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PROFESSIONAL WELLBEING

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The aim of this chapter is to review issues relating to wellbeing and stress that may affect psychologists. It will discuss the causes of stress and wellbeing and the outcomes for psychologists, then set out some realistic ways in which stress can be managed and wellbeing can be supported.

Most psychologists will be familiar with the concepts of stress and wellbeing. Stress is defined as "an interaction between the person and their (work) environment and is the awareness of not being able to cope with the demands of one's environment when this realisation is of concern to the person" (Scott-Howman & Walls, 2003. p. 42). Work-related stress has been extensively researched and many of the personal and situational factors associated with it have been identified.

Subjective wellbeing is more than the absence of ill-health. Recent efforts to define wellbeing have found three components; satisfaction with life as a whole and with different aspects of life *(e.g.,* work, family, community, health), the presence of positive affect (pleasant emotions such as joy, contentment, happiness, pride) and the relative absence of negative affect (unpleasant emotions such as guilt, sadness, anxiety and depression) (Diener, Sub, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Although less extensively researched than stress, there is a growing body of information about how life circumstances and psychological factors interact to produce well-being. Less is known about positive stress or 'eustress', a "perception of the person-environment transaction as offering the potential for pleasure, positive consequence, growth or challenge" (Ravicz, 1996, p. 19), or a related concept, *morale,* which is "the energy, enthusiasm, team spirit and pride that employees experience as a result of their work" (Hart & Cotton, 2002, p. 102) although they are also attracting increasing attention (McGowan, Gardner, & Fletcher, 2006).

Stress (distress) and well-being are not mutually exclusive, and they can occur simultaneously. Although related, these domains are often studied independently. The current chapter will present some of the research into stress and well-being that is particularly relevant to psychologists as workers. We begin with an overview of the main components of work-related stress and coping. Later we will discuss specific applications to the professional practice of psychology.

A MODEL OF STRESS AND WELL-BEING

Stress and well-being are integral parts of the cognitive and behavioural processes by which individuals and groups encounter demands and identify and mobilise resources to deal with them. One major conceptualisation of this process is the cognitive-transactional model of stress and coping developed by Richard Lazarus and his colleagues (Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). An outline showing the components of the cognitive-transactional model is depicted in Figure 1.
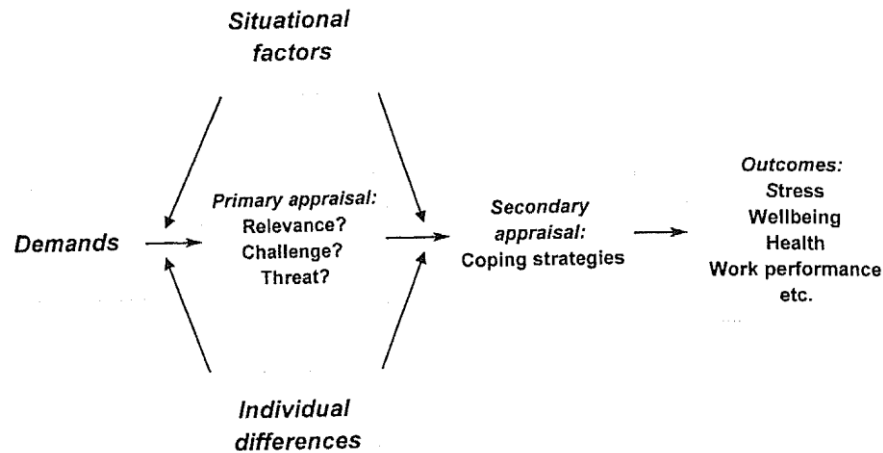
Figure 1: *Overview of the transactional model of stress and wellbeing.*

The focus of this model is on individual and situational factors that interact with the appraisal of demands to produce outcomes. Stress and well-being are subjective and affected by individual and situational factors, and by cognitive processes such as appraisal and coping.

