

ISSUE 31

Who Has the Most Stressful Job?

No one has a harder job than miners. They work long hours deep underground. The work is dirty and dangerous. At any time, the earth may collapse around them. If they are not crushed to death immediately, they will die soon from lack of air. Even if they have enough air, they may starve to death while their rescuers try to find them. But even if they are lucky and never have any accidents, the air they breathe is extremely dirty, so they usually suffer from decades of serious lung disease.

Who has the most stressful job, in your opinion?

- (1) Taxi/bus/truck driver
- (2) Salesperson
- (3) Police officer
- (4) Doctor or nurse
- (5) Homemaker
- (6) President
- (7) Lawyer
- (8) Professional athlete
- (9) CEO
- (10) The jobless



Sample Answers

(A) People in sales have *tremendously* stressful jobs because they work on *commission*. In other words, they get a percentage of how much they sell. Part of the stress, then, is due to wage instability. One week they may do very well, and the next they may sell nothing at all. So, it is very hard to plan ahead financially. The other part of the stress is in making the *sales pitch* itself; the customer somehow has to be persuaded not only that he needs the product *in question* but that he needs it right now.

(B) The head of any government has a terribly hard time at his job because he is under constant pressure from every direction. He has to make political, legal, military, economic, diplomatic, and social policies while also managing public relations effectively. It's no wonder that pictures of presidents show them aging rapidly through the course of their administration.

Speak Your Mind

1. What is the most stressful part of your job?
How could this stress be *lessened*?
2. Do you think there is any relationship between the degree of stress and the payment for a job?
3. What is the most effective way of *coping with* stress?
4. Some people insist that stress is necessary to be *productive*. Do you agree? Why?
5. What are some *symptoms* of stress?
6. Can anyone enjoy job-related stress? If so, how? If not, why not?

- **tremendous** : very great in size, amount, or intensity

- **commission** : amount of money made every time a product is sold - **sales pitch** : high-pressure sales talk

- **in question** : under consideration - **lessen** : reduce - **cope with** : deal well with

- **productive** : leading to a useful result - **symptom** : sign of disorder or disease

Speak Your Mind Helpers

1. What is the most stressful part of your job? How could this stress be lessened?

(A)

I'm a teacher, and the most stressful aspect of my job is dealing with the parents. They always want special favors for their children, and they never respect my professionalism. The stress could be reduced greatly if people would only realize I'm there to help their children get an education, not to cause trouble for them.

(B)

Being an air traffic controller is the most stressful job in the world. We have to make life-and-death decisions all day long, hurriedly, despite the ever-changing traffic patterns. By the end of the day, I'm an emotional *wreck*. We should get shorter hours and more controllers to help us.

2. Do you think there is any relationship between the degree of stress and the payment for a job?

(A)

The higher one goes up the *corporate ladder*, the more responsibility there is and the higher the amount of stress. So, yes, I think there is a close relationship.

(B)

The relationship between pay and stress is *inverse*. The people with the highest salaries do the least work; they "make decisions" and *delegate* all the tasks to their *underlings*. Instead of being under stress, they are the ones who put the stress on the shoulders of others.

3. What is the most effective way of coping with stress?

(A)

Nothing *beats* good relaxation. I try to make sure that I have a half hour or so of quiet time in the afternoon, when I just close my eyes and rest. I don't think I ever actually fall asleep, but when my "nap" is *through* I feel refreshed and energized.

-wreck : in a disorderly or worn-out state

-corporate ladder : hierarchical order of position, title, or rank in a corporation →inverse : exactly opposite

-delegate : give part of one's work, duties, or responsibilities to (sb) who is more junior

-underling : worker who is ranked beneath another; subordinate →beat : do better than →through : finished

(B)

People need to completely separate home and work. I never take work home with me, never even talk about or think about work-related matters. I enjoy my colleagues, but I don't want to spend my free time with them, because I know our job situation will *end up* being the main topic of conversation. Similarly, I refuse to take my home to the office. Any problems I'm having with my spouse or kids can be dealt with at home; I'm too busy at work to be distracted by them. One stressful situation at a time is enough to deal with.

