

EAS/EmployeeAssistanceServices

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New Job Stress/Anxiety, Part I

April 2007

“Maybe I shouldn’t have taken this job. I don’t feel connected to my co-workers, my concentration is down, and I’m not sleeping more than 4 hours. I’m losing my confidence.”

Anxious Employee, 4 weeks on the new job

Work is stressful. The Holmes/Rahe Stress Inventory lists 5 job related events in the list of the top 22 life stressors. Starting a new job is stressful: a high percentage of people accessing employee assistance counseling are new employees and/or their spouses.

Because starting a new job is stressful, it’s natural that normal anxiety will accompany this change. Normal anxiety occurs any time there is a change. Anxiety can be helpful: it can forestall danger, and protect a person from harm. (“If you’re having normal anxiety, don’t worry about it.”)

However, normal anxiety can become pathological when it is *intense for several weeks*.

New employees, suffering intense anxiety for several weeks, can experience mistakes in perspective, judgment, decision making and communication. Intense anxiety can lead to great personal distress, family difficulties and inability to accomplish work goals.

Below is a list of 24 anxiety symptoms. Check each symptom you have experienced in the last 3 weeks. With normal anxiety, you may check off a few, and notice the intensity and duration are low. However, if you are checking off several anxiety symptoms, and assess your level is intense, and your symptoms have lasted longer than 3 weeks, discuss your inventory results with your Employee Assistance Counselor or your personal physician.

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|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> nervous | <input type="checkbox"/> frequent urination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shaky | <input type="checkbox"/> hot flashes/chills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> frequent worry | <input type="checkbox"/> keyed up/on edge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> muscle aches | <input type="checkbox"/> lump in throat/trouble swallowing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> very tired | <input type="checkbox"/> difficulty concentrating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shortness of breath | <input type="checkbox"/> quick to startle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> rapid heartbeat | <input type="checkbox"/> trouble falling asleep/staying asleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sweating [not due to heat] | <input type="checkbox"/> irritability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dry mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> avoiding places/people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dizziness/light headedness | <input type="checkbox"/> frequent thoughts of danger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> nausea, stomach problems | <input type="checkbox"/> thinking: “I can’t cope” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> restlessness | <input type="checkbox"/> frequently: “Something terrible will happen.” |

****This theme of “New Job Stress/Anxiety” will continue in EAS newsletters for the next several months: healthy ways to address anxiety, coping with change, what to do/not do if you’re starting a new job, stress hardiness strategies, solving work stress problems, reducing stress at work.**