Demands

The process begins with physical and/or psychological demands. Occupational demands, or factors which can activate the processes of appraisal and coping, fall into a wide range of categories. These include:

 – *Job or task design:* tedious and repetitive work, work that under-utilises employee skills, constant client contact.

 – *Workload and work pace:* work overload or underload; high time pressure.

 – *Work-life balance:* conflict between the demands of work and those outside work.

 – *Work schedules:* badly designed or inflexible schedules; unpredictable or unsociable hours.

 – *Work role problems:* lack of clarity about what to do; conflicting requirements; too much or too little to do.

 – *Organisational design:* poor communication; little participation in decision-making; low trust; inflexible work practices; lack of control over work; too much or too little responsibility.

 – *Career development problems:* career uncertainty or stagnation; low status and lack of appropriate rewards.

 – *Selection systems:* poor fit between staff needs and capabilities and job requirements.

 – *Training:* few chances to enhance relevant skills.

 – *Relationships at work:* isolation; lack of consultation between management and staff; interpersonal conflict; lack of support.

 – *Hazardous work.*

Lists such as this one often appear in the literature on work-related stress but they are less helpful than they appear. Work environments with inadequate lighting, excessive noise, heat or cold, hazards and excessive workloads are usually stressful for most people but few other factors

invariably give rise to stress. Individual differences often play a major role in the appraisal or stressful situations as well as individuals' emotional and behavioural responses to stress. These individual differences include adaptability to shiftwork, preferences for social interaction, tolerance of ambiguity, preferences for control and leadership styles while, for managers, some apparent 'stressors' such as workloads, deadlines and long work hours may be associated with job satisfaction as well as with stress (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000). Whether or not a demanding situation will lead to stress, wellbeing or both depends on how the demand is appraised and how it is managed.

Appraisal

Primary appraisal involves an assessment of the relevance and potential consequences of a demand. Demands can be appraised as 'irrelevant' to the individual, 'relevant but benign' (offering the chance to preserve or enhance wellbeing) or 'relevant and stressful' (representing a potential threat to the individual's goals, beliefs or expectations). There has been little research into which strategies, if any, are used to address demands that are seen as irrelevant or benign. Almost all research has focused on demands that are appraised as both relevant and stressful.

Stressful appraisals include an appraisal of harm or threat and also of challenge. Harm represents damage that has already occurred. Threat appraisals occur when a person anticipates that the demand will be associated with future harm or loss. Challenge appraisals occur when the demand is seen as having potentially positive outcomes, even under difficult circumstances. A demand which is appraised as a challenge is seen as an opportunity for recognition, praise, learning and personal growth (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

One framework that integrates the concepts of primary appraisal of threat and challenge considers the need for a balance between demands and the resources available to deal with them. Resources include objects (e.g. possessions), personal characteristics (e.g. self-esteem, attitudes, knowledge and skills) and desirable conditions [e.g. good management systems, supportive relationships (Hobfoll, 1988)]. When demands match resources, the demand is seen as a challenging opportunity to learn and succeed but when demands exceed resources, the demand is seen as a threatening opportunity for failure.

Coping

Secondary appraisal involves the identification and assessment of options for coping with demands. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested two forms of coping which they called problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves addressing the demand by actively taking steps to deal with the problem or making a plan of action and then putting it into practice. Emotion-focused coping involves addressing negative emotions, for example by seeking distractions or using alcohol or other drugs. Other categories of coping have since been identified including meaning-focused coping, in which values, beliefs and goals can be drawn upon to find meaning in difficult situations, and social coping in which other people provide emotional support or practical help (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). The appraisal and coping processes interact and are ongoing. Challenge appraisals are linked to greater use of problem-focused coping, positive thinking and the use of humour, while threat appraisals are linked to greater use of denial, wishful thinking and fatalism (McCrae, 1984). Once initial coping attempts have been made the demand is re-appraised. If the demand is still seen to be relevant and stressful then further coping may be undertaken.

