



Coping with Workplace Stress and Fatigue

INTRODUCTION

As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, growth within the roofing industry during the first half of 2021 has been hampered by a lack of skilled labour, recruitment difficulties, continued material shortages and price rises. This is causing the workplace stress levels of individuals working on site to rise, as it is predominantly these operatives that are facing the daily requests for information on when materials will be delivered, or if additional labour is available.

In addition to this, these searching and sometimes demanding questions can be asked within a meeting environment where other contractors are present causing additional stress for the individual on the receiving end. The purpose of this Tool-Box-Talk (TBT) is to help identify simple methods which can be utilised to support workers to cope with stress and build resilience to enable them to handle the short term challenges the industry faces.

Workplace stress and fatigue

Stress and fatigue in the workplace can reduce productivity and increase the likelihood of mistakes, which in turn, can lead to other workplace incidents or accidents. Workers can often be at their limits of both physical and mental abilities during a working day, so it's essential that they are able to keep their focus, handle stressful situations, pay attention to details, and remain calm under pressure, all of which are difficult to do when suffering from stress and fatigue.

How to manage stress and fatigue

Resilience is the ability to withstand stressful situations and perform well under pressure without compromising your health and wellbeing. We must therefore support our staff and workers in building resilience to the challenges being faced by the current material and skills shortages, in order to promote their wellbeing.

Tips for building resilience

- **Control the Controllable**—concentrate your energy into areas you can do something about.
- **Evaluate and review:**
 - What went well?
 - What didn't go well?
 - What do I need to do differently next time?

- Focus on the solution and opportunity.
- Learn something positive and move on.
- Connect with friends and colleagues.
- Manage your energy levels.

Manage your energy levels

- Use food to fuel the body and brain to function effectively and to sustain energy.
- Reduce sugar and refined carbohydrates.
- Eat good fats for sustained energy.
- Add protein to each meal.
- Eat three regular meals daily.
- Get fit to cope with the mental and physical demands of your work.
- Try and walk more by building walking and exercise into your daily routine.
- Acknowledge and respect that your brain and body need good rest and recovery.
- Make getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep a priority.
- Have a digital detox—less screen time.
- Take regular breaks away from the workplace.

How can I support a work colleague?

If you notice that work colleagues are becoming more stressed or fatigued whilst at work than they would normally be, there are simple things you can do to reach out and provide support:

- Take them for a coffee and ask how they are?
Ask more than once.
- Listen without judgement and be careful not to offer opinions on how they should manage their wellbeing.
- It is good to be aware of relevant personal issues affecting staff such as illness, bereavement and other stress related factors that may contribute to a colleague struggling to cope in the workplace.
- You don't have to know all the answers, but you can explore some of the options they might have.
- Share what's happening with your own work and life too. It's amazing how much better we feel when we talk about the real stuff affecting all our lives.



Further support

There are many places to signpost an employee for expert help. **The Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity**¹ is dedicated to the welfare of all construction workers in the UK and Ireland and have produced posters like this to put in canteens and around the sites. They have recently launched 'Help Inside the Hard Hat' campaign to raise awareness of poor mental health within the construction industry.

¹ The Lighthouse Construction Industry Charity:
<https://www.lighthouseclub.org>

Published by
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July 2021

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