

Firing off...

from... the work clinic blog



coping with stress

Tara Craig

Cynical women – myself included – often refer to ‘male pride’, but it would appear that it is more than just a tired cliché.

Academics in the University of Cambridge’s sociology department have found that men who live in fear of redundancy are far more likely to succumb to depression than their female colleagues. And, oddly, both men and women are more affected by the fear of losing their jobs than by actually being made redundant.

The study, which included case studies of companies that had been taken over by competitors, sparking concerns over potential job cuts, found that men recorded higher measures of depression and anxiety on the standard clinical measure than women. This measure records symptoms such as poor concentration, insomnia and unexplained sadness.

Senior lecturer Brendan Burchell says that “a macho issue about men being the breadwinner” has much to answer for.

Ironically, although men may be feeling the strain, the number of women in full-time work fell by 53,000 last quarter, whereas the number of men dropped by 36,000.

But is this news? We’ve known for years that men find it more difficult to deal with stress than women do. And we’ve all heard the saying ‘pride comes before a fall’. So rather than continuing to commission research that reaches the same conclusion each time, shouldn’t the experts be doing something to combat this stress, or at least to understand and alleviate the symptoms before it’s too late for the victims?



TOUGH TIMES...
Men recorded higher measures of depression and anxiety.

befriend’. Both biology and culture isolate men when they are under pressure. They can’t physically fight the fear of redundancy, so they need to learn to fight and transform their fearful thoughts instead. Men find it harder to share vulnerabilities or talk about problems, so set up formal brainstorming sessions or access to a coach.

We must help men accept the benefit of not having to be the sole breadwinner and protector, thus gaining broader perspectives of themselves as having meaning and purpose beyond their work.

Post by Ellie Oakes, Nov8 on 09.03.09
The most interesting finding is that it is the fear and not the actual event that has the biggest impact on wellbeing – for both sexes.

This raises both a responsibility and an opportunity for organisations to deal differently with an unfortunately increasingly common occurrence. This insight invites organisations to address uncertainty as early as possible. Frequent dialogue and the courage to be honest about knowns and unknowns empowers both men and women to deal with the consequences of the choices they have.

Withholding all information until the last minute leaves individuals powerless and unable to tackle the terrible monster under the bed. And, as the study found, it’s the monster and not the reality that truly affects wellbeing.

Your comments

Post by Ian Draper, UK National Work Stress Network

on 08.03.09

Work-related stress and associated illnesses affect both genders in similar ways. There are some causes of higher stress levels for women where extra family and caring duties can affect their performance at the workplace. In our work, we have seen little evidence to suggest that men are more or less resilient to stress than women. Home and work pressures cannot be disconnected from each other and can jointly cause illness where people are less able to cope with the perceived and real excessive pressures they experience.

The more obvious cynicism about pressure-related illnesses comes from those who believe that sufferers are ‘wimps and weaklings’, compared with their own position of alleged strength. Men and women alike are similarly affected by stress.

Post by Helen Whitten, Positiveworks

on 09.03.09

Men’s and women’s brains respond differently to stress. Men go into ‘fight or flight’ mode, and women into ‘tend and

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