Coping processes are not inherently good or bad; the usefulness of a coping strategy depends on the context in which it is used. When demands are within the person's control then the most adaptive coping strategies are likely to be those which involve actively planning and addressing the demand but when demands are outside the person's control then it may be more important to

focus on managing emotional reactions rather than the demand itself. One of the most important factors in effective coping appears to be the ability to use a range of coping strategies appropriately (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Dispositional Moderators

Resilience and hardiness may decrease an individual's susceptibility to stress while traits such as emotional stability, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, optimism, self-efficacy and hardiness may be related to greater levels of well-being (Beasley, Thompson, & Davidson. 2003; Clarke & Singh, 2004; Karademas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 2004; Maddi, 2002: Paton. Smith, Violanti, & Eranen, 2000; Penley & Tomaka, 2002; Treharne, Lyons, & Tupling, 2001). However the identification of individual differences related to stress and well-being does not mean that staff selection can be used to directly manage stress at work. Information about individuals' previous levels of stress, coping and well-being, when it is available, may not be relevant to a person's current circumstances and resources, work issues and health (Scott-Bowman & Walls, 2003).

Recruitment and selection processes need to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities to work effectively. This means selecting and placing staff in positions appropriate to their abilities and experience, as well as providing appropriate training and professional development. These approaches can improve well-being as well as work performance.

Situational Moderators

Resources that can support the effective management of work demands include appropriate levels of control at work, social support and a supportive organisational culture.

Much of the research into the importance of work demands and job control has been conducted within the framework of Karasek's demand-control-support model. The model proposes that work in which people face high demands but relatively low control over the resources that are needed to meet those demands is particularly stressful (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorel I, 1990). Social support is included in the model as a 'buffer' against stress. There is evidence that jobs which are high in demands and low in control (high-strain jobs) are associated with worse physical and psychological health than jobs which are high in demands and high in control (active jobs), Control (e.g., participation in decision-making) means that individuals have some influence over how they do their work and *can* have input into the decisions that affect them. Effective employee consultation and participation can increase the range and quality of information available for making decisions and can increase commitment to changes and strategies from those who are required to implement them. However, levels of control and participation must be appropriate to individuals and roles: there are significant individual and cultural differences in preferences for active participation in decisions at work.

Although the evidence tends to be mixed, the negative effects of high-strain jobs may be more apparent when social support is low than when it is high. Social support comprises the resources provided by other people and includes emotional support such as sympathy and understanding, information provided by others and practical help. Interpersonal networks that provide emotional, informational and practical support can be very important in managing stress and well-being (Sonnentag & Frese, 2003). Friendships at work can be an important source of social support associated with job satisfaction and intentions to remain with the organization (Morrison, 2004).

Social support is not unequivocally positive. A high level of practical help can reduce an individual's feelings of personal effectiveness and induce feelings of inferiority. Support networks involve reciprocal obligations which can be experienced as coercive rather than supportive, and

negative feelings of stress as well as positive feelings of wellbeing can be communicated and shared throughout work groups (Sonnentag & Frese, 2003).

Organisational cultures also vary in the extent to which they support well-being or stress. In workplaces where peers and managers discourage individual success and achievement, employees experience increased levels of stress and diminished well-being (Rundle-Gardiner & Carr, 2005). Many organisations in New Zealand have developed initiatives to help employees balance work and non-work demands. The use of initiatives such as flexible work arrangements, leave arrangements, assistance to care for dependents and employee assistance programs depends not only on availability but also on employee perceptions as to whether or not managers and supervisors support the use of the initiatives and whether employee career prospects (e.g., promotion) will be damaged by use of the initiatives (Smith & Gardner, 2006). Managers and supervisors can also influence work demands through the timing of meetings, deadlines, scheduling, monitoring, and modelling long hours at work or good work-life balance. An organisational culture which does not support the effective management of work demands is likely to be associated with greater stress and reduced well-being.

