Work-Related Stress and Stress Management

Learning Objectives

AFTER READING THIS CHAPTER, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

- Define stress and describe the stress experience.

- Outline the stress process from stressors to consequences.

- Identify the different types of stressors in the workplace.

- Explain why a stressor might produce different stress levels in two people.

- Discuss the physiological, psychological, and behavioural effects of stress.

- Identify five ways to manage workplace stress.

Sylvia Noreen thought that working at a small hospital in Prince Edward Island would reduce the stress she had experienced as a nurse in Ontario for 17 years. Instead, she discovered that Stewart Memorial Hospital nurses in Tyne Valley also experience unacceptable stress levels due to budget cuts and staff shortages. "There can be a lot of demands made on you," says Noreen. "The workload can get quite strenuous at times." With no vacations during her first year at Stewart, Noreen's scheduled days off were precious time to recharge her batteries. Unfortunately, those moments were fewer than she had hoped. "We're faced with being called back on our days off," Noreen says. "It is trying at times."

Canadian nurses and other health care workers are feeling some of the highest levels of stress and burnout of any occupation across the country. With Montreal-area emergency rooms filled to 167 percent, nurses at St. Luc Hospital in Montreal recently walked out twice briefly to protest the work overload. "There is exhaustion and the inability of five to do the work of eight, or 12 to do the work of 20," said Jennie Skene, president of the Quebec nurses' union.

The problem isn't just overwork, say some nurses; it's the inability to achieve the minimum standards of professional care that nurses set for themselves. "Most people went into nursing because they care about the patient, and you can't give the care you want to give," complains a nurse in Ontario. "So I think that's the biggest thing why people get burnt out and don't care as much."

Amanda Coffin, shown here at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Charlottetown, just recently became a registered nurse, but is already feeling the stress of nurse shortages. *Jim Day, Charlottetown Guardian.*

Amanda Coffin, who graduated from nursing at the University of Prince Edward Island less than one year ago, has already discovered that her profession suffers stress from underfunding and nurse shortages. "It is going to get worse before it gets better is what I hear from other staff,'" says Coffin, who has witnessed two wards close at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Charlottetown where she works. "It's stressful because it was always constant moving of the patients."[1] ■

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Nursing is a stressful job that has both short- and long-term effects on employees in this profession. But work-related stress is becoming an epidemic in almost every occupation in Canada. According to a recent survey, 41 percent of Canadians experience more stress than almost any other country among the 15 OECD members in the study. A Conference Board of Canada survey reports a similar level of stress (46 percent) due to the challenges of balancing work and family demands, nearly double the rate reported a decade earlier (27 percent). Another study, sponsored by the Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation, reported that almost one-third of employees regularly have difficulty coping with the demands of their jobs.[2]

Chronic work-related stress is not just a Canadian affliction. Over half of American employees say they work under a great deal of stress. Japan's Institute of Life and Living reports that 68 percent of Japanese often feel worried and anxious, up from 37 percent a decade earlier. Nearly two-thirds of Australian employees say they are under extreme stress at work. An international study reported that people born after 1955 are up to three times as likely to experience stress-related disorders as were their grandparents. At the Escorts Heart Institute in Delhi, India, routine cardiac screenings indicate that most executives are in the advanced stages of stress. "Corporate India is finally waking up to the fact that a lot of human potential is being drained away because of stress and burnout," says Shekhar Bajaj, CEO of the Indian consumer electronics manufacturer Bajaj Electricals.[3]

In this chapter, we look at the dynamics of work-related stress and how to manage it. The chapter begins by describing the stress experience. Next, the causes and consequences of stress are examined, along with the factors that cause some people to experience stress when others do not. The final section of this chapter looks at ways to manage work-related stress from either an organizational or individual perspective.

WHAT IS STRESS?

stress
An individual's adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to the person's well-being.

Stress is an adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to a person's well-being.[4] As we shall see, stress is the person's reaction to a situation, not the situation itself. Moreover, we experience stress when something is perceived to interfere with our well-being, that is, with our innate drives and need fulfillment. Stress has both psychological and physiological dimensions. Psychologically, people perceive a situation and interpret it as challenging or threatening. This cognitive appraisal leads to a set of physiological responses, such as higher blood pressure, sweaty hands, and faster heart beat.

We often hear about stress as a negative consequence of modern living. People are stressed from overwork, job insecurity, information overload, and the increasing pace of life. These events produce *distress*—the degree of physiological, psychological, and behavioural deviation from healthy functioning.[5] There is also a positive side of stress, called *eustress*, that refers to the healthy, positive, constructive outcome of stressful events and the stress response. Eustress is the stress experience in moderation, enough to activate and motivate people so they can achieve goals, change their environments, and succeed in life's challenges.[6] In other words, we need some stress to survive. However, most research focuses on distress, because it is a significant concern in organizational settings. Employees frequently experience enough stress to hurt their job performance and increase their risk of mental and physical health problems. Consequently, our discussion will focus more on distress than on eustress.

General Adaptation Syndrome

The stress experience was first documented fifty years ago by Dr. Hans Selye, the Montreal-based pioneer in stress research.[7] Selye determined that people have a fairly consistent physiological response to stressful situations. This response, called the **general adaptation syndrome,** provides an automatic defence system to help us cope with environmental demands. Exhibit 7.1 illustrates the three stages of the general adaptation syndrome: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. The line in this exhibit shows the individual's energy and ability to cope with the stressful situation.
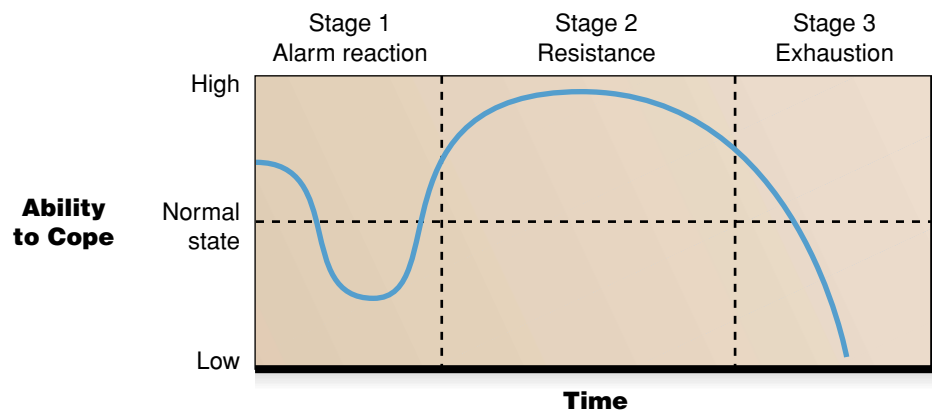
Alarm reaction In the alarm reaction stage, the perception of a threatening or challenging situation causes the brain to send a biochemical message to various parts of the body, resulting in an increased respiration rate, blood pressure, heartbeat, muscle tension, and other physiological responses. The individual's energy level and coping effectiveness initially decrease in response to the initial shock. Extreme shock, however, may result in incapacity or death because the body is unable to generate enough energy quickly enough. In most situations, the alarm reaction alerts the person to the environmental condition and prepares the body for the resistance stage.

Resistance A person's ability to cope with the environmental demand rises above a normal state during the resistance stage because the body has activated various biochemical, psychological, and behavioural mechanisms. For example, we have a higher than normal level of adrenaline during this stage, which gives the body more energy to overcome or remove the source of stress. However, our resistance is directed to only one or two environmental demands, so that we become more vulnerable to other sources of stress. This explains why people are more likely to catch a cold or other illness when they have been working under pressure.

Exhaustion People have a limited resistance capacity and, if the source of stress persists, they will eventually move into the exhaustion stage as this capacity diminishes. In most work situations, the general adaptation syndrome process

general adaptation syndrome

A model of the stress experience, consisting of three stages: alarm reaction, resistance, and exhaustion.

Selye's general adaptation syndrome

Source: Adapted from H. Selye, *The Stress of Life,* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956).

Intense bartering and the high stakes of a wrong decision take their toll on energy traders. Many wear out after just 10 years. "The money is so good, it's worth being obsessed and not taking vacations," says Robin Conner, a 30-year-old trader at Reliant Energy in Houston, where this photo was taken. "But it can wear you out." Axia Energy trader Ken Merideth has the same feelings. "I am so burned out at the end of the day, I don't even want to make a decision about what to eat for dinner," he admits.[9] Based on your knowledge of the general adaptation syndrome, why would these energy traders "wear out" after 10 years? *Copyright © Smiley N. Pool/The Houston Chronicle.*

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ends long before total exhaustion. Employees resolve tense situations before the destructive consequences of stress become manifest, or they withdraw from the stressful situation, rebuild their survival capabilities, and return later to the stressful environment with renewed energy. However, people who frequently experience the general adaptation syndrome have increased risk of long-term physiological and psychological damage.[8]

The general adaptation syndrome describes the stress experience, but this is only part of the picture. To effectively manage work-related stress, we must understand its causes and consequences as well as individual differences in the stress experience.

STRESSORS: THE CAUSES OF STRESS

Stressors, the causes of stress, include any environmental conditions that place a physical or emotional demand on the person.[10] There are numerous stressors in organizational settings and other life activities. Exhibit 7.2 lists the four main types of work-related stressors: interpersonal, role-related, task control, and organizational and physical environment stressors.

