

Stress Management
Decrease Stress & Increase Efficiency in the Workplace
Atkins Consulting Professionals
Rocky AHMA Conference
Las Vegas, NV, September 14-16, 2011



Mind Game Question

You are competing in a linear race and overtake the runner in second place. In which position are you now?

- a) First
- b) Second
- c) Third
- d) Fourth
- e) Cannot be determined

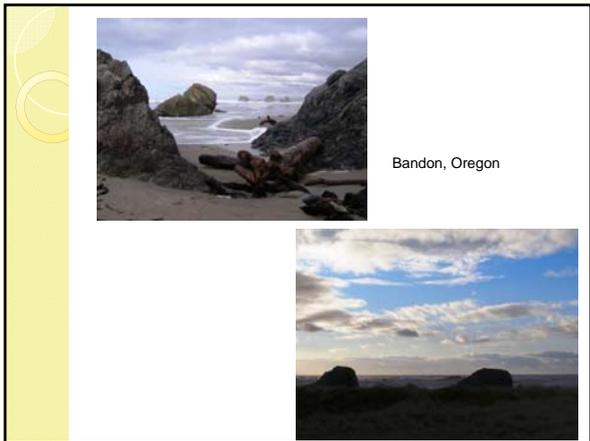


Larison Creek, Oregon









About Atkins Consulting Professionals LLC

- o Atkins Consulting Professionals LLC was created in 2009, owned and managed by Amanda K. Atkins.
- o Areas of specialties include resident file audits for tax credit and HUD subsidized properties, leasing & occupancy compliance work, policy compliance, procedural support, and environmental consulting.
- o We also provide keynote speaking, HUD trainings, and presentation in many areas: compliance-based trainings, fair housing, environmental initiatives, senior sensitivity and other housing related topics.

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What is Stress?

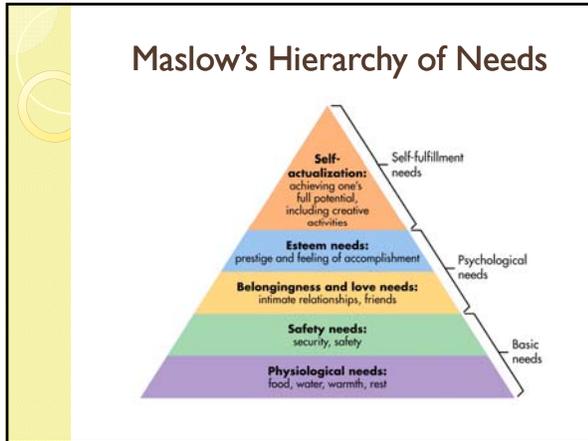
- Stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that "demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize (Richard S. Lazarus).
- Workplace stress is the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when there is a poor match between job demands and the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker

Stress Quiz

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, what percentage of all illnesses and disease is stress-related?

- o 25
- o 60
- o 90

Source: <http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/stress-management/stress-quiz1.htm?answeId=4412>



- ### How Stress Affects Us
- Psychological disorders: depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder
 - Emotional strain: dissatisfaction, fatigue, tension
 - Cognitive impairment: concentration and memory problems
 - Maladaptive behaviors: aggression, substance abuse

- ### How Stress Affects Us Cont.
- Can lead to poor work performance or even work place injuries.
 - Can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.
 - Excessive health care utilization.
 - Hypertension
 - Coronary Artery Disease
 - Stomach ailments

Stress Quiz

Long-term exposure to the stress hormone cortisol has been linked to shrinking in what part of the brain?