Outcomes: Stress and Well-being

Threat appraisals and inappropriate or ineffective coping strategies can lead to stress. Stress can have significant costs for organisations if it leads to increased turnover, absenteeism and poor performance (Macdonald, 2003). Stress can also have negative consequences for individuals including an increased risk of cardiovascular disease (Collins, Karasek, & Costas, 2005), compromised immune functioning (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004), musculoskeletal disorders (Bongers, de Winter, Kompier, & Hildebrandt, 1993) and accidents, especially fatigue-related accidents (Boufous & Williamson, 2006). Exposure to stressors has been linked to depressive symptoms (Dormann & Zapf, 1999), psychosomatic complaints (Sonnentag & Frese, 2003) and burnout. Burnout comprises three features: emotional exhaustion or the depletion of emotional resources; depersonalisation or negative, cynical perceptions of clients and decreased feelings of personal accomplishment (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

There is increasing information about the positive outcomes of work-related demands. Dealing with demanding situations can lead to positive emotion, a sense of doing meaningful work, positive perceptions of one's own health, better decision-making, job satisfaction, stress-related growth and meaning-making (Nelson & Simmons, 2003; Simmons & Nelson, 2001; Skinner & Brewer, 2004; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). Even exposure to traumatic events can have positive outcomes: the concept of post-traumatic growth has received a great deal of attention (Linley Joseph, 2004; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). In the context of work-life balance, the concept of 'positive spillover' has been developed to show that work and non-work demands can facilitate as well as conflict with each other. Work-family facilitation is the extent to which participation in one domain (e.g., work or home) is made easier due to the skills (e.g. communication, time management), resources (e.g., income) and opportunities (e.g. contacts, information) gained or developed in the other domain (Balmforth & Gardner, 2006; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Kirchmeyer, 1993).

WORK STRESS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS

Stressors in Psychological Work

The above overview of stressors, strains and moderators applies as much to professional psychologists as it does to other occupational groups. However, there are some issues which are especially salient for professional practice in psychology. For instance lack of clarity about work roles, conflict between multiple work or work-life roles and role overload are well-

known sources of stress (French, Caplan, & Harrison, 1982). Psychologists can hold multiple, complex and varied roles: teacher, administrator, researcher, therapist, mediator, entrepreneur, crisis counsellor and referral source, sometimes all in the *same* day (O'Connor, 2001). Role conflict can also arise from the need to balance work and home life (Frone, 2003). Financial insecurity can be a significant source of stress (Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004) as can a lack of fit or compatibility between the requirements of the job and the capabilities of the employee. Negative interpersonal relationships, lack of social support, bullying, harassment and discrimination, and non-consultative or dictatorial management styles can be sources of significant stress. Practitioners often work in environments that are isolating and have limited resources. They may have limited control over outcomes and must, for clinical, legal and ethical reasons, keep their personal needs separate from their work with clients (Hannigan, Edwards, & Burnard, 2004). Burnout is most likely in settings which fail to satisfy personal needs, where there is role conflict and ambiguity, responsibility for people, limited decision-making power and upsetting, frustrating or difficult work (O'Connor, 2001). Psychologists seem to be most at risk of the emotional exhaustion component of burnout (Rupert & Morgan, 2005).

The demands that psychologists face may differ for different kinds of psychological work. Demands that may be encountered in clinical work include clients who are suicidal, aggressive or agitated, apathetic or depressed (Griffiths, 2002). Clinicians may also face vicarious traumatisation, compassion fatigue, and aggression from clients that is physical, emotional or legal (O'Connor, 2001). Psychologists' work may require "sensitivity to people and environment, willingness to meet other's needs before one's own, the ability to withhold emotional response in the face of reported trauma and intense emotion, and the ability to tolerate intense emotion and ideation with limited or no outward personal response" (O'Connor, 2001, p. 346). For clinical and educational psychologists, workloads, poor management, lack of resources, having too many things to do, professional self-doubt, feelings of incompetence, feeling 'stuck' and being tired can be stressors (Griffiths, 2002; Hannigan et al., 2004). Psychologists in educational or organisational settings may face conflict between the needs of clients (sometimes organisations) and the individuals (children, job applicants) for whom their services are intended (Griffiths, 2002). Research psychologists may face stress from teaching, funding pressures, time constraints, committees, administrative work and paperwork (Radeke & Mahoney, 2000). Particular stressors for managers include the proliferation of information, the need to rely on interpersonal skills to get things done, organisational politics and fragmented tasks (Quick, Cooper, Nelson, Quick, & Gavin, 2003).

