Discovering the truth about ourselves is a lifetime’s work, but it’s worth the effort.

~

Fred Rogers

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City of Austin

Licensed Therapist
Being Well with Bianca
QUESTION:

What causes stress in the workplace?

Put your answer in the chat.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Event</th>
<th>Mean Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Death of spouse</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Divorce</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Marital Separation from mate</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Detention in jail or other institution</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Death of a close family member</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Major personal injury or illness</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Marriage</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Being fired at work</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Marital reconciliation with mate</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Retirement from work</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Major change in the health or behavior of a family member</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Pregnancy</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sexual Difficulties</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Gaining a new family member (i.e., birth, adoption, older adult moving in, etc)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Major business readjustment</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Major change in financial state (i.e., a lot worse or better off than usual)</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Death of a close friend</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Changing to a different line of work</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Major change in the number of arguments w/spouse (i.e., either a lot more or a lot less than usual regarding child rearing, personal habits, etc.)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Taking on a mortgage (for home, business, etc..)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Foreclosure on a mortgage or loan</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Major change in responsibilities at work (i.e. promotion, demotion, etc.)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Son or daughter leaving home (marriage, attending college, joined mil)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Major change in responsibilities at work (e.g., promotion, demotion, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Son or daughter leaving home (marriage, attending college, joined mil.)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. In-law troubles</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Outstanding personal achievement</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. Spouse beginning or ceasing work outside the home</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Beginning or ceasing formal schooling</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>28. Major change in living condition (new home, remodeling, deterioration of neighborhood or home etc.)</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>29. Revision of personal habits (dress manners, associations, quitting smoking)</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>30. Troubles with the boss</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Major changes in working hours or conditions</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Changes in residence</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Changing to a new school</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Major change in usual type and/or amount of recreation</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Major change in church activity (i.e., a lot more or less than usual)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Major change in social activities (clubs, movies, visiting, etc.)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Taking on a loan (car, tv, freezer, etc.)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Major change in sleeping habits (a lot more or a lot less than usual)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Major change in number of family get-togethers (&quot;&quot;&quot;)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Major change in eating habits (a lot more or less food intake, or very different meal hours or surroundings)</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>41. Vacation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Major holidays</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Minor violations of the law (traffic tickets, jaywalking, disturbing the peace, etc)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now, add up all the points you have to find your score.
Information or Experience

- Past Experiences (Your "list")
- Current Situation (Current Stressors)
- Daily Feeling/Mood (Basic wellness and mental health)

Your reaction to or interpretation/perception of the person or situation
Types of Stress

- **Eustress**: Positive Stress
  - Acute Stress
  - Episodic Stress
- **Distress**: Negative Stress
  - Chronic Stress
  - Toxic Stress

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STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM

Brain
Hypothalamus

Adenocorticotropic hormone (ACTH)

Dilation of Bronchioles

Adrenal Glands

Increased Heart Rate

Blood pressure increases

Liver converts glycogen to glucose

Decreased digestive system activity

Glucose
Glycogen

Increased Heart Rate

Blood pressure increases

Liver converts glycogen to glucose

Decreased digestive system activity

Glucose
Glycogen
## Impact of Stress on Body and Brain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On your body</th>
<th>On your mood</th>
<th>On your behavior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Overeating or undereating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle tension or pain</td>
<td>Restlessness</td>
<td>Angry outbursts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest pain</td>
<td>Lack of motivation or focus</td>
<td>Drug or alcohol misuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue</td>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed</td>
<td>Tobacco use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in sex drive</td>
<td>Irritability or anger</td>
<td>Social withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomach upset</td>
<td>Sadness or depression</td>
<td>Exercising less often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep problems</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WORKPLACE EMOTIONAL WELLNESS AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE

➢ Our brains resist change. Our brains crave homeostasis and will work hard to keep it.

➢ Your brain tries to convince you are right – even when you are wrong.

➢ Look to relationship science.

Consider how hard it is to change yourself and you'll understand what little chance you have in trying to change others.
WORKPLACE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

➢ Negative Bias - Our brains are hard-wired to see the negative (starts in infancy).

➢ Confirmation Bias – we reject information which does not conform to our beliefs/decisions.

➢ Hindsight Bias – things look different with the benefit of context
GETTING TRIGGERED IN THE OFFICE, ON THE WAY TO WORK, ETC., ETC.

