

For Immediate Release

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Americans Report Stress and Anxiety On-the-Job Affects Work Performance, Home Life

Almost Half of Employees Say their Anxiety is Persistent, Excessive

Silver Spring, MD (November 9, 2006) — Close to half of American employees say they experience persistent and excessive stress or anxiety in their daily lives, and one quarter report having taken prescription medication to manage stress, nervousness, lack of sleep and related problems.

Despite this, only 9 percent of working adults have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, a category of illnesses marked by persistent, irrational and excessive worry that interferes with everyday functioning. Affecting 40 million American adults, anxiety disorders are the most common psychiatric illnesses in the United States.

“Undiagnosed and untreated anxiety disorders can greatly impact the workplace, affecting productivity and profit margins, as well as employees’ work relationships and career successes,” said Jerilyn Ross, M.A., L.I.C.S.W, president & CEO of the Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA). “It is unfortunate that although many employees report that their anxiety is beyond what would be considered normal, very few have been diagnosed with or treated for an anxiety disorder. This in spite of the fact that anxiety disorders are highly treatable.”

The findings are part of the 2006 Stress & Anxiety Disorders Survey, a report examining the effect of anxiety disorders as well as everyday stress and anxiety in the workplace. The survey was commissioned by the ADAA in conjunction with National Stress Out Week, November 12-18, 2006, a public education and awareness week focusing on stress, anxiety and anxiety disorders.

Not surprisingly, the study found the majority of Americans experience stress and anxiety on a daily basis. Although commonplace, regular stress and anxiety is not without impact. For the four in five working adults who say they experience it daily, job stress often takes a toll on performance, quality of work, relationships with bosses and interactions with coworkers.

And work stress isn’t clocking out at 5 p.m. American workers who say stress affects their work also claim it extends to their personal life, with 81 percent saying it interferes with their relationship with their spouse/significant other and more than a third saying it affects their relationship with their children.

American Workers Report What Stresses Them Out—and Where It Makes Its Mark

A variety of on-the-job situations induce stress for employees: 55 percent say deadlines cause them stress, 53 percent say interpersonal relationships (i.e., interacting with superiors, coworkers, subordinates) are stressful, 50 percent cite staff management and 49 percent claim dealing with problems brings on stress.

Where does stress make its mark at work? Employees report it affects their performance (56 percent), relationship with co-workers/peers (51 percent), quality of work (50 percent) and relationships with superiors (43 percent).

Employees Look for Ways to Reduce their Stress — But Talking to their Boss Isn't One of Them

What kind of outlet do Americans find for stress reduction? The top method shared by both men and women is sleeping more (44 percent). Women are significantly more likely than men to eat more (46 percent versus 27 percent) and talk to family and friends (44 percent versus 21 percent) to manage job stress. Men are significantly more likely than women to have sex more frequently (19 percent versus 10 percent) and use illicit drugs (12 percent versus 2 percent) to manage job stress.

Other common methods used by both men and women are consuming more caffeine (31 percent), smoking (27 percent), exercising more frequently (25 percent), taking over-the-counter or prescription medication (23 percent) and consuming more alcoholic beverages (20 percent).

One thing neither men nor women are doing that often: talking to their boss about their stress. Just 40 percent of employees whose stress *interferes* with work have talked to their employer about it. Their reasons for not reporting it: fear that their boss would interpret it as lack of interest or unwillingness to do the activity (34 percent), fear of being labeled “weak” (31 percent), fear it would affect promotion opportunities (22 percent), fear it would go in their file (22 percent) and fear of being laughed at or not taken seriously (20 percent).

Is it Just Stress? High Number of People Say Anxiety is Persistent, Excessive, But Few Report Diagnosis of Anxiety Disorder

One quarter of employees — a major portion of the workforce — say that persistent and excessive stress or anxiety has impaired their ability to function in the past six months. Yet while this describes the criteria for an anxiety disorder, only 9 percent of those surveyed had been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.

Persistent and excessive stress or anxiety often contributes to unhealthy behavior patterns. 73 percent of men and women say that avoiding people is triggered by persistent and excessive stress or anxiety. Women are significantly more likely to say it prompts over-eating (54 percent versus 39 percent for men) and compulsive shopping (35 versus 17 percent), while men are more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol (31 percent versus 18 percent for women).

Only one in four employees who are diagnosed with an anxiety disorder has shared this with their employer. Similar to respondents who say they experience everyday stress, individuals with an anxiety disorder who did not share this information with their boss said they feared it would be interpreted as lack of interest or unwillingness to do the activity (38 percent), it would affect promotion opportunities (34 percent) or it would go in their file (31 percent). Only 14 percent did not report their anxiety disorder because they didn't want to produce a doctor's note, 7 percent because they didn't think it was their employer's business, 6 percent because they didn't think it was necessary and 3 percent because they didn't want to.

When suffering from symptoms of their anxiety disorder at work, employees most often report feeling fatigued or tired (74 percent), having trouble concentrating (69 percent) and feeling irritable (63 percent). 41 percent report being less productive as a result of their symptoms.

Editor's Note: For more information on the study and National Stress Out Week, and general information on anxiety disorders including treatment options, self-tests for the various anxiety disorders and searchable listings of therapists and support groups, visit www.adaa.org or contact Francine Greenberg at 240-485-1016 or fgreenberg@adaa.org.

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The Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA) is the leading national, non-profit organization dedicated to the early diagnosis, treatment and cure of anxiety disorders. ADAA offers free educational information and resources on anxiety disorders, local treatment providers, self-help groups, self-tests, clinical trials and more. ADAA is the unified voice for anxiety disorders and promotes the message that anxiety disorders are real, serious and treatable.