

Wellbeing open discuss & exchange experiences

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Agenda & Topics

Step 1

- Intro Michela
- Personal Background
- Professional Story

Step 2

- WFH Challenges
- Work Related Stress
- High Demanding Work Environment

Step 3

- Expat Life
- Isolation
- Burn Out

How are you feeling now?

Work related stress



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random facts about me....



From immigrant



to certified translator



to banker



To Licensed Clinical
Psychologist

random facts about me....



From Italy



To Germany



To The Netherlands



.....back to Italy....



random facts about me....



I've lived 13 years in tiny,
pittoresque Schalkwijk....



random facts about me....



- I have earned a master MBA at TiasNimbas Business School



- I have earned a specialization as certified Management Accountant (CMA)



IMA's Certification for
Accountants and
Financial Professionals
in Business

- I have worked as Financial Controller at ING Bank



random facts about me....



- After 3 years living in Germany
- 13 years living in the Netherlands
- And for 3 years back to Italy.....

...Don't really feel Italian, neither Dutch, nor German

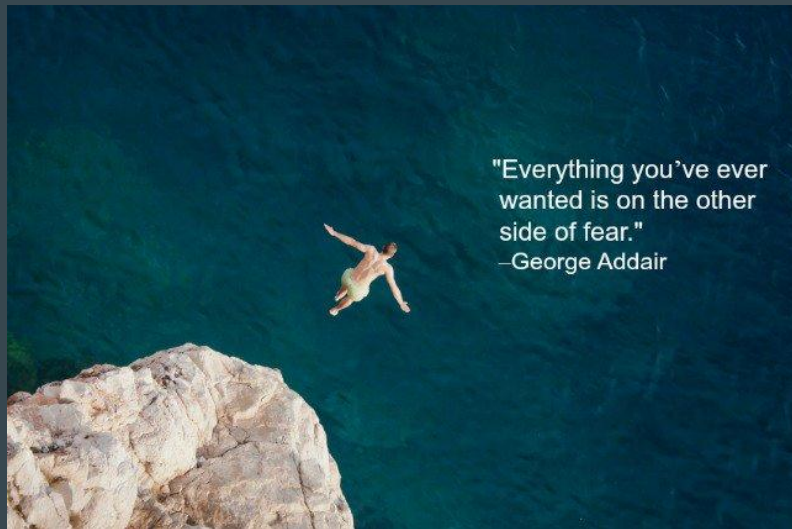


random (stressful) facts about Italy



- People are, more often than not, very rude
- Country with one the highest unemployment rate in the world
- Country with one of the highest Government Budget Deficit in the world
- There's chronic traffic jams in the cities as no one respects the rules
- We've got the worst politicians in the world
- Now....there's Covid 19

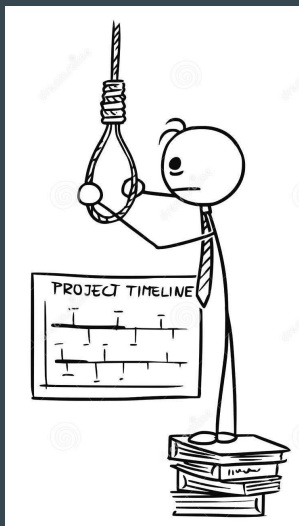
Why did I tell you all that?



"Everything you've ever
wanted is on the other
side of fear."
—George Addair

- Life can be really unpredictable
- There is always chance for change if you allow yourself to see beyond your fears
- You have much more control upon your life than what you think

Work related stress disorder



- Existential matter (why am I here? Who I am? What do I do?..)
- Technology overload (smart working, lockdown, meetings across different time zones...)
- Anxiety (fear of self and others' judgment)
- Difficult interpersonal communication
- sense of identity - «doing» vs. «being» (do I recognize myself in what I do?)
- Living alone as an expat

Work related stress disorder: some definitions



World Health
Organization

- Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope.
- Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as little control over work processes.
- There is often confusion between pressure or challenge and stress and sometimes it is used to excuse bad management practice.



European Agency
for Safety and Health
at Work



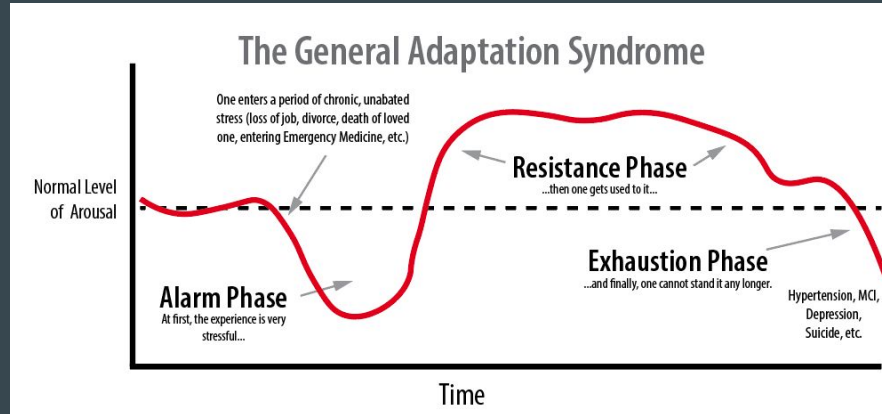
Work-related stress is experienced when the demands of the work environment exceed the employees' ability to cope with (or control) them.³

Stress isn't a disease, but if it is intense and goes on for some time, it can lead to mental and physical ill-health. Being under *pressure* can improve performance and give satisfaction when challenging objectives are achieved. But when demand and pressures become too much, they lead to *stress*. And this is bad for workers and for their organisations.