- Everyone gets triggered - EVERYONE

- The past is not always in the past. (Sorry.)

- Stress can make us feel out-resourced. (So can fatigue, hunger, lack of physical activity)

- Draw from your past and present challenges to compassionately connect with others.
What People Think Empathy Is

Feeling sorry for someone

What Empathy Actually Is

- Sensing other people’s emotions
- Mirroring someone’s feelings
- Imagine what someone is thinking
- Identify how a person is feeling
- Feeling overwhelmed by others’ tragedy
- Really listening to what others have to say
- Understanding another person’s feelings
- Imagining how someone is feeling
- Seeing things from another point of view
PRINCIPLES OF EMPATHY

1) Connecting with empathy MUST precede advice. (Don’t jump to “fixing”.)

2) Responding to someone who is in their emotional brain with your logical brain will escalate a situation.

3) Empathic listening de-escalates. Needing to be “right” escalates

4) If you are struggling to connect with empathy, the problem is not the other person.
You seriously have no idea what people are dealing with in their personal life. So just be nice, it's that simple.
Take a Break (I mean it!)

The power of nature to heal

Mental health days

Meditate (seriously)

Nap – Exercise – Anything

Set strong boundaries
RIGHT NOW, THIS IS HOW IT IS.
What is mindfulness meditation

One Definition = Non-judgmental awareness of the present moment.

- Be aware of the present moment

- Simply noticing feelings and thoughts as they come and go.

- Regain control over our attention. (Counter acts the damage social media has done.)

- Instead of “one day at a time”, it’s “one minute at a time”
Why meditate . . .

MRI scans show:

- After an eight-week course of mindfulness practice, the brain’s “fight or flight” center, the amygdala, appears to shrink. (The amygdala, associated with fear and emotion, is involved in the initiation of the body’s response to stress.)

- As the amygdala shrinks, the pre-frontal cortex becomes thicker. (Pre-frontal cortex is associated with higher order brain functions such as awareness, concentration and decision-making.)

- The connections between the areas of the brain associated with attention and concentration get stronger.

- After eight weeks of mindfulness meditation, there was an increase in cortical thickness in the hippocampus (the area which governs learning and memory)
Left: Amygdala when study participants were watching images with emotional content before learning meditation.  
Right: After eight weeks of training in mindful meditation the amygdala is less activated.  

Source: The Harvard Gazette
With meditation: Increase of activity in the meditator’s frontal lobe, responsible for focusing attention and concentration.

Source: NPR
Why meditate . . .

Need more reasons?

- Widely accepted as a useful part of a treatment plan for anxiety and depression.

- Regularly prescribed as part of chronic pain management.

- Learning to “be still” and “quiet the mind” can help with sleep. Your brain needs a vacation from the stress of modern society.

- Can be used “in the moment” to help when dysregulated.

- Long lasting effects - positive brain activity in people who have learned to meditate and do so regularly remains steady even when they are not meditating.
What holds us back . . .

- The paradox
- “It’s hard to calm my mind.”
- “I don’t know how to do it? What if I do it wrong?”
- “I don’t have time.”
- “It’s boring.”
How To Get Started

- Be kind to yourself – no judgment
- Find a regular time to help create a habit
- Keep it brief
- Find a posture that works for you
- Choose a type you enjoy
- Meditation apps (Free = Insight Timer)
- Other things – aromatherapy, spa or meditation playlists.
Book Recommendations

1. 10% Happier
   - By Dan Harris
   - #1 New York Times Bestseller
   - How I Tamed the Voice in My Head, Reduced Stress Without Losing My Edge, and Found Self-Help That Actually Works—a True Story
   - "Starting, provocative, and often very funny." —Gretchen Rubin, author of The Happiness Project
   - (also a podcast)

2. Comfortable with Uncertainty
   - By Pema Chödrön
   - 168 Teachings on Cultivating Fearlessness and Compassion
   - Read by Joanna Rotte

3. Just Sit
   - By Suey and Elizabeth Novogratz
   - Illustrations by Niko Borges
   - For People Who Know They Should But Don't
To protect your energy...

It’s okay to cancel a commitment.
It’s okay to not answer that call.
It’s okay to change your mind.
It’s okay to want to be alone.
It’s okay to take a day off.
It’s okay to do nothing.
It’s okay to speak up.
It’s okay to let go.
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