4. Some people insist that stress is necessary to be productive. Do you agree? Why?

(A)

I used to complain about stress all the time, but I always managed to do my job. I'm sure if I would have relaxed more, I would not have accomplished as much. When I look back at my success, and the challenges I had to overcome, it was all worth it.

(B)

Stress is *counter-productive*. We all work at a different pace, and hurrying to get more done is merely *self-defeating*. We should concentrate on the task at hand and complete it to the best of our ability before moving on to the next one. Then projects would not have to be finished in a *slipshod* manner or redone, and we would all have fewer health problems as well.

5. What are some symptoms of stress?

(A)

When work really *gets me down*, I get severe headaches and can't concentrate. I don't sleep very well. And, unfortunately, I also find myself drinking more. At times like this, I know I should just take some time off, but usually the stress *manifests* itself in the middle of a project, not when it is nearly complete, so I can't quit. I just have to *grit my teeth* and keep working until I'm done.

(B)

The worst thing about stress is that it *erodes* one's joy of life. I'm normally a pretty *outgoing* sort of person who finds a lot of things to laugh about. A smile is part of my usual *attire*. But when the *going* gets tough, I know that only the tough get going, so I have to *abandon* my carefree attitude and get serious about my job. I'm afraid the Stressed-Out Me is not a very pleasant fellow for my family and colleagues to be with, but at least he's only temporary. Eventually, Mr. Nice Guy comes back.

Speak Your Mind Helpers

6. Can anyone enjoy job-related stress? If so, how? If not, why not?

F : I sure admire your boss. He always seems to accomplish his goals.

M : Well, he's hard to work for sometimes. But I agree that he gets a lot done.

F : He must be under a lot of stress these days, considering the *adverse* business conditions he has to *confront*.

M : Yes, but I think he *thrives* on it. The more stressful the situation, the harder he *bears down*. It's the rest of us who feel the stress more — from him!

F : Maybe if everything worked fine all the time, he wouldn't get anything done.

M : Maybe so, but that situation will never exist. He'll always find some new challenge to *inflict* on us. And on himself too, of course. That's just the way he is. He's *driven*. He can't relax or *let up* for a moment.

F : Don't you wish you were like that?

M : No, not at all. Money and position are nice, of course, but they aren't the most important things in life. I would never want to get to the point where I was dying and all I had to look back on in life was my *bank balance*. I'd rather live my life to the fullest.

F : I guess that explains why he's the boss and you aren't.

M : I guess so. But the stress is *taking its toll* on him as well.

F : What do you mean?

M : He looks tired all the time. His eyes are red, and he has dark circles under them. There's a constant worried look on his face. And I've never seen him so *irritable*.

F : That doesn't sound good.

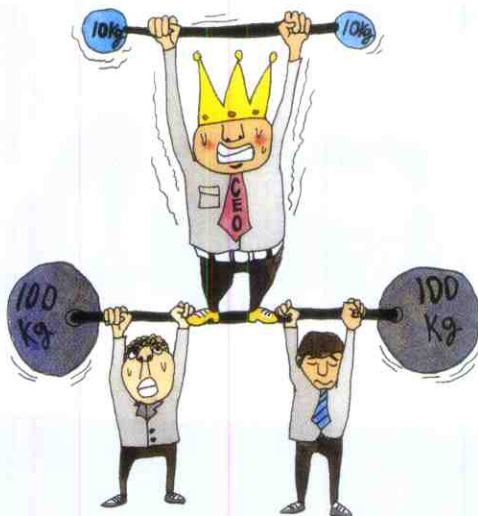
M : No. I'm worried about his health. He's always had problems with his ulcers, but now he's smoking and drinking more than he used to. I'm afraid he's going to have a heart attack if he keeps this up.

F : His home life must be suffering as well.

M : Probably so. I know he's always had trouble spending any time with his family. I hear that his wife is seeking a divorce. And he's never been close to his kids.

F : Hmmmmm. Maybe you're right, after all. *Putting it all in perspective*, maybe he's concentrated on the wrong things in life.

M : I think so. At least when I *knock off* for the day, my time is my own to enjoy as I *see fit*. He never has any time of his own.



- > **irritable** : easily annoyed or angered
- > **put (sth) in perspective** : regard (sth) in terms of relative importance
- > **knock off** : stop working
- > **see fit** : desire