Interpersonal Stressors

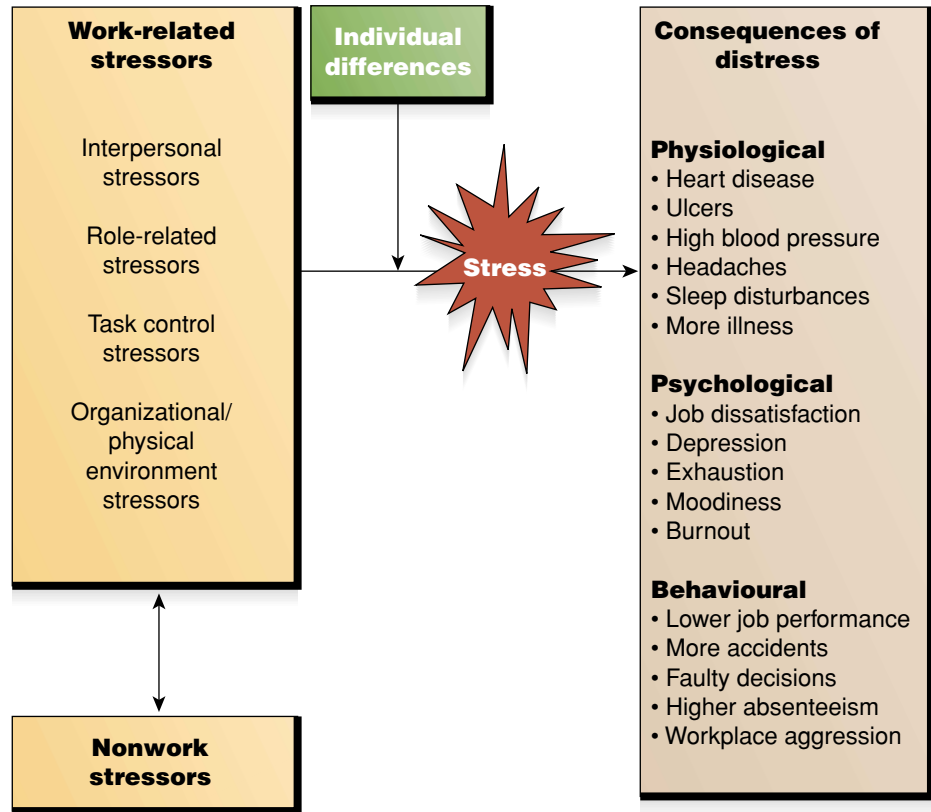Among the four types of stressors, interpersonal stressors are likely the most pervasive in the contemporary workplace. The trend toward teamwork generates interpersonal stressors because employees must interact more with co-workers. Bad bosses, office politics, and various types of interpersonal conflict also take their toll on employees. For example, one recent study found that employees immediately experienced stress from organizational politics events.[11] Other interpersonal stressors include sexual harassment, workplace violence, and bullying.

Sexual harassment   Nicole Curling's new job with Victoria Tea Company in Toronto was extremely stressful. The stress wasn't from long hours or difficult work; it was from her boss's persistent attempts to kiss and fondle her. The Ontario Human Rights Commission awarded Curling $40,000 in emotional distress damages, but the harassment and subsequent legal battle were overwhelming. "It's a gruelling, gruelling experience," she says.[12]

Nicole Curling has experienced the stress of **sexual harassment**—unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that detrimentally affects the work environment or leads to adverse job-related consequences for its victims. According to Statistics Canada, nearly one in every four Canadian women has been sexually harassed on the job, mostly by co-workers and supervisors. Sexual harassment includes situations where a person's employment or job performance is conditional on

stressors
The causes of stress, including any environmental conditions that place a physical or emotional demand on the person.

sexual harassment
Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that detrimentally affects the work environment or leads to adverse job-related consequences for its victims.

Work-related stressors	Individual differences	Consequences of distress
Interpersonal stressors		**Physiological** • Heart disease • Ulcers • High blood pressure • Headaches • Sleep disturbances • More illness
Role-related stressors	**Stress**	
Task control stressors		**Psychological** • Job dissatisfaction • Depression • Exhaustion • Moodiness • Burnout
Organizational/ physical environment stressors		**Behavioural** • Lower job performance • More accidents • Faulty decisions • Higher absenteeism • Workplace aggression
Nonwork stressors		

unwanted sexual relations (called *quid pro quo*). However, the Supreme Court of Canada and other legal decision makers have also concluded that sexual harassment occurs in a *hostile work environment*, that is, when sexual conduct (such as posting pornographic material) unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment. This leads to complications—and interpersonal stress—because men have a narrower interpretation than women do over what constitutes hostile work environment sexual harassment.[13]

Canadian corporate leaders increasingly recognize that sexual harassment (and other forms of harassment) is a serious concern. But harassment is more than a legal issue; it is a serious interpersonal stressor.[14] Victims of sexual harassment experience trauma from quid pro quo harassment and tense co-worker relations in a hostile work environment. Moreover, as Nicole Curling discovered, they are expected to endure more stress while these incidents are investigated. This is particularly true in Japan and other countries where women who complain of harassment are sometimes stigmatized by friends and co-workers. "Companies don't want to hire 'dangerous women' who make a fuss about sexual harassment," says Moeko Tanaka, the pen name of a Japanese woman who won a case of harassment against a prefecture governor.[15]

Workplace violence   The most serious interpersonal stressor is the rising wave of physical violence in the workplace.[16] We immediately think about the United

States, where 1,000 employees are murdered on the job each year and 2 million others experience lesser forms of violence.[17] But the International Labour Organization reports that Canadian employees are more at risk with the fourth highest incidence of workplace assault and sexual harassment among the 32 countries studied. The report discovered that one percent of American women were assaulted in the workplace, compared with four percent of Canadian women. Canadian men had a slightly higher incidence of workplace assault than their U.S. counterparts. One recent study reported that almost all emergency department staff at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver have experienced physical assault, 55 percent of them within the past year. Almost one-third of these employees said they experienced extreme stress as a result of the incident.[18]

Employees who experience violence usually have symptoms of severe distress after the traumatic event.[19] A recent Canadian study reported that both workplace violence and sexual harassment generate emotions of fear and anxiety. It is not uncommon for primary victims to take long-term disability. Some never return to work. Workplace violence is also a stressor to those who observe the violence. After a serious workplace incident, counsellors assist many employees, not just the direct victims. Even employees who have not directly experienced or observed violence may show signs of stress if they work in high-risk jobs.

Workplace bullying   Susan Morgan had a relatively trouble-free job as beverage room manager at the Marine Pub in Coquitlam, B.C., until the pub owners hired a new kitchen manager, Gus Mellios. Over the next two years, Morgan and other staff experienced frequent verbal abuse from Mellios, including rudeness, yelling, and swearing whenever food was returned. The owners knew about these tirades, but were either silent or sided with Mellios. Morgan quit, sued the owners, and eventually won her case.[20]

Canadian courts have reinforced the view that employers have an obligation to treat employees with civility, decency, respect, and dignity. In other words, Canadians have a right to a workplace free of bullying. **Workplace bullying** refers to offensive, intimidating, or humiliating behaviour that degrades, ridicules, or insults another person at work.[21] Research indicates that most victims experience stress and its consequences following incidents of bullying. They also have more absenteeism and, back on the job, have impaired decision making, lower work performance, and more work errors.[22]

A recent Canadian study found that 12 percent of the public and service sector employees surveyed experienced workplace incivility, including rude behaviour, name-calling, and yelling. Five percent of hospital workers in Finland and 40 percent of federal court employees in Michigan say they have experienced bullying. People with higher authority are more likely to engage in bullying or incivility toward employees in lower positions. Women are more likely than men to be targets of bullying.[23] Bullying has become enough of a concern that Scandinavian countries have passed laws against it.

Some organizations have also taken steps to minimize the incidence of incivility. For example, Quaker Oats explicitly advises in its code of conduct that employees must treat each other with consideration, respect, and dignity. Past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour, so companies should carefully screen applicants in terms of past incidents. Feedback, particularly the 360-degree variety (see Chapter 5), lets employees know when their behaviour is out of line. Last, organizations should have a grievance, mediation, or other conflict

workplace bullying
Offensive, intimidating, or humiliating behaviour that degrades, ridicules, or insults another person at work.

resolution process that employees trust when they become victims of workplace bullying.[24]

Role-Related Stressors

Role-related stressors include conditions where employees have difficulty understanding, reconciling, or performing the various roles in their lives. Three types of role-related stressors are role conflict, role ambiguity, and work intensification. **Role conflict** refers to the degree of incongruity or incompatibility of expectations associated with the person's role.[25] Some people experience stress when they have two roles that conflict with each other (called *interrole conflict*). The nurses described in the opening story to this chapter experience interrole conflict because they struggle to maintain humanistic caring and preserve the nurse-patient relationship in a cost-efficient managed care environment controlled by others.[26] Role conflict also occurs when an employee receives contradictory messages from different people about how to perform a task (called *intrarole conflict*) or work with organizational values and work obligations that are incompatible with his or her personal values (called *person-role conflict*).[27]

Role ambiguity refers to the lack of clarity and predictability of the outcomes of one's behaviour. Role ambiguity produces low role perceptions, which we learned in Chapter 2 has a direct effect on job performance. It is also a source of stress in a variety of situations, such as joining an organization or working in a new joint venture, because task and social expectations are uncertain.[28]

Work overload   A third role-related stressor is *work overload*—working more hours and more intensely during those hours. In 1930, noted economist John Maynard Keynes predicted that by 2030 the average employee would be working a 15-hour work week. At the time, Kellogg's, the American cereal company, had switched from eight-hour to six-hour work shifts in order to employ more people during the Depression and give employees more time off.[29] But Keynes' prediction is a far cry from the number of hours employees work today. Although official paid work hours are lower than the early 1900s, total work hours have moved consistently upward over the past 20 years.

Equally significant, Canadians are working more *unofficial* hours beyond their paid hours of work. According to a recent Ipsos-Reid poll, 81 percent of white-collar employees in Canada accept business calls at home, 65 percent check their work e-mail after hours, and 59 percent check their work voice-mail after hours. A recent survey of 31,500 Canadians revealed that nearly one-quarter of employees work more than 50 hours per week, compared with only 10 percent a decade ago.[30] Some writers claim this rising workload is due to the pressure from globalization for more efficiency, and from employees' own desire to keep up with the Jones' in wealth and consumption. Whatever the cause, it has produced higher stress levels.[31] As GLOBAL Connections 7.1 describes, work overload is such a problem in Japan that death from overwork has its own name—*karoshi*.

Task-Control Stressors

One of the most important findings emerging from stress research is that employees are more stressed when they lack control over how and when they perform their tasks as well as over the pace of work activity.[32] Work is potentially more stressful

role conflict
Conflict that occurs when people face competing demands.

role ambiguity
Uncertainty about job duties, performance expectations, level of authority, and other job conditions.

Karoshi: Death by Overwork in Japan

Nobuo Miuro was under a lot of pressure from his employer to get a new restaurant ready for its launch. The interiors fitter from Tokyo worked late, sometimes until 4:30 in the morning. After one such marathon, Miuro caught a few hours of sleep, then returned for another long day. But he didn't get very far. The 47-year old suddenly took ill and keeled over while picking up his hammer and nails. He died a week later. The coroner's verdict was that Miuro died of "*karoshi*"— death by overwork.

Karoshi accounts for nearly 10,000 deaths each year in Japan. Japan's Ministry of Health found that employees worked an average of 80 hours per week for the six months prior to karoshi, rising to 100 hours per week during the last month. Research indicates that these long work hours cause an unhealthy lifestyle, such as smoking, poor eating habits, lack of physical exercise, and sleeplessness. This results in weight gain which, along with stressful working conditions, damages the cardiovascular system and leads to strokes and heart attacks.