- Hippocampus
- Temporal lobe
- Frontal lobe

Source: <http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/stress-management/stress-quiz4.htm?answerId=4472>

Identifying Causes of Stress

- Good observation
- Ongoing staff meeting & retreats
- Confidential HR staff & employee files
- Monitor office politics & policies
- Timely job performances
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)'s Quality of Worklife survey

General Social Survey 2002
SECTION D
Quality of Worklife Module
NIOSH

- 8.2** How would you describe your work arrangement in your main job?
1. work as an independent contractor, independent consultant, or freelance worker
 2. am self-employed and work only when called to work
 3. work for a contractor who provides services and contracts to others under contract
 4. am a regular, permanent employee (standard work arrangement)
- 8.3** How long have you worked in your present job for your current employer?
1. LESS THAN 6 MONTHS
 2. 6 TO 12 MONTHS
 3. ENTER YEARS
- 8.4** In your main job, are you scheduled, paid by the hour, or what?
1. Salaried
 2. Paid by the hour
 3. Other (SPECIFY)
- 8.7** Which of the following best describes your usual work schedule?
1. Day shift
 2. Afternoon shift
 3. Night shift
 4. Shift work
 5. Irregular work shift
 6. Floating shifts
- 8.8** How many days per month do you work extra hours beyond your usual schedule? ____
- 8.9** When you work extra hours on your main job, is it mandatory (required by your employer)?
1. YES
 2. NO
- 8.10** How often are you allowed to change your starting and quitting times on a daily basis?
1. Often
 2. Sometimes
 3. Rarely
 4. Never

NIOSH's Quality of Worklife Survey

Keep a Stress Inventory

- For one week write down the situations, events and people who cause you to have a negative physical, mental or emotional response. Give a brief description of the situation. Where were you? Who was involved? Also, describe your reaction. Did you feel frustrated, angry or nervous?
- After a week, sit down and look at your stress inventory. Use problem solving skills to identify & mediate the issues.

Amanda's 24 Hour Summary

- Morning: insomnia due to sickness, caused physical (not rested) and emotional stress (anxiety).
- Mid-morning: overwhelming task list to accomplish, caused emotional (anxiety, helplessness) & mental (cloudy thinking, unfocused) stress.
- Afternoon: travel pressures, caused physical (banged into), mental (lack of patience), & emotional (annoyed, aggravated) stress.



External Work Stressors

- An incorrectly positioned chair or computer screen.
- A disruptive noise or constant commotion in the office.
- An unruly coworker.
- Excessive overtime.
- Other environmental factors, such as air pollution.
- Bullying in the work place.

Internal Work Stressors

- Management styles.
- A perception or stereotype.
- Emotional baggage.
- An unruly coworker.
- Overwhelming tasks at hand.
- Feelings of dissatisfaction, inability, irritability, powerlessness, uselessness.
- Career concerns & job security.

Inappropriate Leadership Skills



Source: <http://www.getmilked.com/comics/comics/VitalLeadershipSkills.jpg>

Stress Reduction Tips

- Learn to manage your time;
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle;
- Know your limitations;
- Pinpoint stressors;
- Avoid unnecessary conflict;
- Accept things you cannot change;
- Take time to relax & recharge;
- Fight perfectionism.

TIME
Study: Crying Won't Make You Feel Better

There's something cathartic about having a good cry and "letting it all out," even if you don't have anything in particular that's bugging you down.

Or maybe not. This published in the *Journal of Research in Personality* found that shedding tears had no effect on mood for nearly two-thirds of a group of women who kept diaries over three months.

Crying is not really as beneficial as people think it is, Jonathan Stankiewicz, lead author of the study and an associate professor of psychology at the University of South Florida, told MSNBC's *My So Bold* blog. "While a minority of crying episodes were associated with mood improvement, a significant majority were not."

DISCLAIMER: The Crying Center Women's Tears That Drive Transformation

As part of the study, 67 Dutch women between the ages of 17 and 63 kept a total of 1,616 crying episodes in diary notes (overall they kept notes a three-month period). For half of the women, crying didn't improve their mood at all, although the tears did make them feel worse. Only 16% of participants reported feeling more calm after a crying fit, while 26% reported feeling better.

Stankiewicz explains that crying isn't the problem; shedding tears that come from concern is it and suggests that those who talk back after a particularly nasty day can have benefited from the school buses to reach to the world support and a change of perspective about.

DISCLAIMER: Why Adults Cry for Really in *Advanced KIDS* (Movie)

The study also offered a peek into the private act of crying — where, how long and why the women experienced their emotions. The participants reported crying without feeling an average of eight minutes, either alone or in the presence of one other person. The majority of crying occurred in the living room, and the women said the main reason for their tears were conflict, how bad somebody was looking or feeling.

