

Transforming Stress in the Workplace

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Stress is a wonderful opportunity in life. Stress is the challenge that makes our muscles grow, that triggers neural connections and sharpens our mind, that strengthens our emotional base.

In New Zealand, the coastal Pohutukawa tree grows incredibly strong branches against the prevailing westerly winds – a striking example of the potential offered by stress.

Yet, in the modern business environment, we are paying a high price for inadequately managed stress. In the US, the cost of job stress has been estimated at \$300 billion annually. In Australia, the cost of workers' compensation claims for stress-related conditions is estimated at over \$200 million every year. According to their National Health and Safety Commission, work-related stress accounts for the longest stretches of absenteeism.

Unmanaged workplace stress has been identified as causing accidents, absenteeism, employee turnover, diminished productivity and direct medical, legal and insurance costs.

Thus, it can be seen that unmanaged stress impacts the bottom line both ways, in terms of costs and in terms of reduced profits.

Managing stress is now thought to be one of the key skills for survival in an increasingly stressful business world. This skill falls into three categories:

1. Recovering from the physiological effects of stress
2. Dealing effectively with potential or newly-arising stress situations
3. Transforming the negative perception of stress situations into an attitude of embracing challenge for growth

The starting point is self-awareness. By cultivating self-awareness, one goes inward and becomes aware of conditioned reactions to situations. Then one can choose to respond in more positive or at least emotionally neutral ways – and most modern-day workplace stress is emotional.

Having a daily deep relaxation routine is essential, for recovering from stress and for increasing self-awareness. This can consist of morning stretches or Yoga, breathing techniques, meditation, or guided deep relaxation. A relaxing pre-sleep routine will help achieve naturally deep and recharging sleep.

These practices eventually give us a greater sense of control over our lives; offering the valuable insight of stress as a positive challenge rather than an energy-draining obstacle. This can miraculously turn around the atmosphere and culture in a workplace, bringing the business onto a new level of effectiveness and competitiveness.

Science of Life, in collaboration with **Pod Consulting Ltd**, has created a training programme that takes a workforce towards mastery over stress. This is done through time-tested and proven techniques as used by major corporations worldwide. Contact us on 0800 235 023 for further information or email info@ScienceOfLife.co.nz

Gerald Lopez is a partner of Science of Life. He is a Yoga and stress management consultant; who presents in an engaging, caring and very clear style. Gerald also practises as an Ayurvedic Medicine consultant, and is chairman of the Natural Health Council.