Karoshi came to the public spotlight in the 1970s when Japan's economy was booming, but the country's current recession is making matters worse. Companies are laying off employees and loading the extra work onto those who remain. Performance-based expectations are replacing lifetime employment guarantees, putting further pressure on employees to work long hours. Many also blame Japan's "samurai spirit" culture, which idolizes long work hours as the ultimate symbol of company loyalty and personal fortitude. "Being exhausted is considered a virtue," explains a Japanese psychiatrist.

So far, only 17 percent of Japanese firms offer overstressed employees some form of counselling. However, the Japanese government has launched an advertising campaign encouraging people to call a "karoshi hotline" for anonymous help. The families of deceased workaholics, including Nobuo Miuro's relatives, are also taking action by suing the employers for lack of due care.

Sources: Y. Liu, "Overtime Work, Insufficient Sleep, and Risk of Non-Fatal Acute Myocardial Infarction in Japanese Men," *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 59 (July 2002), pp. 447–51; D. Ibison, "Overwork Kills record Number of Japanese," *Financial Times*, May 29, 2002, p. 12; "Trend of Caring for Employees Waning among Japan's Companies," *Japan Weekly Monitor*, May 14, 2001; C. Fukushi, "Workplace Stress Taking Toll on Women's Health," *Daily Yomiuri*, April 21, 2001; S. Efron, "Jobs Take a Deadly Toll on Japanese," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 2000, p. A1; M. Millett, "Death Of A Salaryman," *The Age (Melbourne)*, April 11, 2000, p. 15; E. Addley and L. Barton, "Who Said Hard Work Never Hurt Anybody?" *The Guardian (UK)*, March 13, 2001.

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when it is paced by a machine, involves monitoring equipment, or the work schedule is controlled by someone else. A recent Statistics Canada study of 12,000 Canadians reported that employees in production, sales, and service jobs have higher psychological stress because of their lack of work control.[33]

Organizational and Physical Environment Stressors

Organizational and physical environment stressors come in many forms. Organizations create stress by altering the psychological contract (see Chapter 4), reducing job security, and restructuring and downsizing employment. "When you announce downsizing, you immediately get higher levels of stress, tension and aggression," says Gerry Smith, vice-president of organizational health for Warren Shepell Consultants in Vancouver. "You find more interpersonal conflicts at work between employees and management and there's a reduction in services and friendliness to customers and clients."[34]

Some stressors are found in the physical work environment, such as excessive noise, poor lighting, and safety hazards. For example, a study of textile workers in a noisy plant found that their levels of stress measurably decreased when supplied with ear protectors. Another study reported that clerical employees experience significantly higher stress levels in noisy open offices than in quiet areas.[35] People

working in dangerous work environments also experience potentially higher stress levels.

Work–Nonwork Stressors

The stress model shown earlier in Exhibit 7.2 has a two-way arrow, indicating that stressors from work spill over into nonwork and vice versa. There are three types of these work–nonwork stressors: time-based, strain-based, and role-based conflict.[37]

Time-based conflict   Jennifer Kelly knows all about the stress of trying to balance time at work with family. The graphic designer works 52 hours a week, sleeps about six hours a night and, in her words, is "frazzled and tired." With clients all over the world, Kelly has a 24/7 schedule, leaving little time for family. "When I'm with them (the kids), I'm so tired sometimes that I can't take them anywhere or do anything fun," admits Kelly.[38]

Jennifer Kelly has to contend with *time-based conflict*—the challenge of balancing the time demanded by work with family and other nonwork activities. This stressor is particularly noticeable in employees who hold strong family values and weakest in people whose values emphasize a work-life imbalance.[39] Time-based conflict relates back to the work overload stressor described earlier. As Canadians work longer hours (and more intensely during those hours), they have little time or energy left for themselves and family. For instance, a Conference Board of Canada study reported that 46 percent of employees reported moderate to high stress due to work-life conflict, compared to 27 percent in a survey a decade earlier.[40]

Inflexible work schedules, business travel, and rotating shift schedules also take a heavy toll because they prevent employees from effectively juggling work and nonwork.[41] Time-based conflict is more acute for women than for men because housework and childcare represent a "second shift" for many women in dual career families.[42] Until men increase their contribution to homemaking and business learns to accommodate the new social order, many of these "supermoms" will continue to experience superstress.

Ken Wiley, a faller in the Queen Charlotte Islands, knows that logging is a risky business. Wiley got badly cut when his saw kicked back on him, and broke his cheekbone when hit by a falling tree. Both his father and grandfather died in logging accidents, and this photo shows him wearing a hockey jersey worn by a fellow logger killed recently. Safety experts say the death toll could get worse because organizational change and uncertainty are creating more stress. "There is job loss and a complete change in the way companies do business," says Cary White, a safety officer with the B. C. Workers' Compensation Board. "[T]hat is a major contributing factor in accidents . . . the person has so many things on their mind they had difficulty concentrating on the job."[36] What can forest products companies do to minimize deaths and injuries due to organizational stressors? *Mark van Manen/Vancouver Sun*

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Strain-based conflict   *Strain-based conflict* occurs when stress from one domain spills over into the other. Relationship problems, financial difficulties, and loss of a loved one usually top the list of nonwork stressors. New responsibilities, such as marriage, birth of a child, and a mortgage are also stressful to most of us. Stress at work also spills over to an employee's personal life and often becomes

the foundation of stressful relations with family and friends. In support of this, one study found that fathers who experience stress at work engage in dysfunctional parenting behaviours which then lead to their children having behaviour problems in school.[43]
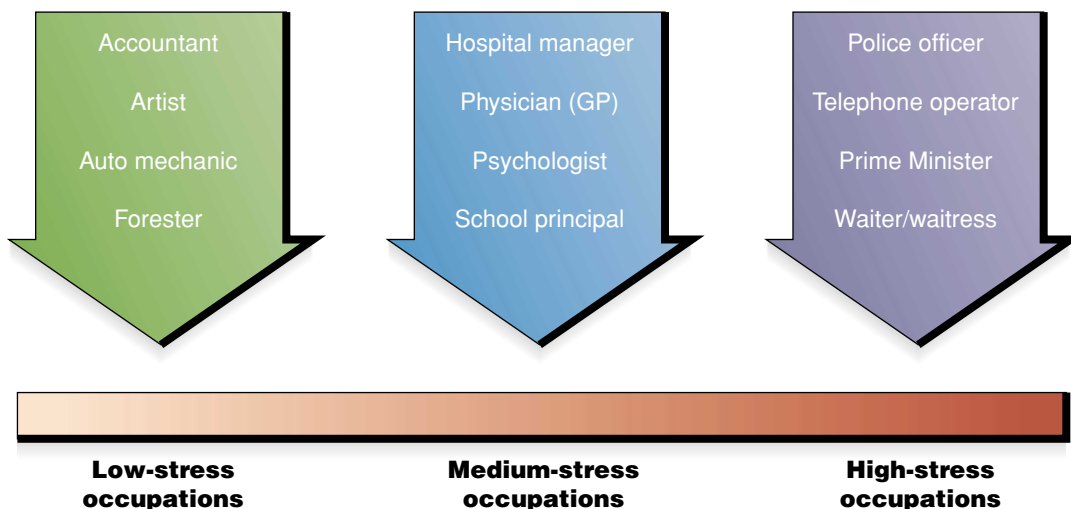
Role behaviour conflict   A third work–nonwork stressor, called *role behaviour conflict*, occurs when people are expected to enact different work and nonwork roles. People who act logically and impersonally at work have difficulty switching to a more compassionate behavioural style in their personal lives. For example, one study found that police officers were unable to shake off their professional role when they left the job. This was confirmed by their spouses, who reported that the officers would handle their children in the same manner as they would people in their job.[44]

Stress and Occupations

Several studies have tried to identify which jobs have more stressors than others.[45] These lists are not in complete agreement, but Exhibit 7.3 identifies a representative sample of jobs and their relative level of stressors. You should view this information with some caution, however. One problem with rating occupations in terms of their stress levels is that a particular occupation may have considerably different tasks and job environments across organizations and societies. A police officer's job may be less stressful in a small town, for instance, than in a large city where crime rates are higher and the organizational hierarchy more formal.

Another important point to remember when looking at Exhibit 7.3 is that a major stressor to one person is insignificant to another. In this respect, we must be careful not to conclude that people in high-stressor occupations actually experience higher stress than people in other occupations. Some jobs expose people to more serious stressors, but careful selection and training can result in stress levels no different from those experienced by people in other jobs. The next section discusses individual differences in stress.

EXHIBIT 7.3   Stressors in occupations

Low-stress occupations	Medium-stress occupations	High-stress occupations
Accountant	Hospital manager	Police officer
Artist	Physician (GP)	Telephone operator
Auto mechanic	Psychologist	Prime Minister
Forester	School principal	Waiter/waitress

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN STRESS

Exhibit 7.2, shown earlier in this chapter, indicated that individual characteristics moderate the extent to which people experience stress or exhibit a specific stress outcome in a given situation. Two people may be exposed to the same stressor, such as having too many deadlines, yet they experience different stress levels or stress symptoms.[46]

People exposed to the same stressors might have different stress symptoms for three reasons. First, each of us perceives the same situation differently. People with high self-efficacy, for instance, are less likely to experience stress consequences in that situation because the stressor is less threatening.[47] Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief that he or she has the ability, motivation, and situational factors to complete a task successfully (see Chapter 3). Similarly, some people have personalities that make them more optimistic, whereas others are more pessimistic (see Chapter 4). Those with pessimistic dispositions tend to develop more stress symptoms, probably because they interpret the situation in a negative light.[48]

A second reason why some people have more stress symptoms than others in the same situation is that people have different threshold levels of resistance to a stressor. Younger employees generally experience fewer and less severe stress symptoms than older employees because they have a larger store of energy to cope with high stress levels. This explains why exercise and healthy lifestyles are discussed later in this chapter as ways to manage stress. As we shall learn later, people who exercise regularly and have healthy lifestyles (e.g., diet, sleep) are also less likely to experience negative stress outcomes.

A third reason why people may experience the same level of stress and yet exhibit different stress outcomes is that they use different coping strategies.[49] Some employees tend to ignore the stressor, hoping it will go away. This is usually an ineffective approach, which would explain why they experience higher stress levels. There is some evidence (although still inconclusive) that women cope with stress better than men. Specifically, women are more likely to seek emotional support from others in stressful situations, whereas men try to change the stressor or use less effective coping mechanisms.[50] However, we must remember that this is not true for all women or men.

