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Comprehension story 4

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

Since we so often attach our jobs to our sense of self-worth, work related stress can be an important in our daily lives. It is therefore important to identify things that can cause stress in the work place (job stressor), and when possible, deal with them in a healthy manner. Common job stressors include the following: conflicts with colleagues, supervisors or work under supervision; changes in work routine; deadlines; too much (or too little) responsibility; lack of control over work methods and planning; long working hours; repetitive tasks excessive or rhythmic noise; poor time management or organization; working with hazardous equipment or substance; threat of pay reduction or unemployment; and lack of necessary resources. These are factors that nearly everyone has to deal with at one time or another in the work place. These stressors may vary from job to job, and individual react differently to those stimuli, but we are usually affected in some way by job stressors.

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Although workers of any age can succumb to stress in the work place, older workers in general are hit the hardest by job stress. Technological advances tend to cause more stress for older workers, especially those who have been performing a similar routine for a long time and are suddenly forced to assimilate new technology into their daily work. Older workers are also prime targets for layoffs. They have worked their way up the pay scale and in general are paid a higher wage than their younger counterparts. As a result, many old workers are

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leaving force at an earlier age than they normally would because of increased stress. 25

Stress in modern work place has increased greatly over the last 15 years. Corporate mergers and buyout have eliminated entire companies and thousands of jobs, new technology has caused drastic increase in working pace, and the competitiveness of the modern economy has forced individual employees to take on much heavier workload. 30

Today's work has to deal with stressors that are unique to the times we live in. The most obvious of this is the drastic increase in work place technology. Increased mechanical efficiency leads to the need for fewer workers but requires employees to become knowledgeable concerning the new machines they work with. Personal computer and computer networks, although increase work place efficiency and speed, are themselves contributors to job stress. Increased work speed is double edged sword. Getting more work done within a specified time may mean more profit for a company, but it also leads to the expectation that more work will always be accomplished in less time. Computers drastically reduce the time needed to perform tasks, but the person running the computers may then be asked to perform more tasks within the work day, causing stress. Workers are also asked to know about many uses of various computer software programs, which are constantly being changed and improved. The constant upgrading of computer programs requires that employees be reeducated continually to keep up. The increased productivity provided by computers may lead to elimination of jobs, since one worker may now be able to do the work of two or more. 35 40 45

The computer also may contribute to physical problems. The monitor of the computer may cause eyestrain, fatigue, and muscle tension. Constant work on a key board may place excess stress on fingers, hands and wrists. This in turn may contribute to arthritic conditions or to the newly recognized affliction known as carpal tunnel syndrome. The simple act of sitting at the computer for extended periods 50

with the body in a fixed position can put stress on the muscles and bones of the back, neck and limbs. 55

Affliction such as these, which are caused by repetitive motions, unusual body posture, or holding static joint positions over extended periods, are now referred to as repetitive strain injuries (RSIs). The risk of developing RSIs is increased during periods of emotional or while trying to beat deadlines. RSIs can also develop because of improper placement of equipment (such as key board) or by certain work practices. Company production goals based on quotas, such counting worker's key-strokes throughout the day, can force employees to work through needed break periods to meet the expected work output; this in turn can increase the risk of RSIs development. 60 65

The current corporate trend of eliminating jobs to cut cost-“downsizing” – has contributed greatly to the problems of job stress. This practice affects not only ranking file workers but employees in management as well as well. Often cuts are made with little or no regard to an employee's years of service or experience (or because of this, to save money), so anyone on the may be vulnerable. This lack of job security has been an important contributor to job stress over the last years. 70

Although the current popularity of downsizing may be unprecedented, the effects of the fear of unemployment have been studied as early as 1960s. For example, from 1965 to 1973 the workers at Cape Canaveral was downsized from 65,000 employees to 32,000, aerospace worker, highly trained and highly paid, were being laid off in large numbers as the government cut back on the space programme. With few skills that could be transferred to other jobs, many found themselves bagging groceries and taking tickets for living. The fear of being unemployed and the difficult transition after being laid off caused many physical and mental problems for Cape Canaveral workers and their families. Because of heavy stress, these families suffered from 75 80

anxiety and depression and led to high divorce rates in the nation, drinking, drug use, and sudden heart attack deaths. Autopsies on these heat attack victims, some of whom were as young as 29, showed that no significant risk factor were present except for high levels of chemicals (such as epinephrine) that are released in response to stress 85

