

## What is Stress and How Does it Impact Organizations?

**Stress is a normal physical response to demands or perceived threats** and is the body's way of protecting us from situations, events, and interactions that trigger a response. We ALL experience stress in our lives and it is directly connected to both our physical and mental health. Research shows that stress contributes to medical conditions such as heart disease and high blood pressure, while impacting brain functions like memory, learning, mood, and anxiety. This is where self-care on a regular, daily basis plays a strong preventative role and should be treated not as a luxury, but as a necessity – especially in the workplace.

**Stress in organizations impacts everything from systems, to revenue, to your workforce.**

When a system, with many moving functions and pieces is compromised, all parts are affected. A great example of how ongoing stress can present itself at work is COVID-19 and how it impacted working parents, employees who were new to remote work, and teams who experienced job or financial insecurity.

**91%**  
OF ADULTS

said feeling overwhelmingly stressed negatively affects the quality of their work.

- Deloitte Insights

**12.8M**  
WORK DAYS

are lost in a year due to work-related stress, depression, or anxiety.

- Health and Safety Executive

**84.8%**  
OF ADULTS

say workplace stress impacts their mental health.

- Mental Health America

Just as a positive influence can create a welcome shift within a system, a negative influence will create breakdowns in communication, collaboration, motivation and ultimately productivity. Leadership has to play a strong role in keeping employees and your systems functioning smoothly in stressful times. This is where the guiding principles of psychological safety: trust, open communication, and an atmosphere that encourages feedback and innovative risk-taking can be critical to helping you guide your organization through stressful times.

Along the same lines, leadership should be modeling the behaviors they want to see in employees. How does your executive team walk the walk when it comes to talking about mental health or prioritizing self-care? If you talk openly about anxiety, stress, or needing to take a break and go for a walk – employees will too. This builds resilience and, in turn, stronger and less stressed teams.