Work Stress and Type A/Type B Behaviour Pattern

For several years, scholars proposed that people with a **Type B behaviour pattern** experience less stress in the same situation than people with a **Type A behaviour pattern**. Type A people are hard-driving, competitive individuals with a strong sense of time urgency. They tend to be impatient, lose their temper, talk rapidly, and interrupt others during conversations.[51] In contrast, Type B people are less competitive and less concerned about time limitations. They tend to work steadily, take a relaxed approach to life, and be even-tempered. Although scholars are now less convinced about the importance of Type A/Type B behaviour pattern in understanding work-related stress, some research continues to report that Type A people experience higher job stress.[52]

Work Stress and Workaholism

More than 30 years after the term was coined, workaholism has gained attention in the literature on stress and other topics. Scholars are still debating the precise

type A behaviour pattern
A behaviour pattern associated with people having premature coronary heart disease; type As tend to be impatient, lose their temper, talk rapidly, and interrupt others.

type B behavior puattern
A behaviour pattern of people with low risk of coronary heart disease; type Bs tend to work steadily, take a relaxed approach to life, and be even-tempered.

How Workaholic are Canadians?

Staring out from the cover of *Confessions of a Street Addict*, James Cramer looks like a dangerous man. In fact, he admits that he was an addict. "I had many of the problems you see in addicts—they can't stay away, they need more and more, they love the adrenaline and then it takes control of their lives," says Cramer.

James Cramer's "street" is Wall Street and his addiction is to his work. The cofounder of TheStreet.com and Smart Money magazine is a repentant workaholic who had the symptoms that scholars have associated with this affliction. He was obsessed with market trades, became a tyrant in the office whenever a stock went south, and lost touch with his family. Even casual gatherings were evaluated by whether they added value to his work. "You might get together with me for a drink and I would be thinking 'Why am I wasting my time?'" Cramer recalls.

How many Canadians are as workaholic as James Cramer? The question is difficult to answer because of disagreement among scholars regarding definition and measurement of workaholism. According to a recent Statistics Canada study, 27 percent of adult Canadians say they are workaholics. Men and women about equally identify themselves as workaholics. Not surprisingly, over half of employees working more than 60 hours per week consider themselves workaholics. Those who report being workaholics in the Statistics Canada study worry more, experience more stress, and are less happy with life (although they also say they enjoy their jobs).

The Statistics Canada study relies on a single item self-report, so probably overestimates the number of traditional workaholics in this country. A potentially better estimate comes from a study by Professor Ron Burke at York University of over 500 MBA alumni. Relying on academic conceptualization and measurement, Burke was able to group respondents into the three types of workaholism. The study found that 16 percent of the MBA alumni surveyed are traditional workaholics, 19 percent are enthusiastic workaholics, and 14 percent are work enthusiasts.

Sources: A, Kemeny, "Driven to Excel: A Portrait of Canada's Workaholics," *Canadian Social Trends*, Spring 2002, pp. 2–7; J. J. Cramer, *Confessions of a Street Addict* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002); J. Langton, "Wall Street Made me a Monster," *Evening Standard*, May 27, 2002; R. J. Burke, "Workaholism among Women Managers: Personal and Workplace Correlates," *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 15 (2000), pp. 520–34; R. J. Burke, "Workaholism and Extra-work Satisfactions," *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 7 (1999), pp. 352–64.
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workaholic
A person who is highly involved in work, feels compelled to work, and has a low enjoyment of work.

definition, but they generally agree that there are several components of workaholism and different types of workaholics. One type of **workaholic** fits the classic definition, namely, a person who is highly involved in work, feels compelled or driven to work because of inner pressures, and has low enjoyment at work. These stereotypic workaholics exhibit compulsive behaviour and are preoccupied with work, often to the exclusion and detriment of their health, intimate relationships, and participation in child rearing.[53]

Along with stereotypic workaholics, the academic literature identifies two other workaholic types: *enthusiastic workaholics* and *work enthusiasts*. Enthusiastic workaholics have high levels of all three components—high work involvement, drive to succeed, and work enjoyment. Work enthusiasts have high work involvement and work enjoyment, but low drive to succeed.[54] Connections 7.2 describes two estimates of the degree of workaholism in Canada.

Workaholism is relevant to our discussion of stress because traditional workaholics tend to have more prone to stress and burnout. Research has found that stereotypic workaholics tend to have a Type A behaviour pattern. They have significantly higher scores on depression, anxiety, and anger than do nonworkaholics, as well as lower job and career satisfaction. Workaholics of both sexes report more health complaints than do work enthusiasts.[55] There is still some debate whether the other forms of workaholism—enthusiastic workaholics and work enthusiasts—are good or bad for the individual and organization.

CONSEQUENCES OF DISTRESS

The general adaptation syndrome introduced at the beginning of this chapter describes how chronic stress diminishes the individual's resistance, resulting in adverse consequences for both the employee and the organization. Let's look at the main physiological, psychological, and behavioural consequences.

Physiological Consequences

Stress takes its toll on the human body.[56] Studies have found that medical students who are anxious about their exams are more susceptible to colds and other illnesses. Many people experience tension headaches due to stress. Others get muscle pain and related back problems. These physiological ailments are attributed to muscle contractions that occur when people are exposed to stressors.

Cardiovascular disease is one of the most disturbing effects of stress in modern society.[57] Strokes and heart attacks, rare a century ago, are now one of the leading causes of death among Canadian adults. Stress also influences hypertension (high blood pressure). Hypertension has decreased in recent years due to better lifestyle and medical treatment, but it remains one of the top ailments in older Canadians.[58]

Medical researchers believe that the long-term effect of stress on heart disease goes something like this: Whenever people are stressed, their blood pressure goes up and down. That frequent pressure causes injury to the blood vessel walls, which eventually makes them constrict and function abnormally. Over time, this leads to heart disease. Unfortunately, we often can't tell when we are physiologically stressed. For example, researchers have found that people think they are in a low-stress state when, in fact, their palms are sweating and their blood pressure has increased.[59]

job burnout
The process of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment resulting from prolonged exposure to stress.

Psychological Consequences

Stress produces various psychological consequences, including job satisfaction, moodiness, and depression.[60] Emotional fatigue is another psychological consequence of stress and is related to job burnout.

Job burnout **Job burnout** refers to the process of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy (lower feelings of personal accomplishment) resulting from prolonged exposure to stress.[61] The phrase "job burnout" didn't exist 40 years ago; now it's heard in everyday conversations. Job burnout is a complex process that includes the dynamics of stress, coping strategies, and stress consequences. Burnout is caused by excessive demands made on people who serve or frequently interact with others. In other words, burnout is mainly due to interpersonal and role-related stressors.[62] For this reason, it is most common in helping occupations (e.g., nurses, teachers, police officers).

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www.glasbergen.com

"It's a smoke detector. The boss thinks I might be headed for a burnout."

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Interpersonal and         │
│   role-related stressors    │
└─────────────────────────────┘
            │ │ │
            ▼ ▼ ▼
┌─────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Emotional exhaustion      │───────▶│                         │
└─────────────────────────────┘        │                         │
            │                          │   Physiological,        │
            ▼                          │   psychological,        │
┌─────────────────────────────┐        │   and behavioural       │
│         Cynicism            │───────▶│   consequences          │
└─────────────────────────────┘        │                         │
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│     Reduced efficacy        │───────▶│                         │
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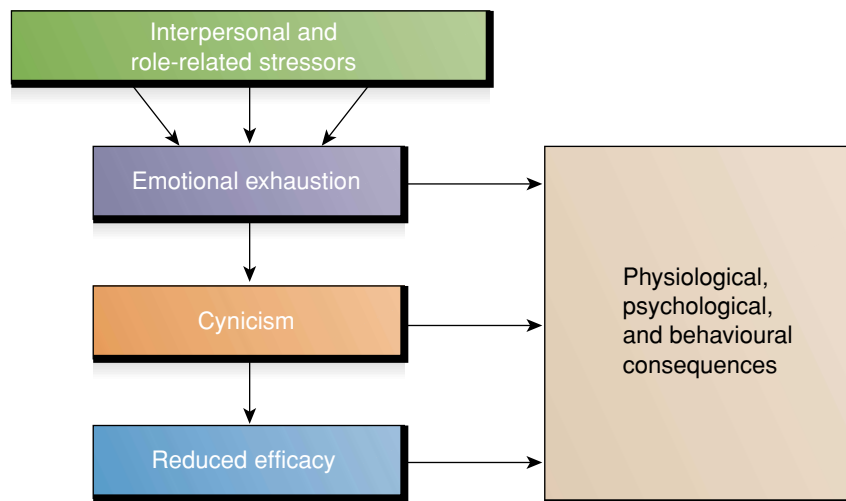
Exhibit 7.4 diagrams the relationship among the three components of job burnout. *Emotional exhaustion* is the first stage and plays a central role in the burnout process.[63] It is characterized by a lack of energy, tiredness, and a feeling that one's emotional resources are depleted. Emotional exhaustion is sometimes called *compassion fatigue* because the employee no longer feels able to give as much support and caring to clients.

Cynicism (also called *depersonalization*) follows emotional exhaustion and is identified by an indifferent attitude toward work and treating others as objects rather than people. Burned-out employees become emotionally detached from clients and cynical about the organization. This detachment goes to the point of callousness, far beyond the level of detachment normally required in helping occupations. Cynicism is also apparent when employees follow rules and regulations strictly rather than try to understand the client's needs and search for a mutually acceptable solution.

Reduced professional efficacy (also called *reduced personal accomplishment)*, the final component of job burnout, refers to feelings of diminished confidence in one's ability to perform the job well. In other words, a person's self-efficacy declines (see Chapter 3). In these situations, employees develop a sense of learned helplessness because they no longer believe that their efforts make a difference. The model shows that cynicism tends to cause reduced professional efficacy, although some experts now think lower professional efficacy and cynicism occur at the same time as a result of emotional exhaustion.[64]

Behavioural Consequences

When stress becomes distress, job performance falls and workplace accidents are more common. High stress levels impair our ability to remember information, make effective decisions, and take appropriate action.[65] You have probably experienced this in an exam or emergency work situation. You forget important information, make mistakes, and otherwise "draw a blank" under intense pressure.

Overstressed employees also tend to have higher levels of absenteeism. One reason is that stress makes people sick. The other reason is that absenteeism is a coping mechanism. At a basic level, we react to stress through fight or flight. Absenteeism is a form of flight—temporarily withdrawing from the stressful situation so that we have an opportunity to reenergize. Companies may try to minimize absenteeism, but it sometimes helps employees avoid the exhaustion stage of the stress experience (see Exhibit 7.1 earlier in this chapter).[66]

Workplace aggression Workplace aggression is more than the serious interpersonal stressor described earlier. It is also an increasingly worrisome consequence of stress.[67] Aggression represents the "fight" (instead of flight) reaction to stress. In its mildest form, employees engage in verbal conflict. They "fly off the handle" and are less likely to empathize with co-workers. Occasionally, the combination of an individual's background and workplace stressors escalate this conflict into more dangerous levels of workplace hostility.

