of deadlines and targets.

Relationships at work, organisational set-ups, change and work patterns can all play a part. We also often re-enact familiar patterns. If your father was a bully you may feel bullied by your male boss. If you felt second-best to your sister you may find yourself resenting a colleague. Such emerging patterns can be rewarding to examine and release us to be who we want to be.

When is the best time to seek help?

If you are losing sleep, constantly dreading work, starting to drink heavily or noticing repeating problem patterns it may be useful to seek help. These patterns can be useful to explore in the less intimate surroundings of work and can allow us to move forward more freely. These patterns and roles can then allow us to look less self-critically at our more personal relationships.

Help and Treatment

Employers have a legal responsibility to protect their workforce and usually take steps to deal with work stress. Talk to a manager or ask for help from your Occupational Health department.

Learning assertiveness skills, how to prioritise and delegate, and how to manage time are all useful for managing work-related stress. Some employers also offer in-house counselling services.

Counselling can help unravel patterns of relating to people, and show us how to examine our own issues, helping towards a more fulfilling career.

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Content written/edited by Denise Pickup BACP (Accred) in 2008. The content is for general information only and may or may not relate to your individual situation; please contact a professional directly to discuss this issue.