

Primary Interventions

- Organisation directed
- Change the design, organisation and management of work.
- Most often designed to deal with problems identified by a significant proportion of employees, targeting the group-level rather than the individual employee.
- Logic = prevents employee health being damaged by the problem, because the problem either no longer exists or is significantly reduced

Elkin and Rosch (1990): strategies to reduce stress.

- Redesign the task
- Redesign the work environment
- Establish flexible work schedules
- Encourage participative management
- Include the employee in career development
- Analyse work roles and establish goals
- Provide social support and feedback
- Build cohesive teams
- Establish fair employment policies
- Establish fair methods for the distribution of rewards

The driver of primary interventions is often Participative Action Research (PAR), and involves employees working with researchers to identify problems and design solutions.

Kompiert et al. (1998) – primary interventions take time to work because they require employees to adapt to different ways of working.

Bond et al. (2008) – individual differences can have a great impact in the way that outcomes are generated from the same intervention for different employees. Individuals with higher psychological flexibility tend to benefit more from improvements to *control* generated by the intervention.

Examples of primary interventions	
DEMANDS	▪ Improving planning of workload so employees face more realistic deadlines ▪ Adjusting staffing levels so that they reflect peaks and troughs in workload ▪ Allowing staff 'protected time' to deal with complex/difficult tasks that require concentration ▪ Having particularly influential individuals act as role models (i.e., leaving office on time, being seen taken regular breaks) ▪ Introducing flexi-time or compressed working weeks ▪ Increasing variety by letting people rotate around the different tasks carried out in their team
CONTROL	▪ Reviewing and/or changing the guidance staff are given about the completion of tasks so that they have more discretion and control about how they are complete ▪ Making performance feedback available quickly ▪ Increasing employee control over how work is allocated

SUPPORT	▪ Encouraging interaction between team members ▪ Making sure managers or supervisors have adequate time to fulfil supervisory element of their role ▪ Introducing a mentoring process ▪ Ensuring work schedules don't result in individuals being isolated
RELATIONSHIPS	▪ Altering the physical layout of the workplace ▪ Ensuring appraisal process are of a good quality and properly implemented ▪ Implementing and maintaining effective systems for dealing with bullying and harassment ▪ Allow staff to experience their colleagues working conditions ▪ Introduce handover time or overlapping shifts to increase contact
ROLE	▪ Review, update and publicise job descriptions ▪ Include the active review and clarification of roles in the performance appraisal process ▪ Allow team discretion of allocation of roles ▪ Establish systems for employee participation in decision-making about the boundaries of job roles and responsibilities ▪ Ensure employees' roles don't result in them being in frequent conflict with colleagues, clients or members of the public
CHANGE	▪ Opening up new lines of communication, or using new communication media, to disseminate important information about change ▪ Providing training in different styles of management ▪ Use of newsletters and staff briefings to ensure all staff get vital information about goals, objectives and plans

Secondary Interventions

- Most workplace stress initiatives have been directed at helping employees as individuals learn to cope with any stressors that occur at work
- Achieved by improving individual adaptability to their environment by changing their thinking, behaviour and improving their skills.
- 'inoculation treatment' – the organisation and its working environment will not change, therefore the individual has to learn ways of coping that help them to 'fit' better with its demands
- The main aim of secondary intervention is to change employees' psychological responses to difficult or stressful elements of their work, with the objective to *reduce or eliminate* the harm the employees might experience without altering their exposure to the source of stress.

Stress management training (SMT) is the most common form of secondary intervention. Generic skills are often developed through these sessions so that employees can use them to deal better with lots of different sources of stress. Trainees need to work hard at developing new skills.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is based on the concept that unhealthy human behaviour and the experience of negative emotions can be reduced by changes in cognition/appraisal. This means training people to think differently about their experiences, or to give different meanings to events. Workplace CBT focuses on changing the way people perceive and attach meaning to their experiences of work.

Tertiary Interventions

- Aim is to help those who have already been damaged by work – rehabilitation for employees after problems have already occurred.
- Tertiary interventions are particularly important when primary and secondary interventions are impractical (although this is rare), or when they are unlikely to be totally effective for every employee.
- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP's): originally designed to help employees who were suffering from issues of alcohol dependency, but they are now designed to help employees who are experiencing any one of a number of different problems.
- Tertiary interventions are designed to repair the damage. They should not be seen as a substitute for primary and/or secondary interventions.

Berridge and Cooper (1993) define an EAP as:

'a programmatic intervention at the workplace, usually at the level of the individual employee, using behavioural science knowledge and methods for the control of certain work related problems (notably alcoholism, drug abuse and mental health) that adversely affect job performance, with the objective of enabling the individual to return to making her or his full contribution and to attaining full functioning in personal life'.

Most EAP's offer psychological counselling of one type or another. Usually there is a self-referral route for the employees plus the possibility of referral by line managers. Randall and Lewis (2007) describe four different types of EAP's:

- 1) An in-house programme whereby internal counsellors or trained managers provide support for staff
- 2) An external programme whereby organisations out-source provision
- 3) A consortium whereby organisations group together and establish collaborative programmes
- 4) An affiliate programme, resembling the consortium approach, but coordinated by an external provider.

Summary

- A useful way to view stress management is to think of interventions in terms of their objectives. Primary intervention (dealing with the source of stress), secondary intervention (stress management training) and tertiary (employee assistance programmes) rehabilitation.
- Tackling the sources of work-related stress through primary interventions could be effective in the long-term. It is important to involve employees in the design of such interventions.
- Various secondary interventions work in different ways, however, all are designed to weaken, or break, the link between exposures to sources of stress and problems with well-being.
- Some secondary interventions, particularly CBT have been found to have quite a large short-term impact on individual psychological well-being. The impact of these interventions on long-term employee well-being and organisational health is less clear.
- Dealing with the sources of stress may require a variety of interventions: these need to be tailored to the specific problems facing the organisation within the specific organisational context.