DISCLAIMER: *Behind a register of TIME*. Find her on Twitter at @JENNIFERDICK. You can also contribute the discussion on TIME's Facebook page and on Twitter at @JENNIFERDICK.

Find this article at:
<http://time.com/3000000/09/15/11/crying-wont-make-you-feel-better/>

Journal of Research in Personality article on the Effects of Crying

Stress Reduction Tips Cont.

- Spend time in silence, preferably alone, each day.
- Physical movement
- Pursue your passion
- Don't buy into the news
- Love your body
- Laugh often & with friends
- Word-watch
- Musical passion/music in the workplace

Stress Quiz

Stress can cause alopecia areata. What part of the body does this disorder affect?

- Skin
- Hair
- Heart

Source: <http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/stress-management/stress-quiz-2.htm?answertf=4419>

The Four A's

- Avoid – negative people, learn to say no, take control of your surroundings.
- Alter – manage your time, state your feelings, ask others to change, manage your time better.
- Accept – Forgive, speak with someone, positive self-talk, learn from mistakes.
- Adapt – adjust your standards, practice thought-stopping, adopt a mantra.

Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-relief/SR00037>

Increase Productivity

- Time management
- Don't procrastinate
- Rehearse and prepare
- Don't multitask, focus on one task at a time
- Use benchmarks & goals to track progress
- Delegate
- Quality over quantity

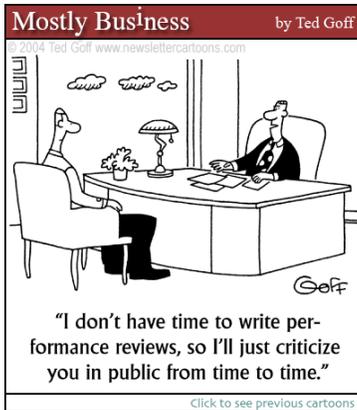
20:20:20 Rule

- The 20-20-20 rule suggest that after every 20 minutes, you (the computer user) should take a break for at least 20 seconds and look at objects that are 20 feet away from you.



Workplace Stress Reduction Tips

- Allow employees to telecommute, as applicable.
- Clearly define workers' roles and responsibilities.
- Design jobs to provide meaning, stimulation, and opportunities for workers to use their skills.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction among workers.



Organization Changes to Prevent Job Stress

- Ensure that the workload is in line with workers' capabilities and resources.
- Design jobs to provide meaning, stimulation, and opportunities for workers to use their skills.
- Clearly define workers' roles and responsibilities (annual reviews).
- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.

Organization Changes to Prevent Job Stress Cont.

- Improve communications-reduce uncertainty about career development and future employment prospects.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction among workers.
- Establish work schedules that are compatible with demands and responsibilities outside the job.
- Open door policy.

A Few Quotes

"If you can change your mind, you can change your life."

– William James

"Of all the things that matter, that really and truly matter, working more efficiently and getting more done, is not one of them." – Mike Dooley

"Brain cells create ideas. Stress kills brain cells. Stress is not a good idea." – Frederick Saunders

"Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are." – Chinese Proverb

Tips & Resources

Workplace Stress, *Wikipedia*.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workplace_stress
Center for Disease Control & Prevention Workplace
Healthy & Safety. <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/stress/>
Need Stress Relief? Try the 4 A's, *MayoClinic*.
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-relief/SR00037>
Stress in the Workplace, *Rebecca Maxon*. FDU, Summer
1999.
<http://www.fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/99su/stress.html>
The National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health.
<http://www.cdc.gov/NIOSH/>

Atkins Consulting Professionals

Training materials will be posted for one (1)
week after this presentation at
www.atkinsconsultingprofessionals.com

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Signs Someone is Coping with Stress

There are many different signs and symptoms that can indicate when someone is having difficulty coping with the amount of stress they are experiencing:

Physical: headaches, grinding teeth, clenched jaws, chest pain, shortness of breath, pounding heart, high blood pressure, muscle aches, indigestion, constipation or diarrhea, increased perspiration, fatigue, insomnia, frequent illness.