Who discovered the stress “syndrome” (GAS) ?

Hans Selye - Canadian-Hungarian endocrinologist (British Medical Journal, June 17th, 1950)

Experiment on cavia's - higher cortisol and adrenaline in blood would lead to other hormonal and physiological changes, and eventually, to death



General Adaptation Syndrome

Stress is not bad per se: it prepares the body to face the immediate danger or threaten. As such, it is a natural defense mechanism of all animals in which the body enters in an alert state which supports survival. It involves the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (HPA axis) system. However, the “resistance” phase must have a short duration. The problem is that in modern work environment the stress phase has become a chronic state, which sets the employees' health at risk.

From work stress to occupational burnout



Prolonged high level of work stress leads to burn out.

ICD-11. (International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision) defines the burn out syndrome as:

Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: 1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and 3) reduced professional efficacy. Burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.

Occupational burnout

"A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations."

- **Dr. Ayala Pines and Dr. Elliot Aronson.**

"A state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward."

- **Dr. Herbert J. Freudenberger.**

Occupational burnout symptoms

- Physical and mental exhaustion
- Disillusionment
- Lack of motivation and emotional involvement with the job, disengagement
- Feeling of being constantly overwhelmed by the tasks yet to do

Which are the main stressors in modern work environment ?

- High demanding targets (are they really achievable? Do I have full control on all parts of the project/job? What does that say about myself??.....)
[suggestions and discussion]
- Increased flexibility on working hours does not always mean less working hours.....
- Global engaged companies have employees in various parts of the world who need to communicate with each other in different time zones
- High level of perceived interpersonal competition

Sharing Session... 10 mins

- Do you recognise your experience?
- Does it relate to you?
- How many Zoom Meetings are too many?
- How do I take time for myself in a 9 to 9 day...?
- What is your emotional state at 9.00 compared 20.00?

Which are the main stressors in modern work environment ?

- Amount of repetitive tasks in the job
- The job is too demanding or also too little demanding for our capabilities
- Social pressure \Rightarrow keep performing and pursuing successful careers \Rightarrow status must stay high in the eyes of others, no matter we like the job or not



Which are the additional stressors during Covid Pandemic?

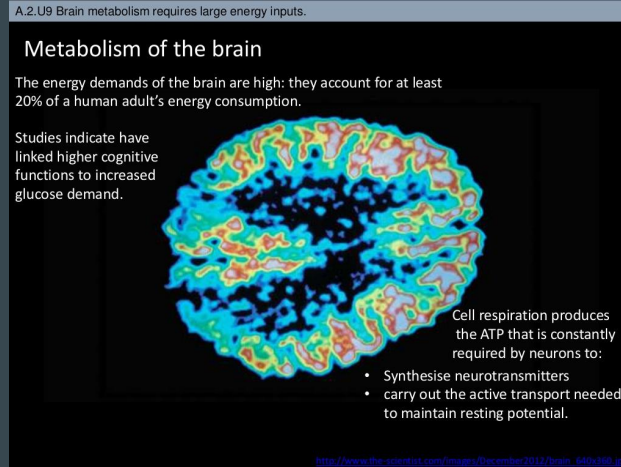
WFH - no more perceived delimitation between work and private life (feeling like you never leave work)

No longer in person interactions with colleagues; this may lead to miscommunication, emotional detachment, lack of positive interactions and sharing; risk of building up negative emotions which cannot be mitigated by social interactions

Some employees might have difficulties in managing the work space in the apartment they share with other member of the family (spouse, kids, room mate...)

Which are the additional stressors during Covid Pandemic?

Cognitive overload : technology absorbs much attention and concentration (that's why online meetings are often experienced as more tiring than in person meetings). The brain cells need time to discharge from the overload of waste molecules produced by the catabolism process.



Additional stressors during Covid Pandemic as an Expat

- Lack of family and friends support when you need to detach from work stress
- Lack of significant quality time outside working hours
- Loneliness \Rightarrow helplessness \Rightarrow you're all alone at home



Sharing Session... 10 mins

- How do you feel alone with no water cooler chats/coffee breaks/team lunch?
- How do you manage children, screams, cry & play time?
- When is time for me & myself right?

Work related stress - individual and general factors

- Not everyone reacts in the same way to stress (family history, genetics, prior experiences, temperament, personality, level of self esteem.....)
- Different level of social support
- Different goals in life
- Ability to anchor to what we are aiming to (life project, why am I doing all this??)
- Level of identification with the job

Sharing Session... 10 mins

- What are level of emotional support?
- What is my goal (daily vs monthly)...?
- Guilt feelings vs working hours...
- Mental space & connection... what are you strategies to find & maintain social support?

Work related stress - individual and general factors

- Ability to maintain sense of purpose
- Ability to understand own emotions and remain “self-centered”
- Assertivity and level of trust in life and others
- Internal or external locus of control
- The job design does not meet my expectations and reward does not balance the effort

How are you feeling now?

Work related stress - individual and general factors

.....can you add other factors?

Q&A and open discussion