



# OH&S TIP SHEET

Health and Safety in Early Childhood Services

## Stress

Some stress is normal. It often provides us with the energy and motivation to meet challenges at home and at work so that we achieve goals, leaving us satisfied and happy. As with most things, too much stress can have negative impacts, leading to exhaustion, frustration or dissatisfaction and eventually ill-health.

### Stress-related definitions

- **Stress:** Worry or emotional tension caused by a difficult situation, event or series of events.
- **Resilience:** The capacity for a person to adapt by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of well-being.
- **Workplace stress:** (According to the World Health Organization) Conflict between job demands on the employee and their ability to cope. This is made worse when there is little support from supervisors and colleagues, and where the employee has little control in meeting these demands.

### Work and non-work related stressors

Some potential work related stressors are:

- occupational bullying and violence
- lack of decision making and control
- role uncertainty
- demanding work schedules or workloads

- inadequate skills to undertake a job
- unclear goals or expectations
- inability to work successfully with colleagues or manager
- job not a good fit for a person's values
- feeling undervalued or underutilised
- company changes, job changes or job uncertainty.

Some potential non-work related stressors are:

- relationship challenges
- death or illness of a family member or close friend
- illness and health concerns
- financial difficulties
- drug and alcohol abuse
- lack of decision making and control
- moving house and other major, consuming life disruptions.

### Costs of work related stress

There are significant costs associated with work related stress, such as:

- job dissatisfaction

- employee turnover
- reduced efficiency
- illness
- absenteeism
- petty internal politics
- bad or snap decisions
- indifference and apathy
- lack of motivation or creativity.

### Coping with work and non-work related stress

Research has confirmed that the way we react to setbacks at and outside of work can influence how well our health will fare from stress. It tells us that if we react to stress from a base of being personally empowered, then in many instances, when faced with stressful situations, we see these as bad events that are temporary setbacks, not 'all pervasive and forever', and as isolated to particular circumstances.

In many instances with the help of friends, families, loved ones and trusted work colleagues and managers, we can overcome these through our effort and abilities. This is sometimes referred to as resilience.