Psychosocial: anxiety, irritability, sadness, defensiveness, anger, mood swings, hypersensitivity, apathy, depression, slowed thinking or racing thoughts; feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, or of being trapped.

Behavioral: overeating or loss of appetite, impatience, quickness to argue, procrastination, increased use of alcohol or drugs, increased smoking, withdrawal or isolation from others, neglect of responsibility, poor job performance, poor personal hygiene, change in religious practices, change in close family relationships.

EFFECTS OF STRESS

Stress is difficult for scientists to define because it is a highly subjective phenomenon that differs for each of us. Things that are distressful for some individuals can be pleasurable for others. We also respond to stress differently. Some people blush, some eat more while others grow pale or eat less. There are numerous physical as well as emotional responses as illustrated by the following list of some **50 common signs and symptoms of stress**.

1. Frequent headaches, jaw clenching or pain
2. Gritting, grinding teeth
3. Stuttering or stammering
4. Tremors, trembling of lips, hands
5. Neck ache, back pain, muscle spasms
6. Light headedness, faintness, dizziness
7. Ringing, buzzing or "popping sounds"
8. Frequent blushing, sweating
9. Cold or sweaty hands, feet
10. Dry mouth, problems swallowing
11. Frequent colds, infections, herpes sores
12. Rashes, itching, hives, "goose bumps"
13. Unexplained or frequent "allergy" attacks
14. Heartburn, stomach pain, nausea
15. Excess belching, flatulence
16. Constipation, diarrhea
17. Difficulty breathing, sighing
18. Sudden attacks of panic
19. Chest pain, palpitations
20. Frequent urination
21. Poor sexual desire or performance
22. Excess anxiety, worry, guilt, nervousness
23. Increased anger, frustration, hostility
24. Depression, frequent or wild mood swings
25. Increased or decreased appetite
26. Insomnia, nightmares, disturbing dreams
27. Difficulty concentrating, racing thoughts
28. Trouble learning new information
29. Forgetfulness, disorganization, confusion
30. Difficulty in making decisions.
31. Feeling overloaded or overwhelmed.
32. Frequent crying spells or suicidal thoughts
33. Feelings of loneliness or worthlessness
34. Little interest in appearance, punctuality
35. Nervous habits, fidgeting, feet tapping
36. Increased frustration, irritability, edginess
37. Overreaction to petty annoyances
38. Increased number of minor accidents
39. Obsessive or compulsive behavior
40. Reduced work efficiency or productivity
41. Lies or excuses to cover up poor work
42. Rapid or mumbled speech
43. Excessive defensiveness or suspiciousness
44. Problems in communication, sharing
45. Social withdrawal and isolation
46. Constant tiredness, weakness, fatigue
47. Frequent use of over-the-counter drugs
48. Weight gain or loss without diet
49. Increased smoking, alcohol or drug use
50. Excessive gambling or impulse buying

Source: *The American Institute of Stress*: <http://www.stress.org/topic-effects.htm>

General Social Survey 2002
SECTION D
Quality of Worklife Module
NIOSH

5.2

How would you describe your work arrangement in your main job?

- 1 I work as an independent contractor, independent consultant, or freelance worker
- 2 I am on-call, and work only when called to work
- 3 I am paid by a temporary agency
- 4 I work for a contractor who provides workers and services to others under contract
- 5 I am a regular, permanent employee (standard work arrangement)

5.3

How long have you worked in your present job for your current employer?

- 1 LESS THAN 6 MONTHS
- 2 6-12 MONTHS
- 3 ENTER YEARS

5.5

In your main job, are you salaried, paid by the hour, or what?

- 1 Salaried
- 2 Paid by the hour
- 3 Other (SPECIFY)

5.7

Which of the following best describes your usual work schedule?