Since work related stress appears to be increasing in nearly all professions, it is more important than ever to be able to recognize the physical signs of stress and be able to reduce the effects of work related stress. Recognize when stress is getting to you. Be able to identify early warning signs that you may be under heavy stress. Emotional signs may include anxiety, lack of interest, and irritability. Mental fatigue, physical exhaustion and frequent illness may be physical manifestation of stress as well. Not everyone reacts to stressful situations in the same way, so know yourself well enough to recognize when stressors are affecting you. 90

Control your environment when you can. Not every work situation can be controlled, but controlling some situations can help reduce stress. Try not to schedule stressful work activities for the same time. Break larger jobs down into smaller parts. It is safe to do so, rearrange your work area to keep things fresh..... If stress on the job seems to be greatly affecting you physically or mentally, it is important that you see your family doctor or a qualified mental health professional as soon as possible. 100

Questions

- (a) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02 marks)
- (b) What does the writer meant by;
- (i) “...individuals reacts differently to these stimuli.”..? line (13-14) (03 marks)
- (ii) “... the current popularity of downsizing may be unprecedented”? (line 73) (03marks)
- (c) In about 100 words, explain why according to the passage, old people suffer most from stress at work. (12marks)

(d) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using your own words wherever possible

- | | | |
|--------|---|------------|
| (i) | Working with hazardous equipment (line 09-10) | (02 marks) |
| (ii) | Succumb stress (line 16.) | (02 marks) |
| (iii) | Prime target for lay - off (line 12) | (02 marks) |
| (iv) | Corporate merger and buyouts (line 26) | (02 marks) |
| (v) | A double edged sword (line 37) | (02 marks) |
| (vi) | Arthritic conditions (line 52) | (02 marks) |
| (vii) | Trying to beat deadlines (line 60-61) | (02 marks) |
| (viii) | vulnerable (line 72) | (02 marks) |
| (ix) | cut back (line 79) | (02 marks) |
| (x) | Physical manifestations (line 97) | (02 marks) |
| | | (20 marks) |

Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

Proposed answers

(a) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02 marks)

- Stress at work place
- Work place
- Causes of stress at work
- Etc.

(b) What does the writer mean by;

- (iii) “...individuals react differently to these stimuli.”..? line (13-14)
(03 marks)

Individuals are affected differently by same stressors.

Or

Each person responds to a situation in a varied way

Individuals respond differently to the same provocations

or

Individuals show different level of feelings to the same inconveniences

- (iv) “... the current popularity of downsizing may be unprecedented”?
(line 73) (03marks)

The trend of deliberate and strategic reduction of organization’s workforce

- (c) In about 100 words, explain why according to the passage, old people suffer most from stress at work. (12marks)

REASONS WHY OLD PEOPLE SUFFER MOST FROM STRESS AT WORK

Old people suffer most from work stress because they are more likely to be targets of job cuts; they are less likely to adapt to new technologies, increased workloads, abruptly and continuously changing routines; high expectations from their employers, meeting deadlines, excessive noise, and coping with constant upgrades and new technologies. Older people are also more susceptible to computer risks such as eyestrains, backache and repetitive strain injuries (RSIs). Having stayed at the place of work longer, older people are likely to have bigger work responsibilities, and conflicts with colleagues and supervisors.

- (d) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using your own words wherever possible

- | | | |
|--------|--|------------|
| (i) | Working with hazardous equipment (line 09-10) | (02 marks) |
| | Working with dangerous tools | |
| (ii) | Succumb stress (line 16.) | (02 marks) |
| | Deal with stress, accept stress or come to terms with or put up with stress | |
| (iii) | Prime target for lay-off (line 12) | (02 marks) |
| | Most likely to lose job/main focus for retrenchment | |
| (iv) | Corporate merger and buyouts (line 26) | (02 marks) |
| | A situation where one business buys another or where businesses combine into one for economical reasons | |
| (v) | A double-edged sword (line 37) | (02 marks) |
| | Has both good and bad consequences/qualities | |
| (vi) | Arthritic conditions (line 52) | (02 marks) |
| | Joint pains and inflammations | |
| (vii) | Trying to beat deadlines (line 60-61) | (02 marks) |
| | Endeavoring to complete tasks before certain dates of time/struggling to accomplish work in a given time | |
| (viii) | vulnerable (line 72) | (02 marks) |
| | likely target/prone to/ easily affected/susceptible/victim of | |
| (ix) | cut back (line 79) | (02 marks) |
| | reduced/curtailed/lessened | |
| (x) | Physical manifestations (line 97) | (02 marks) |

Clear Signs or symptoms/recognizable indicators/visible signs

(20 marks)

Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

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Thanks

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