Coping with Work-Related Stress

There is little research to date on the coping strategies that psychologists use to deal with work-related demands. Clinical psychologists in the United Kingdom reported that they coped with stress by talking to other clinical psychologists, exercising, talking to a partner and participating in professional networks (Hannigan et al., 2004). Other positive approaches included spending time with partners, family and friends, keeping a balance between personal and professional life commitments, keeping a sense of humour, maintaining self-awareness and engaging in leisure activities and holidays (Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004).

While some information exists about the adaptive strategies used by psychologists, there is very little information about maladaptive strategies that may be used. Psychologists, despite their knowledge of psychological processes, are better at identifying distress and impaired performance in their colleagues than in themselves (O'Connor, 2001). Professional behaviour requires an appearance of competence and expertise which does not easily allow for errors, uncertainty, emotional openness or the public discussion of (and learning from) mistakes and some psychologists, including trainees, may struggle with the feeling they are not perfect enough

for their chosen profession (O'Connor, 2001). Psychologists are often extremely reluctant to seek help. They may perceive seeking help as 'self-indulgent and stigmatizing' and fear 'becoming a client' or failing to manage work stress where others seem to manage well (Hannigan et al., 2004).

Stress and Satisfaction Among Psychologists

Despite all this, psychologists generally report being satisfied, happy, healthy, feeling that their work has a positive impact on their personal lives and feeling high levels of personal accomplishment (Hannigan et al., 2004; Radeke & Mahoney, 2000; Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004). Those who manage to keep a sense of control over their work tend to be satisfied, which may be why those working in independent practice were found (in a US study) to show less burnout and a greater sense of personal accomplishment than those working for agencies such as hospitals and community centres (Rupert & Morgan, 2005). Although work hours are related to stress, the type of activity is also important. For both research and clinical psychologists, time spent on administration and paperwork was stressful but time spent conducting therapy (for clinicians) was not (Rupert & Morgan, 2005). A sense of meaningfulness and of doing a worthwhile job is related to wellbeing and enjoyment of work. Clinical psychologists reported finding satisfaction from helping others and promoting growth in clients (Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004). Making progress towards a valued goal was important, and having the resources in areas related to the goals was a key factor in wellbeing (Diener, 2000).

Biculturalism, Multiculturalism and Work-Related Stress Among Psychologists

Psychological models are often developed in a Western context then applied to people of other cultures. Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) sets out the basis of respect between Maori and non-Maori and psychologists should be informed about the meaning and implications of the Treaty for their work. Psychologists also need to be aware of the increasing multiculturalism within New Zealand which is reflected in increasing cultural diversity among psychologists and among the people with whom psychologists work. Culture includes, but is not restricted to, -age or generation, iwi, hapu and tribal links; gender; sexual orientation; occupation and socioeconomic status; cultural and epistemological frame of reference; ethnic origin or migrant experience; religious or spiritual belief; and disability" (New Zealand Psychologists Board, 2006, p.4). Cultural issues are relevant to each component of the cognitive-transactional model of stress and also to the model as a whole but, with regard to the links between cultural issues, work-related stress and the practice of psychology, very little research has been done.