- 1 Day shift
- 2 Afternoon shift
- 3 Night shift
- 4 Split shift
- 5 Irregular shift/on-call
- 6 Rotating shifts

5.8

How many days per month do you work extra hours beyond your usual schedule? ____

5.9

When you work extra hours on your main job, is it mandatory (required by your employer)?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.10

How often are you allowed to change your starting and quitting times on a daily basis?

- 1 Often
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Rarely
- 4 Never

5.11

How often do you work at home as part of your job?

- 1 Never
- 2 A few times a year
- 3 About once a month
- 4 About once a week
- 5 More than once a week
- 6 Worker works mainly at home

5.12 (*This question applies only to people who indicate that they work at home as part of their job.*)

Is it usually because you want to, you have to in order to keep up with your job, or for some other reason?

- 1 Worker wants to work at home
- 2 Worker has to work at home to keep up with job
- 3 Other combinations and other reasons

5.13

How hard is it to take time off during your work to take care of personal or family matters?

- 1 Not at all hard
- 2 Not too hard
- 3 Somewhat hard
- 4 Very hard

5.14

How often do the demands of your job interfere with your family life?

- 1 Often
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Rarely
- 4 Never

5.15

How often do the demands of your family interfere with your work on the job?

- 1 Often
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Rarely
- 4 Never

5.16

After an average work day, about how many hours do you have to relax or pursue activities that you enjoy? __

5.17

Do you have any jobs besides your main job or do any other work for pay?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.18

Now I'm going to read you a list of statements that might or might not describe your main job. Please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of these statements.

My job requires that I keep learning new things

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.19

My job requires that I work very fast

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.20

I get to do a number of different things on my job

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.21

I have a lot of say about what happens on my job

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.22

My main satisfaction in life comes from my work

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.23

I have too much work to do everything well

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.24

On my job, I know exactly what is expected of me

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.25

My job lets me use my skills and abilities

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.26

At the place where I work, I am treated with respect

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.27

I trust the management at the place where I work

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.28

The safety of workers is a high priority with management where I work

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.29

There are no significant compromises or shortcuts taken when worker safety is at stake

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.30

Where I work, employees and management work together to ensure the safest possible working conditions

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.31

The safety and health conditions where I work are good

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.32

I am proud to be working for my employer

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.33

Conditions on my job allow me to be about as productive as I could be

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.34

The place where I work is run in a smooth and effective manner

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.35

Workers need strong trade unions to protect their interests

- 1 Strongly Agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Disagree
- 4 Strongly Disagree

5.36

In your job, do you normally work as part of a team, or do you work mostly on your own?

- 1 Yes, I work as part of a team
- 2 No, I work mostly on my own

5.37

In your job, how often do you take part with others in making decisions that affect you?

- 1 Often
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Rarely
- 4 Never

5.38

How often do you participate with others in helping set the way things are done on your job?

- 1 Often
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Rarely
- 4 Never

5.39

How often are there not enough people or staff to get all the work done?

- 1 Often
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Rarely
- 4 Never

5.40

Now I'm going to read you another list of statements about your main job. For each, please tell me if the statement is very true, somewhat true, not too true, or not at all true with respect to the work you do.

The chances for promotion are good

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.41

I have an opportunity to develop my own special abilities

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.42

I receive enough help and equipment to get the job done

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.43

I have enough information to get the job done

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.44

I am given a lot of freedom to decide how to do my own work

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.45

My fringe benefits are good

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.46

My supervisor is concerned about the welfare of those under him or her

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.47

I am free from the conflicting demands that other people make of me

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.48

Promotions are handled fairly

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.49

The people I work with take a personal interest in me

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.50

The job security is good

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.51

My supervisor is helpful to me in getting the job done

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.52

I have enough time to get the job done

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.53

The people I work with can be relied on when I need help

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.54

I have the training opportunities I need to perform my job safely and competently

- 1 Very true
- 2 Somewhat true
- 3 Not too true
- 4 Not at all true

5.55

In general, how would you describe relations in your work place between management and employees?