Co-worker aggression represents a relatively small proportion of workplace violence, but these behaviours are neither random nor inconsequential. Like most forms of organizational behaviour, co-worker aggression is caused by both the person and the situation.[68] While certain individuals are more likely to be aggressive, we must also remember that employee aggression is also a consequence of extreme stress.[69] In particular, employees are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour if they believe they have been treated unfairly, experience other forms of frustration beyond their personal control, and work in physical environments that are stressful (e.g., hot, noisy).

MANAGING WORK-RELATED STRESS

A few years ago, Mary Parniak was under a lot of pressure. The Baxter Corp. executive in Mississauga, Ontario, was involved in a messy corporate audit, faced a number of critical decisions involving ethical dilemmas, and was trying to adjust to a new boss. "I was on the brink of a stress-induced burnout," recalls Parniak. "I began to behave in ways that weren't normal for me, things like crying on the job or feeling that if one more person walked into my office I was going to scream." Fortunately, a colleague recognized the symptoms and urged Parniak to get some help before it was too late. Working with an industrial psychologist once a week for several months, Parniak learned to maintain a better balance in her life.[70]

Mary Parniak was fortunate. She was able to manage her stress before matters got worse. Unfortunately, many of us deny the existence of our stress until it is too late. This avoidance strategy creates a vicious cycle because the failure to cope with stress becomes another stressor on top of the one that created the stress in the first place. The solution is to discover the toolkit of effective stress management strategies identified in Exhibit 7.5, and to determine which ones are best for the situation.[71] As we look at each approach, keep in mind that both the organization and employees share joint responsibility for effective stress management. Moreover, managing stress often includes more than one of these strategies.

Remove the Stressor

From this list of stress management strategies, some writers argue that the *only* way companies can effectively manage stress is by removing the stressors that

EXHIBIT 7.5

Stress management
strategies
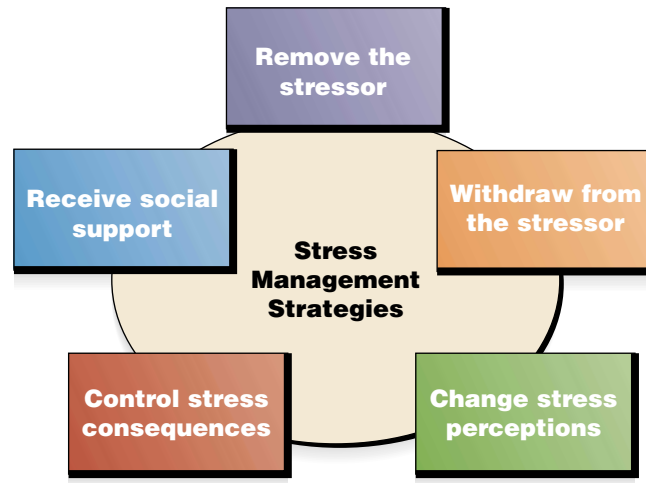
cause unnecessary tension and job burnout. Other stress management strategies may keep employees "stress-fit," but they don't solve the fundamental causes of stress.[72]

One way for organizations to manage stress is to investigate the main causes of stress in their workplace. Good Hope Hospital in the UK conducted such an audit by asking staff to complete confidential questionnaires to identify when and how they experience stress.[73] Another recommendation is to change the corporate culture and reward systems so they support a work–life balance and no longer reinforce dysfunctional workaholism. More generally, research has found that one of the most powerful ways to remove workplace stressors is to empower employees so that they have more control over their work and work environment (see Chapter 6).[74] Role-related stressors can be minimized by selecting and assigning employees to positions that match their competencies. Noise and safety risks are stressful, so improving these conditions would also go a long way to minimize stress in the workplace. Workplace bullying can be minimized through clear guidelines of behaviour and feedback for those who violate those standards.

Employees can also take an active role in removing stressors. If stress is due to ambiguous role expectations, for example, we might seek out more information from others to clarify these expectations. If a particular piece of work is too challenging, we might break it into smaller sets of tasks so that the overall project is less threatening or wearing. We can also minimize workplace violence by learning to identify early warning signs of aggression in customers and co-workers and by developing interpersonal skills that dissipate aggression.

Family-friendly and work–life initiatives   Given the high levels of work–life conflict in Canada that we read about earlier, you would think that organizations around the country are scrambling to create a family-friendly workplace that aims to improve work–life balance. Not so, according to a recent study of 31,500 Canadians, which concluded that work schedules may have deteriorated over the past decade. Many companies claim to offer a work–life balance, yet Canadians are working more hours than ever and some employees complain that much of the rhetoric doesn't match corporate practices.[75] Five of the most common work–life balance initiatives

As a new mom, Jennifer Hong (right) was eager to spend some time with her baby Kayln, so she half-jokingly asked her friend Beatrice Gautier (left) what she thought of sharing her job at Ceridian Canada Ltd. Gautier jumped at the opportunity. "It's something I'd wanted to do for years and I'd been looking for the ideal partner," says Gauthier. Today, Hong and Gautier share the same office and job, each working two or three days of the week. Both say job sharing has reduced stress and improved their lives. "In effect [Ceridian was] getting two highly skilled and motivated people for the price of one, so it was a win all round, for us, for the company and for our clients," says Hong.[77] What other activities would encourage employees at Ceridian Canada to balance their work with nonwork? *Mark van Manen/Vancouver Sun.*

www.ceridian.ca

are flexible work time, job sharing, telecommuting, personal leave, and childcare facilities.[76]

■ *Flexible work time*—Some firms are flexible about the hours, days, and amount of time employees want to work. For example, Kraft Canada's work–life program gives employees the freedom to rearrange their work schedule to accommodate family events, from attending their kids' sports activities to caring for elderly parents.[78]

■ *Job sharing*—Job sharing splits a career position between two people so they experience less time-based stress between work and family. They typically work different parts of the week with some overlapping work time in the weekly schedule to coordinate activities.[79]

■ *Telecommuting*—Chapter 1 described the increasing number of employees telecommuting. This reduces the time and stress of commuting to work and makes it easier to fulfill family obligations, such as temporarily leaving the home-office to pick the kids up from school. Research suggests that telecommuters experience a healthier work–life balance.[80] However, telecommuting may increase stress for those who crave social interaction. It also isn't a solution for child care.

■ *Personal leave programs*—Employers with strong work–life values offer extended maternity, paternity, and personal leaves to care for a new family or take advantage of a personal experience. Governments across Canada offer paid maternity leave. Increasingly, employees require personal leave to care for elderly parents who need assistance.

■ *Childcare support*—On-site child care centres have existed since World War II, when women worked in war factories. In 1964, Toronto's Riverdale Hospital became one of the first organizations in the postwar era to have a child care centre. Soon after opening the centre, the number of female applicants jumped 40 percent and absenteeism dropped significantly. Today, child care facilities are found at the National Bank of Canada, Husky Injection Molding Systems, and many other companies.[81]

Withdraw from the Stressor

Removing the stressor may be the ideal solution, but it is often not feasible. An alternative strategy is to permanently or temporarily remove employees from the stressor. Permanent withdrawal occurs when employees are transferred to jobs that better fit their competencies and values.

Temporary withdrawal strategies   Temporarily withdrawing from stressors is the most frequent way employees manage stress. Nortel Networks has a relaxation

Keep the Stress-Busting Siesta in Modern Spain

Maria Jose Mateo is defying a force that has ruled Spain for centuries. The 29-year-old bank employee is trying to stay awake during the afternoon. She and many other Spaniards are giving up their siesta—a two or three-hour mid-afternoon break when employees head home for a hot meal, followed by a restful nap.

Customers in other European countries increasingly expect Spanish employees to answer the telephone throughout the day. Companies are also discouraging these long breaks to increase productivity. TotalFina, the French oil company, gives its Spanish managers and salespeople coupons for nearby fast-food outlets—a hint that they should have a power lunch, not a power nap. Commuting is also killing siestas. Employees don't have time to commute twice each day through traffic-clogged Madrid and Barcelona.

Ironically, the siesta is disappearing just when people in other countries are discovering the health benefits of a midday power nap. American studies report that the nervous system needs a long break at night and a shorter one somewhere between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. in the afternoon. A smattering of American firms, such as Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, have established napping policies. Kodak, PepsiCo, IBM, and Pizza Hut offer courses teaching employees how to take power naps at work. Deloitte Consulting has gone as far as setting up nap rooms.

Fede Busquet, a former tanning-salon owner, may have found a solution to Spain's siesta dilemma. Busquet realized that Spaniards still need their siesta when he noticed rows of parked cars along Barcelona's streets with men sleeping inside around midday. He thought these people might prefer a more comfortable place for a power nap near their office.

Busquet set up two dozen parlours where, for 1,000 pesetas (US $7), customers get a 10-minute massage in an ergonomic chair, then an hour in that same chair

Masseurs Remco Rafina, left, and Eva Pacheco give two people a special siesta massage in a newly opened massage parlor in Madrid. For $7.6 Euros (CDN $12) customers get a 10-minute massage in an ergonomic chair, then an hour in that same chair to sleep or rest. Those in a hurry can stay half as long for half the price. *AP Photo/Paul White*

to sleep or rest. Those in a hurry can stay half as long for half the price. Business is booming. It seems that Spaniards still need their midday siesta, but something quicker and closer to the office.

Sources: L. Stevens, "Believers in the Midday Doze are Stripping Away Stigma of Siestas," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, March 24, 2001; R. Hogan, "A Daytime Nap Could Make You More Productive," *Los Angeles Times,* January 15, 2001; S. M. Handelsblatt, "Stressed Out and Stranded in Barcelona?" *Wall Street Journal Europe*, August 4, 2000, p. 32; R. Boudreaux, "Spaniards Are Missing Their Naps," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2000; D. Woolls, "Spanish Entrepreneur Finds Market Niche in Siesta Deprived," *Deseret News*, March 22, 1999.

room complete with comfy chairs and comedy videos where employees can temporarily escape from the hassles of work. With more open offices and less privacy, some employees are finding that the washrooms are the best place to retreat.[82] Siestas provide midday sleep breaks for employees in Spain and other Mediterranean countries. However, GLOBAL Connections 7.3 describes how Spanish employees are under pressure to give up their cherished siesta due to globalization and urbanization, just as other countries discover the benefits of these power naps.