The cognitive-transactional model is an individualistic one. While research has confirmed the relationships among demands, appraisal, coping and outcomes in many occupations and countries, some important issues have yet to be addressed. For instance the Maori worldview is considered to be more collective, with the self defined by relationships with others to a greater extent than the relatively individualistic worldview of Pakeha (Durie, 1998). The applicability of individualistic models of stress and wellbeing to people of cultures which have a more collectivist orientation has yet to be established. The well known model of Maori psychological and physical wellbeing, Te Whare Tapa Wha, was developed as a shift away from a focus on ill-health towards wellbeing but this model has not, to the authors' knowledge, been investigated in the context of work-related stress and wellbeing.

It is also important for psychologists to recognise that people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds may be subject to different demands related to economic, social and employment opportunities (Jones & Bright, 2001). Health and wellbeing are linked to a secure cultural identity, and stress and anxiety may result if cultural values are not respected at work. Workplaces vary

in diversity, in respect for biculturalism and in the degree of support for staff. Creating culturally congruent organisational environments for Maori may assist with building resilience (Gavala & Flett, 2005). More information is needed on culturally appropriate ways to identify and address work demands.

The literature on coping is also dominated by individualistic approaches. Control and direct action by individuals have been emphasised while the social aspects of coping have been relatively neglected (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Culture may affect the relative preferences people have for collective strategies, in which individuals share resources, or for individualistic ones in which personal benefits are pursued regardless of others. There is a need for more information as to how culture impacts on preferences for and effectiveness of coping strategies. Another area that deserves more attention is the role of spirituality and religious coping in enhancing wellbeing. These have not often been studied in the context of occupational stress but are very significant in the work and lives of many people (Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000).

Cultural safety requires psychologists to reflect on their own cultural identity, to recognise the impact that this has on their professional practice, to appreciate the cultural bases of psychology and to be able to modify their practice accordingly (Board, 2006). Psychologists should obtain training, experience and advice to ensure that they are competent and culturally safe. Much more information is needed about the relationships among culture, demands, coping and outcomes in order to build effective psychological practice.

IMPLICATIONS: MANAGING WORK-RELATED STRESS

In New Zealand the *Health and Safety in Employment Act (1992)* and the *Health and Safety in Employment Amendment Act (2002)* place the responsibility for managing hazards on both the employer and the employee. A hazard is an actual or potential cause or source of harm, including the physical or mental harm caused by work-related stress. Psychological stressors, like other workplace hazards, need to be managed. They can be addressed by a systematic approach of identifying hazards, assessing their significance, controlling them and evaluating the effectiveness of the controls.

Identifying Demands

The most effective approaches to building well-being and reducing stress deal with the underlying causes, so it is necessary to identify both levels of stress and wellbeing and the factors that are related to these outcomes. Staff and management must work together to identify the positive and negative aspects of work and to identify ways to resolve problems and enhance strengths.

Where particular types of stressors may affect groups of staff, one way to identify the extent of stress-related problems is to conduct a *stress audit.* A stress audit usually involves a self-report index. These indices ask respondents to report the existence of a range of stressors. The information that is gathered can be *very* valuable but the listed stressors are quite general and the scales may overlook stressors that are specific to particular organisations or jobs.

Where occupation or job-specific audit tools are needed, development ideally requires three steps. First, a task-based job analysis is needed to identify the key job tasks and an ergonomic analysis to identify the physical characteristics of the work environment. Secondly, structured interviews are carried out with employees and supervisors in the jobs to be assessed to identify potential stressors associated with the tasks and physical work environment. The third step is to select the stressors to be included in the self-report inventory and to decide on the format, scoring and interpretation of the inventory. The inventory is then administered to staff and supervisors [preferably those who did not take part in the development phases to avoid redundancy of

information (Sulsky & Smith, 2005)]. This process provides relevant and detailed information although it may be too time-consuming or expensive for some workplaces.

As well as identifying problems, it is important to identify aspects of work that people find satisfying and rewarding. These might include: a variety of interesting tasks, a sense of control, good collaborative relationships, a well designed work environment, appropriate rewards and chances for career progression (OSH, 2003).