Days off and vacations represent somewhat longer temporary withdrawals from stressful conditions. One study of a police and emergency responses services
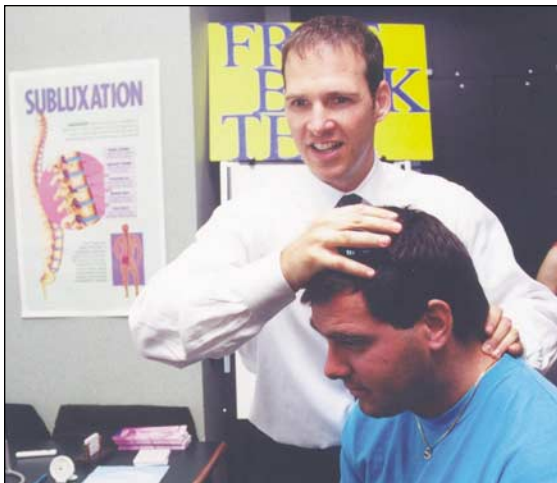
department in western Canada found that this leisure time significantly improved the employee's ability to cope with work-related stress.[83] A few Canadian firms offer paid sabbaticals to long-service employees. This includes McDonald's of Canada, which offers salaried employees an eight-week paid sabbatical after 10 years of service. "[The sabbatical] allows our employees to take the time to do things they wouldn't normally have an opportunity to do and to breathe, explore, enjoy their loved ones and do some special things," says a McDonald's of Canada spokesperson.[84]

Change Stress Perceptions

Employees often experience different levels of stress in the same situation because they perceive it differently. Consequently, stress can be minimized by changing perceptions of the situation. This does not involve ignoring risks or other stressors.

A few years ago, the Town of Richmond Hill launched a comprehensive wellness program to help employees reduce stress and improve their health. The Town conducts health risk assessment reviews, provides awareness sessions on a variety to health topics, and holds clinics on allergies and other ailments. Employees also receive free or subsidized memberships to various fitness clubs. In its first four years, the Town of Richmond Hill's wellness initiative has produced favourable results. "[W]e're seeing tremendous successes pointing to a healthier and productive workforce as well as reduced healthcare costs and absenteeism," says Joan Wade, the municipality's manager of employee benefits and occupational health and safety and wellness.[89] In your opinion, why don't more Canadian employers offer comprehensive wellness plans? *Courtesy of the Town of Richmond Hill.*
www.town.richmond-hill.on.ca

Rather, we can strengthen our self-efficacy and self-esteem so that job challenges are not perceived as threatening. Humour can also improve our perceptions by taking some psychological weight off the situation. "Workplace pressures will keep increasing," says a clinical psychologist at Vancouver-based telecommunications company Telus Corp. "A lot of things aren't going to change, so we have to change people's perception."[85]

Several elements of self-leadership described in Chapter 6 can alter employee perceptions of job-related stressors. For example, mental imagery can reduce the uncertainty of future work activities. A study of newly hired accountants reported that personal goal-setting and self-reinforcement can also reduce the stress that people experience when they enter new work settings.[86] Positive self-talk can change stress perceptions by increasing our self-efficacy and developing a more optimistic outlook, at least in that situation.

Control the Consequences of Stress

Coping with workplace stress also involves controlling its consequences. For this reason, many Canadian companies have fitness centres where employees can keep in shape. Research indicates that physical exercise reduces the physiological consequences of stress by helping employees lower their respiration, muscle tension, heartbeat, and stomach acidity.[87] Another way to control the physiological consequences of stress is through relaxation and meditation. Generally, these activities decrease the individual's heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tension, and breathing rate.[88]

While fitness and relaxation/meditation are still important, many firms have shifted to the broader approach of wellness programs, which educate and

support employees in better nutrition and fitness, regular sleep, and other good health habits. One recent survey reported that 67 percent of Canadian employers offer single-issue wellness initiatives (such as smoking cessation programs), but only 17 percent of employers offered more comprehensive wellness plans.[90] Magna International is in the latter group. The Toronto-based global auto-parts manufacturer has presentations on a particular health topic every two months, then sets up clinics the next month where employees meet one-on-one with health advisors on that topic.[91]

Many large employers offer **employee assistance programs (EAPs).** EAPs are counselling services that help employees overcome personal or organizational stressors and adopt more effective coping mechanisms. Most EAPs are "broad-brush" programs that counsel employees on any work or personal problems. Family problems often represent the largest percentage of EAP referrals, although this varies with industry and location. For instance, all of Canada's major banks provide post-trauma stress counselling for employees after a robbery, particularly when a weapon was visible.[92] EAPs can be one of the most effective stress management interventions when the counselling helps employees to understand the stressors, and acquire and practise stress management skills.[93]

Receive Social Support

Social support from co-workers, supervisors, family, friends, and others is one of the more effective stress management practices.[94] Social support refers to the person's interpersonal transactions with others and involves providing either emotional or informational support to buffer the stress experience.

Social support reduces stress in at least three ways.[95] First, employees improve their perception that they are valued and worthy. This, in turn, increases their self-esteem and perceived ability to cope with the stressor (e.g., "I can handle this crisis because my colleagues have confidence in me"). Second, social support provides information to help employees interpret, comprehend, and possibly remove the stressor. For instance, social support might reduce a new employee's stress because co-workers describe ways to handle difficult customers. Finally, emotional support from others can directly help to buffer the stress experience. This last point reflects the idea that "misery loves company." People seek out and benefit from the emotional support of others when they face threatening situations.[96]

Social support is an important way to cope with stress that everyone can practise by maintaining friendships. This includes helping others when they need a little support from the stressors of life. Organizations can facilitate social support by providing opportunities for social interaction among employees as well as their families. People in leadership roles also need to practise a supportive leadership style when employees work under stressful conditions and need this social support. Mentoring relationships with more senior employees may also help junior employees cope with organizational stressors.

employee assistance programs (EAPs)
Counselling services that help employees overcome personal or organizational stressors and adopt more effective coping mechanisms.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Stress is an adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or threatening to a person's well-being. Distress describes high stress levels that have negative consequences, whereas eustress describes the moderately low stress levels needed to activate people. The stress experience, called the general adaptation syndrome, involves moving through three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. The stress model shows that stress is caused by stressors. However, the effect of these stressors depends on individual characteristics. Stress affects a person's physiological and psychological well-being, and is associated with several work-related behaviours.

Stressors are the causes of stress and include any environmental conditions that place a physical or emotional demand on the person. Stressors are found in the physical work environment, the employee's various life roles, interpersonal relations, and organizational activities and conditions. Conflicts between work and nonwork obligations are a frequent source of employee stress.

Two people exposed to the same stressor may experience different stress levels because they perceive the situation differently, have different threshold stress levels, or use different coping strategies. Workaholics and employees with Type A behaviour patterns tend to experience more stress than other employees.

Intense or prolonged stress can cause physiological symptoms, such as high blood pressure, ulcers, sexual dysfunction, headaches, and coronary heart disease. Behavioural symptoms of stress include lower job performance, poorer decisions, more workplace accidents, higher absenteeism, and more workplace aggression. Psychologically, stress reduces job satisfaction and increases moodiness, depression, and job burnout. Job burnout refers to the process of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy resulting from prolonged exposure to stress. It is mainly due to interpersonal and role-related stressors and is most common in helping occupations.

Many interventions are available to manage work-related stress. Some directly remove unnecessary stressors or remove employees from the stressful environment. Others help employees alter their interpretation of the environment so that it is not viewed as a serious stressor. Wellness programs encourage employees to build better physical defences against stress experiences. Social support provides emotional, informational, and material resource support to buffer the stress experience.

KEY TERMS

Employee assistance programs (EAPs), p. 218

General adaptation syndrome, p. 201

Job burnout, p. 211

Role ambiguity, p. 205

Role conflict, p. 205

Sexual harassment, p. 202

Stress, p. 200

Stressors, p. 202

Type A behaviour pattern, p. 209

Type B behaviour pattern, p. 209

Workaholic, p. 210

Workplace bullying, p. 204

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Several Web sites—including www.unitedmedia.com/comics/dilbert/ and www.cartoonwork.com—use humour to illustrate problems that people experience at work. Scan through these and other Web sites and determine what types of work-related stressors are described.
2. Is being a full-time college or university student a stressful role? Why or why not? Contrast your response with other students' perspectives.
3. Police officer and waiter are often cited as high-stress jobs, whereas accountant and forester are low-stress jobs. Why should we be careful about describing these jobs as involving high or low stress?
4. Two recent graduates join the same major newspaper as journalists. Both work long hours and have tight deadlines to complete their stories. They are under constant pressure to scout out new leads and be the first to report new controversies. One journalist is increasingly fatigued and despondent, and has taken several days of sick leave. The other is getting the work done and seems to enjoy the challenges. Use your knowledge of stress to explain why these two journalists are reacting differently to their jobs.
5. Do people with Type A personalities make better employees? Why or why not? Do people with Type A personalities make better executives? Why or why not?

6. A friend says he is burned out by his job. What questions might you ask this friend to determine whether he is really experiencing job burnout?

7. What should organizations do to reduce employee stress? What responsibility does an employee have to manage stress effectively?

8. A Canadian technology firm pays employees' membership fees at a local fitness facility. What is your opinion of this employer-provided benefit? Is this program an expense? An investment? Explain your perspective.

C A S E   S T U D Y   7.1

A TYPICAL DAY FOR JOE HANSEN, MANAGING DIRECTOR

By Hazel Bothma, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Meet Joe Hansen, managing director of Magical Connections, Cape Town, South Africa. Shadow him for a day and see the challenges and stressors he faces in his daily work.

Buzz. Joe turns over and switches the alarm off. It's 6:00 a.m. and he tosses with the idea of going for a run. However, last night, like many nights before that, he stayed up working til late in the evening, so he decides to postpone the run and catch another 30 minutes sleep. Fate intervenes within five minutes as he hears his 18-month-old daughter start to cry. Joe looks over at his wife, and decides to let her sleep. She had to take care of their daughter last night, as he had to work until 11:00 p.m. Dragging himself out of bed, he fetches his wailing daughter and goes to the kitchen to prepare her bottle. While in the kitchen he balances his daughter on his lap, turns on his laptop, and grimaces as his machine shows him 42 new e-mails. He thinks back to the time before e-mail and cellular phones were popular. Although he would be the first to admit that he couldn't do without these new technologies he realizes that in ways the division of boundaries between work and nonwork have become blurred. Joe realizes that, like many of his colleagues in the IT sector, he finds it hard to separate work life from home life. His daughter now feeding quietly in her cot gives Joe the opportunity to start responding to the e-mails and deleting much of the junk mail he receives. At 6:45 he jumps in the shower, still feeling tired, preparing himself for a day of work. As he combs his hair he notices the first touch of grey—38, he thinks wryly to himself, and starting to show. He wonders if his late hours and pressure from his work are the culprits. It's now 7:15 and Joe needs to get to the office. No time for breakfast. Instead he gulps down his second strong cup of coffee, promising himself that starting tomorrow he will make time to eat before work.

As Joe starts driving to work, the early morning traffic beginning to grow, he thinks that at least he is not on his way to the airport for one of his frequent business trips, which leave him exhausted and with piles of work to complete once back. Hardly ten minutes into the drive to work, his cellular phone rings. It's Justin, one of his team managers, requesting a meeting with him today to discuss why some of the teams are not reaching their targets. Joe thinks back to his first job at one of the major banks. Teamwork was non-existent and being then at the bottom of the managerial rung, he was hardly ever consulted or asked to make decisions. All this has changed, especially within the informational technology sector. Joe's company, Magical Connections, where he is managing director, has very few managers, and most of the 22 staff work in teams. A far cry from his days in the bank, when he was one of 500 employees, faceless in a hierarchical company. Many of the people Joe worked with in the banking industry are still there. For Joe it remains a constant challenge to keep competent staff who leave almost every two years for other IT companies, or even to seek work elsewhere in South Africa. Despite this challenge of people constantly moving in the industry, Joe does not miss the way work used to be organized in the bank, and likes the way his company is structured. The division of labour within Magical Connections helps its progress,

tasks are divided logically, and the frustration of a huge bureaucracy is something he does not miss.

As Joe walks into the office, he is met with Alan, who is pacing up and down the reception floor. Their company is urgently waiting for new parts from Taiwan to arrive. Alan explains that although the parts have landed at the port in Durban, customs are holding them up, as some document seems to be missing. The companies that have been promised the various parts have been ringing Alan to find out where they are. Alan looks near the breaking point as he explains heatedly to Joe the pressure of having to deal with irate customers who want everything now. Joe is empathic with Alan as he too constantly faces pressure from all sides. After a brief meeting with Alan brainstorming solutions to this crisis, Joe eagerly helps himself to his third cup of coffee, hoping the caffeine will perk him up, and although it's only 10:00 in the morning, he finds a cigarette in his desk drawer, and goes outside to smoke. He is well aware of the health risks, not to speak about the wrath he would face if his wife found out, but as always the day seems packed with obstacles and Joe uses this five minutes to be on his own.

At 11:00 Joe sits down with one of teams to discuss their targets. Justin, one of the team members, starts the meeting off by accusing Sharon of not performing adequately and thereby jeopardizing the team's target. Justin rants on that he is tired of having to work even harder to make up for Sharon's poor performance. As Joe listens, he realizes that Justin's antagonistic nature is not helping the meeting, and Joe is aware that without good interpersonal skills from all team members the effective working of the team is only hindered. Added to this he is going to have to ascertain what is causing Sharon not to meet her targets. Joe makes a mental note to try and organize some training on interpersonal skills for all teams. It is imperative for Magical Connections that teams be effective, as this also translates into remaining competitive at both a national and global level. If their company is to stay afloat in this highly competitive environment, remaining competitive is the cornerstone of their survival.

Dan, Joe's old school friend, phones him up at 1:00 to see if he would like to join him for lunch. Joe laughs down the phone and reminds Dan that he has not had a lunch break in the past two years. He thinks longingly of a quiet lunch, good food and company, but knows that he has too much to do. Justin is still angry about poor team performance, and Joe knows he needs to deal with this issue as soon as possible. Dan laughs back at him and tells him that as M.D. he should be delegating more and enjoying some time off. He has a point, Joe thinks. Empowerment is still a relatively new concept in South Africa, but Joe knows that if he delegated more of his work to younger staff and allowed them to make more decisions, it would free up more of his time to think about long-term strategy for his company. But today is not the day for a lunch-break, so a hamburger and chips from the canteen will have to do.

At 2:30 p.m. Fiona walks into his office and tells Joe she intends to leave the company. Joe's heart sinks. She is one of the brightest employees they have. This means that again their company will have to try and attract a new person, and of course retain them. The recruitment and selection of a new person will be time consuming and Joe makes a mental note to start this process.

At 4:00 p.m. Joe finds himself lying on a massage table having a massage in his office. It is a relatively new idea that the company brought in a month ago on recommendations from some employees. All employees are entitled to a 30-minute massage once a week. With gentle music floating in his office, the smell of aromatherapy oils lingering in the air, Joe feels his knots being worked under the masseur's able hands and feels the release of his tension. What a great idea this has turned out to be.

With a bulging briefcase Joe manages to leave the office at 6:00 p.m.—aware that his wife has been looking after their daughter all day and will now be exhausted and desperate for him to come home and help. He has six new computer journals he needs to read, and a page of Web sites that he needs to explore. The almost constant pressure to keep abreast of the flood of information within this industry is an overwhelming feature of Joe's life. Added to this Joe realizes that next week he needs to undertake a vendor computer-training course, which will keep him out of the office. For Joe the constant need for retraining is a necessity to stay abreast.

As Joe starts his 20-minute drive home he puts a new CD on and starts humming to his favourite track. The humming soon changes to a full-throated bellow as he sings the chorus out aloud and makes drumming noises on the steering wheel. However, a phone call with another work-related issue interrupts this pleasant interlude. As he ends the call, Joe thinks to himself that this

weekend he is going to take his wife and daughter away for a weekend. Perhaps to the mountains where they can relax as a family, and he can spend some time talking to his wife. He grins to himself, no cell phone and no laptop. With that comforting thought he thinks about the challenges he faces tomorrow and in the future. Magical Connections needs to stay fast, flexible, responsive, resilient, and creative, and Joe looks forward to being one of the people doing just that. Despite the challenges of his job, Joe loves his work and finds it challenging and rewarding.

Discussion Questions

1. Identify the stressors facing Joe.

2. How do you think Joe could go about managing his stress more effectively?

3. Would it be fair to argue that employees within the IT sector experience higher levels of stress than, say, employees within the banking or manufacturing sector?

T E A M   E X E R C I S E   7.2

STRESSED OUT OR "NO PROBLEM"?

Purpose This exercise is designed to help students understand how people can have different stress reactions to the same stressors.

Instructions

■ *Step 1:* Students individually indicate their responses to each of the incidents on the scoring sheet.

■ *Step 2:* The instructor places students into groups (typically 4 or 5 people) to compare their results. For each incident, group members should discuss why each person feels

more or less stress. They should pay particular attention to the reasons why some students would feel little stress. Specifically, they should examine the extent that each person (a) perceives the situation differently, (b) has more or less tolerance to stressors due to health or need to cope with other problems, and (c) would use different coping strategies to deal with any stress related to the incident.

■ *Step 3:* After group members have diagnosed these results, the instructor brings the class together to compare results and discuss why people react differently to stressors.

Circle the number on the right that best describes the extent to which you would feel stressed in this situation.	Very Little ▼		Moderately ▼			Very Much ▼	
1. Your final exam for Economics 200 is in 48 hours and a bad flu and other assignments have prevented you from studying for it. You know that the instructor will not accept your illness and other assignments as an excuse to have the examination at another time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. You started work last month as a sales clerk in a small clothing store (men's or women's) and have been asked to mind the store while the other two clerks take their lunch break elsewhere in the shopping mall. During this usually slow time, four customers walk in, each one of them wanting your immediate attention.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Circle the number on the right that best describes the extent to which you would feel stressed in this situation.	Very Little ▼		Moderately ▼			Very Much ▼	
3. You and two friends are driving in an older van with snow tires to a ski resort in the Canadian Rockies. You took over driving duty at 8 p.m., two hours ago. Your friends are asleep in the back seat while you approach a steep pass. It has been snowing so heavily that you must drive at a crawl to see where you are going and avoid sliding off the road. You passed the last community 30 miles back and the resort is 40 miles ahead (nearly two hours at your current speed).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. You work as an accountant in a large insurance company and, for the past month, have received unwanted attention several times each week from your supervisor, a married person of the opposite sex. The supervisor regularly touches your shoulder and comments on your looks. You are sure that they are advances rather than just friendly gestures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. You and your spouse purchased your first home one year ago, a detached house with mortgage payments that your spouse barely covers with his/her take-home pay. The economy has since entered a deep recession and the company informed you today that you will be laid off in two months.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Source: Copyright © 2000. Steven L. McShane.

S E L F · A S S E S S M E N T   E X E R C I S E   7.3

TIME STRESS SCALE

Purpose   This self-assessment is designed to help you to identify your level of time-related stress.

Instructions   Read each of the statements below and circle "Yes" or "No." Then use the scoring key in Appendix B to calculate your results. This exercise is completed alone so students can assess themselves honestly without concerns of social comparison. However, class discussion will focus on the time-stress scale.

1. Yes   No   Do you plan to slow down in the coming year?

2. Yes   No   Do you consider yourself a workaholic?

3. Yes   No   When you need more time, do you tend to cut back on your sleep?

4. Yes   No   At the end of the day, do you often feel that you have not accomplished what you had set out to do?

5. Yes   No   Do you worry that you don't spend enough time with your family or friends?

6. Yes   No   Do you feel that you're constantly under stress trying to accomplish more than you can handle?

7. Yes   No   Do you feel trapped in a daily routine?

8. Yes   No   Do you feel that you just don't have time for fun any more?

9. Yes   No   Do you often feel under stress when you don't have enough time?

10. Yes   No   Would you like to spend more time alone?

Source: Statistics Canada's 1998 General Social Survey. Cited in P. DeMont, "Too Much Stress, Too Little Time," *Ottawa Citizen*, November 12, 1999.

BEHAVIOUR ACTIVITY PROFILE — THE TYPE "A" SCALE

Go to the Student CD for the interactive version of this exercise.

Purpose This self-assessment is designed to help you to identify the extent to which you follow a Type "A" behaviour pattern.

Instructions Each of us displays certain kinds of behaviours, thought patterns of personal characteristics. In this self-assessment, select the number that you feel best describes where you are between each pair of words or phrases. The best answer for each set of descriptions is the response that most nearly describes the way you feel, behave, or think. Answer these in terms of your regular or typical behaviour, thoughts, or characteristics. The results show your relative position on the Type "A" and Type "B" behaviour pattern continuum.

WORK ADDICTION RISK TEST

Go to the Student CD for the interactive version of this exercise.