When identifying stressful and healthy aspects of work, the information should he specific, it should be written down and should include examples or evidence for the presence or absence of each aspect. Ideas about how to address problems should be recorded at the same time. A documented approach ensures that details are not overlooked and provides baseline information that allows changes to be tracked.

Once stressful and healthy aspects of work have been identified, it is necessary to decide which problems or demands should be tackled first. Early steps need to be taken to address the most significant problems but it is also helpful to look at 'easy' ones where relatively simple solutions are available. This gets the process started. Action plans need to be developed and implemented, then follow-up reviews or stress audits should be conducted to investigate the impact of the changes. When problems are being addressed it is important to make sure that the positive aspects of work are not undermined by any changes but are strengthened as far as possible. Once work aspects that lead to stress and wellbeing have been identified and managed, regular review can help make sure that the problems have been addressed, that new problems have not arisen and that the intended results have been achieved (Michie & Williams, 2003).

Managing Demands

Effective management of work-related demands needs to include initiatives at three levels:

– *Primary.* This approach includes strategies to reduce the causes of stress and increase those factors at work that are associated with well-being.

– *Secondary.* These initiatives aim to help individuals to cope with stress.

– *Tertiary.* These strategies aim to provide support to those who are stressed (O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2002).

Primary Intervention: Reducing Causes of Stress and Building Resources for Well-Being

Effective management of demands involves ensuring that tasks, technologies and work environments are appropriate, clarifying what is expected, developing flexible work schedules, providing constructive feedback, social support and equitable reward systems and increasing the control that staff have over their work (O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2002; Sonnentag & Frese, 2003).

Job redesign could aim, for example, to

– ensure staff have more control over the pace and method of work and have the opportunity to 'see a job through';

– allow for professional development and provide opportunities for learning through training and experience;

– recognise improvements in skills and expertise;

– allow for flexible hours, part-time employment or job sharing;

– improve understanding of the task;

– promote informal contact between fellow staff, clients, supervisors and spouses;

– clarify what is expected of staff to reduce uncertainties about the job;

—   build consultation and communication to clarify expectations, negotiate workloads, seek more or less responsibility, clarify misunderstandings, find effective and acceptable solutions, seek feedback on performance and so forth.

Other initiatives that have successfully reduced stress and dissatisfaction include:

—   Regular staff meetings to share feelings and innovative ideas;
—   Alternative job arrangements;
—   Adequate staffing;
—   Reasonable shift schedules;
—   Organised and efficient work functions and environment;
—   Recognition of and action on legitimate complaints;
—   Opportunities to improve skills;
—   More flexibility and staff member participation in scheduling;
—   Scheduled rotation of work assignments;
—   Appropriate use of job analysis, staff selection and training so that knowledge, skills and abilities are relevant;
—   Effective systems for motivation and performance management;
—   Work-life balance initiatives such as flexible work (e.g. working from home, compressed work weeks, flexible hours), leave arrangements (e.g. maternity leave, paternity leave, leave to care for a sick dependent), dependent care assistance (e.g. childcare, eldercare), and other services such as employee assistance programs. These help ensure that dependents are cared for but they need to be appropriate to staff needs (Frone, 2003).
—   Leisure such as weekends and holidays can allow resources to be replenished and can reduce exhaustion, stress and burnout, at least for a while (Eden, 2001).

Secondary Intervention: Assisting Individuals to Cope with Demands

Psychologists experiencing work-related stress have reported that seeking supervision, talking to other clinical psychologists, participation in a professional support network, exercising and talking to a partner are helpful means of managing stress (Hannigan et al., 2004). Psychologists in private practice may experience fewer opportunities for social support at work and so support from outside the workplace can be particularly valuable (Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004). Support networks can help with building self-awareness, managing workloads and sharing skills. Issues concerning professional supervision are covered by Howard (this volume).

Discussing work frustrations with family does not seem to be related to satisfaction or well-being, but time spent on personal as well as professional priorities is essential for a balanced life. Balance also includes leisure activities such as exercise or sport, reading, watching TV and movies which turn attention and energy away from work and provide rest and relaxation (Radeke & Mahoney, 2000; Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004).

Ensuring that individuals have appropriate levels of competence and skills is important to enable people to deal with demands and to build self-efficacy. Continuing professional development, training courses and mentoring of new staff play a valuable role. As well as work-related competence, specific skills to help psychologists manage demands may include mobilising social support, problem solving, decision making, communication skills including empathy, negotiation and mediation, and conflict prevention and resolution (Michie & Williams, 2003).

Training in stress management often includes coping techniques such as relaxation, meditation and time management, and lifestyle information on health, exercise and diet. These programmes

may be helpful if the sources of stress are being actively managed and the training is aimed at the specific needs of staff (O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2002). Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) are designed to handle personal and emotional problems which interfere with work performance. An EAP will not solve the problems but can give advice on managing stressful situations.

Psychologists need to recognise that they are vulnerable to stress and distress in certain circumstances and to take responsibility for their own wellness. Some important steps include building support networks that include peers, colleagues, family and friends; keeping a balance among work, leisure and other activities; maintaining competence through supervision, education, conferences, workshops, membership of professional associations and reading, and self-care with attention to relaxation, exercise, sleep and nutrition. Self-knowledge of values and the potential for values conflict at work is also important. Personal therapy can help to promote self-awareness and self-monitoring. Psychologists need to remain aware of their satisfaction, stress, priorities and opportunities.

Tertiary Prevention: Supporting Those who are Stressed

As well as prevention, staff who are already stressed need assistance and support. Formal resources such as supervision and peer support may be available and larger organisations may have access to an EAP. Managers should regularly ensure that staff know that confidential and relevant support resources are available and should keep contact phone numbers, website information, and so forth, up-to-date and on display. These resources tend to be used by those who are most distressed so the contact information should be readily and easily available. Psychologists should be encouraged to visit a general practitioner regularly. Managers may also want to consider developing procedures for debriefing staff after particularly stressful experiences.

The value of these approaches is limited as many people choose not to use them. Even when the organisational culture supports the use of resources, the most stressed staff may have the least time and many professionals are reluctant to ask for help or admit they are stressed. In addition, these approaches minimise the effects of stress (at best) and do not fulfil the legal obligation to take practicable steps to eliminate stress Successful management of stress requires intervention at both the individual and organisational levels.

Beyond Managing Stress: Increasing Wellbeing

There is a great deal of information about how to reduce stress but more is needed on how to help individuals and organisations enhance wellbeing. Building wellbeing means finding out which aspects of the work are engaging, why these aspects are pleasurable and what can be done to enhance them.

Some of the enjoyable aspects of work in psychology include helping others, autonomy and opportunities to learn. Employers of psychologists can help by establishing meaningful goals, making sure staff have the resources they need and making sure there is good, supportive, on-going communication. Trust and fairness are important and so are clear goals and expectations. Employers and managers need to be easily accessible, to share information and to encourage others to do the same.

CONCLUSIONS

Work-related stress has serious implications for health and wellbeing, and managing it is far from straightforward. This may account for the documented ineffectiveness of stress management interventions (Beehr & O'Driscoll, 2002). In managing stressors at work it is important to identify, assess and control stressors but also to work towards enhancing the rewarding aspects of the job. Stressors faced by psychologists include client characteristics, workloads, professional

self-doubt, lack of support and poor management. Psychologists are often reluctant to seek help for themselves when they are stressed. Stress and burnout are often reported but, despite the evidence for the stress of psychological work, levels of satisfaction in the profession are high. Employers and managers of psychologists need to ensure workplaces and work are designed for wellbeing, satisfaction and performance. Psychologists themselves need to take responsibility for their own levels of stress and to consider the coping strategies they use to deal with demands. The management of stress involves finding and reducing controllable sources of stress and building support and resources to help psychologists manage stress and build wellbeing.

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