Purpose This self-assessment is designed to help you to identify the extent to which you are a workaholic.

Instructions This instrument presents several statements, and asks you to indicate the extent to which each statement is true of your work habits. You need to be honest with yourself for a reasonable estimate of your level of workaholism.

PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE

Go to the Student CD for the interactive version of this exercise.

Purpose This self-assessment is designed to help you to estimate your perceived general level of stress.

Instructions The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, please indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. You need to be honest with yourself for a reasonable estimate of your general level of stress.

After studying the preceding material, be sure to check out our Online Learning Centre at
www.mcgrawhill.ca/college/mcshane
for more in-depth information and interactivities that correspond to this chapter.

THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA VIGNETTES

Purpose   This exercise is designed to help you understand perceptual issues when working in a diverse work force.

Instructions   The instructor will play a few vignettes portraying actual events at The Royal Bank of Canada. For each vignette, the class will follow these steps:

■ *Step 1:* Watch the vignette, keeping in mind the questions presented below.
■ *Step 2:* The instructor will stop the videotape at the appropriate place and the class will discuss the vignette, guided by the following questions (the instructor may ask additional questions):
   (a) What is your reaction to this incident?
   (b) What is the main issue in this vignette?
   (c) What perceptual problems might exist here?
   (d) What solutions, if any, would you recommend?
■ *Step 3:* After discussing the vignette, the instructor will play the video follow-up so that the class can hear what The Royal Bank of Canada recommends in this situation.

Source: Royal Bank of Canada.

CAREER COACH PROGRAM

Money can solve a lot of problems, but for high tech companies desperate to hang on to their highly skilled employees, money alone doesn't cut it. Somebody else can always offer more. That's why the race is on to find new ways to keep staff happy.

Sixty hour weeks. Unrealistic bosses. Demanding customers. Families unseen for days. In the world of high tech, these are common complaints heard around the water cooler. Dy4 is no exception. The Kanata, Ontario designer of computers for harsh climates, is stretching employees to the limit with rapid growth and product backlogs. To recruit and retain the best employees, Dy4 has introduced a Career Coach Program that helps employees target those areas causing friction.

"The main issue is that they've lost a sense of control in their work place," says Daniel O'Connor, the founder of Keepers Inc. that runs the career coach program. "And what that leaves them feeling is very disempowered and subject to the whims of the industry, the whims of their managers, the whims of the company and that's a pretty discouraging feeling."

O'Connor is working with Grant, who manages one of Dy4's product lines. Grant gets anxiety attacks thinking about the number of meetings he must attend each day while trying to get his product out on time. But is Grant completely powerless? Maybe he's a pushover. Does he ever say no? O'Connor gets Grant to think about the things that lead to all these meetings. But it takes time. A few weeks later, O'Connor discovers that Grant has 10 meetings and is backlogged with 600 e-mail messages.

Ernie is an engineer at Dy4 who is worried about work/life balance. O'Connor encouraged him to track his time for a week and then look at how his life is divided into a pie chart. Dy4 got a huge 61 hour slice of Ernie's pie last week. His family got the crumbs. To turn things around, O'Connor gets Ernie to set some goals, such as going out with his wife at least once every two weeks and eating dinner with the family at least five nights a week. So far, Ernie only gets home one or two nights each week by dinner time.

It's a slow start, but Dy4 employees are moving in the right direction. And as it takes hold, the Career Coach Program helps Dy4 keep its talent from looking elsewhere for work.

1. Dy4 is applying a form of executive coaching for its staff. Do you think this coaching is having a positive effect on employee motivation and attitudes? Why or why not?

2. To what extent is goal setting and feedback being applied in DY4's career coach program?

3. This video program begins by claiming that money is not enough to recruit and retain employees? Do you believe this statement? What would be more important than money to you when looking for a job?

Source: "Keepers Inc.", CBC *Venture* 742, March 7, 2000.

PART ENDING VIDEO CASE STUDY | **Case 3** | **CBC**

THE SPEED TRAP

E-mail, cell phones, and fax machines have put us on the fast track. But are we accelerating beyond our endurance? Are we speeding to a standstill? Rather than ease our burdens, these communication devices have increased our technostress. Tim Breen, a busy copy centre manager, points out that technology moves far faster than we do, and trying to keep up can wear us out, both mentally and physically.

The mad rush to squeeze more work activities into the day, with no time left for personal pursuits, led small business owner Sandra Erickson to seek help. She turned to time management consultant Mark Ellwood who teaches clients how to get balance into their lives.

"Eric," a patient at the Homewood Health Centre in Guelph, Ontario wishes he had sought help earlier. A casualty of a 13-to-16 hour workday regime, the former construction executive found himself going into a tailspin. After climbing into the top income bracket, Eric was diagnosed as clinically depressed, and lost his job.

Psychiatrist Dr. Beth Reade says that there is a limit, even for the most high-energy people, on how much we can do. We have to set our priorities and learn to say no, she says.

Japan has officially recognized overwork as a disease. It's called *karoshi* and 10,000 workers die of it each year. One victim, 23-year-old Yoshiko, was a graphic artist who died on the job suddenly due to a brain haemorrhage. According to her parents, who are suing their daughter's former employer, Yoshiko worked herself to death.

Although France has legislated a 35-hour work week, four out of 10 businesses have workers on the job for more than 10 hours a day. Labour inspector Gerard Filoche says that a 13 percent unemployment rate means employers can coerce employees to work unreasonable hours.

Discussion Questions

1. While watching this documentary, identify the various incidents with the stressor categories described in this chapter. Which stressors seem to be more common?

2. What strategies identified in this program that help employees minimize or avoid unnecessary stress at work and in their lives?

3. Are there any sources of work-related stress that this documentary overlooks? What are they?

Source: "The Speed Trap," CBC *Witness*, January 6, 2000, © 90th Parallel Productions.

EMPLOYEE LOYALTY

Not so long ago, life was simple. Companies offered secure, even lifetime employment. Workers were loyal to the company. Well, a few million layoffs later, that deal is history. But companies still need loyal staff and they need young people that will stay with them.

Joel Baglole is a case in point. Baglole received an internship at the *Toronto Star* and later was offered a full-time job. Baglole happily accepted the position, but quit six weeks later when the prestigious *Wall Street Journal* offered him a job. "[The *Toronto Star*] paid me and I worked hard and so that's the way I looked at it," explains Baglole. "I didn't feel like I owed them anything over and above what I'd already given them."

John Honderich has a different view. "We thought that we had made the investment in his being here in terms of what was happening," says the *Toronto Star* publisher. "I think that loyalty has become the forgotten value in the work place today," he adds. "I place a great deal of importance on loyalty because it's a glue that's made this particular organization work and it's been part of the history. We've been around for 108 years. And so when you have a long history and long tradition, loyalty has obviously been part of it."

Honderich and other employers believe that the younger generation of employees don't have loyalty. "They're always looking for the next. And that just seems to be the way they're programmed. That seems to be more the, the mode today."

But Baglole thinks the problem is employers, not young people. "Every day I hear about people… bumped down, demoted, laid off, forced into retirement, given the golden handshake," he says. What's the solution? According to Baglole, companies need to increase job security. "Start hiring long term. …Welcome to the team. You're a valued employee. Here are your benefits. Here's your pension. Here's your corporate credit card. Welcome to the team."

Joseph Polarski's computer consulting company in Toronto is trying to create loyalty through job security, just like Polarski experienced at IBM in the past. "I come from the IBM culture where there was a commitment," he says. "I still dream of that culture. I believe it was an excellent culture and I want to have it back."

The *Toronto Star's* John Honderich is also trying to improve loyalty through training and company shares. But *The Star*, which laid off 200 staffers recently, shies away from job security. "You never can say never to lay-offs. You never can say, because what's going to happen? I mean, this company survived for 108 years and we'd like to think we're going to survive for another 108 years but there's no guarantees."

That's one thing Honderich and Baglole agree on: "I mean, there are no guarantees in life," Baglole acknowledges.

Discussion Questions

1. Which, if any, of the five strategies to build organizational commitment would be effective in this situation involving Joel Baglole?

2. Explain how Joel Baglole's psychological contract is influenced by organizational loyalty in this situation.

Source: L. Buckner, "Employee Loyalty," CBC *Venture*, March 6, 2001.

BALANCING WORK AND LIFE

Work–life balance is the hottest topic among human resource executives these days, and for good reason. Most Canadians have a serious lack of balance, which is costing employers plenty. "We've seen an alarming increase in the amount of stress leave that people are on," says Nora Spinks, one of Canada's leading experts on work–life balance. "It's one of the fastest growing short-term disabilities that there is, that employers are now having to look at."

Companies have introduced several practices to minimize the damage to time-stressed staff, such as fitness programs, career breaks, daycare centres, flex-time, job sharing, telework, and so on. But a major Canadian study has reported that Canadians are still stressed.

"If we look at about a decade ago only about ten percent of the workforce was working a 50 hour plus week," explains Carleton University business professor Linda Duxbury. "We now see that about one in four people are working that many hours." The study also discovered that over one-third of professional and managerial men and women say that the way they're trying to cope is simply by not having kids.

University of Guelph professor Peter Hausdorf says that part of the problem is that employers don't want to deal with the main cause of poor work–life balance: workload. "[Employers] seem reluctant to deal with the fact that the issue is … workload and what they would rather do is focus on other aspects. So [they'll] have fitness facilities to deal with stress. These are all good things but they're not dealing with the core issue, which is the volume of work."

Courtney Pratt, CEO of Toronto Hydro, admits his company is pushing staff too hard, but he doesn't see much choice while Toronto hydro prepares for privatization. "But when you get into a crunch like we're in, there's not a whole lot you can do other than I think you have to empathize with people," Pratt admits. "You do whatever you can to try and give them the time off that they need but quite frankly, we need their intellectual horse-power right now and it's not an option."

Linda Duxbury sees the issue differently: "Excuse me, but how can you afford to continue to operate this way?" she warns. "Look at your absenteeism. Look at your turnover. Look at your prescription and benefit costs. Look at your succession planning." Nora Spinks notes that the need to keep good staff is another reason to encourage work–life balance: "If you're competing for the same people that somebody else is, and now offering flexibility and support of work environments and stress-free opportunities, people are going to be attracted to there before they're attracted to an organization where it's rigid, it's structured, it's high stress."

Discussion Questions

1. Explain how companies that encourage work-life balance might be more successful than those pushing more hours of work out of their staff.

2. What other topics in the first two parts of this book explain how work-life balance may improve organizational effectiveness?

Source: Dianne Buckner, "Balancing Work and Life," CBC *Venture,* April 7, 2002.