- 1 Very good
- 2 Quite good
- 3 Neither good nor bad
- 4 Quite bad
- 5 Very bad

5.56

Does your job require you to do repeated lifting, pushing, pulling or bending?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.57

Does your job regularly require you to perform repetitive or forceful hand movements or involve awkward postures?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.58

When you do your job well, are you likely to be praised by your supervisor or employer?

- 1 Yes
- 2 Maybe
- 3 No

5.59

When you do your job well, are you likely to get a bonus or pay increase?

- 1 Yes
- 2 Maybe
- 3 No

5.60

How fair is what you earn on your job in comparison to others doing the same type of work you do?

- 1 Much less than you deserve
- 2 Somewhat less than you deserve
- 3 About as much as you deserve
- 4 Somewhat more than you deserve
- 5 Much more than you deserve

5.61

Do you feel that the income from your job alone is enough to meet your family's usual monthly expenses and bills?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.62

Were you laid off your main job at any time in the last year?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.63

How easy would it be for you to find a job with another employer with approximately the same income and fringe benefits as you have now?

- 1 Very easy to find similar job
- 2 Somewhat easy to find similar job
- 3 Not easy at all to find similar job

5.64

Taking everything into consideration, how likely is it you will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year

- 1 Very likely
- 2 Somewhat likely
- 3 Not at all likely

5.65

Do you feel in any way discriminated against on your job because of your age?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.66

Do you feel in any way discriminated against on your job because of your race or ethnic origin?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.67

Do you feel in any way discriminated against on your job because of your gender?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.68

In the last 12 months, were you sexually harassed by anyone while you were on the job?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.69

In the last 12 months, were you threatened or harassed in any other way by anyone while you were on the job?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.70

Would you say that in general your health is Excellent, Very good, Good, Fair, or Poor?

- 1 Excellent
- 2 Very good
- 3 Good
- 4 Fair
- 5 Poor

5.71

Now thinking about your physical health, which includes physical illness and injury, for how many days during the past 30 days was your physical health not good? ___

5.72

Now thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good. ___

5.73

During the past 30 days, for about how many days did your poor physical or mental health keep you from doing your usual activities, such as self-care, work, or recreation? ___

5.74

How often do you find your work stressful?

- 1 Always
- 2 Often
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Hardly ever
- 5 Never

5.75

How often during the past month have you felt used up at the end of the day?

- 1 Very often
- 2 Often
- 3 Sometimes
- 4 Rarely
- 5 Never

5.76

In the past 12 months, have you had back pain every day for a week or more?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.77

In the past 12 months, have you had pain in the hands, wrists, arms, or shoulders every day for a week or more?

- 1 YES
- 2 NO

5.78

In the past 12 months, how many times have you been injured on the job? ___

5.79

All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job?

- 1 Very satisfied
- 2 Somewhat satisfied
- 3 Not too satisfied
- 4 Not at all satisfied

Study: Crying Won't Make You Feel Better

By MEREDITH MELNICK Monday, August 1, 2011

There's something cathartic about having a good cry and "letting it all out," even if you don't have anything in particular that's bringing you down.

Or maybe not. Data published in the *Journal of Research in Personality* found that shedding tears had no effect on mood for nearly two-thirds of a group of women who kept daily emotion journals.

"Crying is not nearly as beneficial as people think it is," Jonathan Rottenberg, lead author of the study and an associate professor of psychology at the University of South Florida, **told** MSNBC's blog the Body Odd. "Only a minority of crying episodes were associated with mood improvement — against conventional wisdom."

(MORE: [The Crying Game: Women's Tears Dial Down Testosterone](#))

As part of the study, 97 Dutch women between the ages of 18 and 48 logged a total of 1,004 crying episodes in daily mood journals they kept over a three-month period. For 61% of the women, crying didn't improve their mood at all, although the tears didn't make them feel worse. Only 9% of respondents reported feeling more sad after a crying jag, while 30% reported feeling better.

Rottenberg suspects that crying isn't the physically cleansing act that many have assumed it is and suggests that those who felt better after a waterworks session may not have benefited from the actual tears so much as the social support and showings of affection they elicited.

(MORE: [Why Adults Cry So Easily in Animated Kids' Movies](#))

The study also offered a peek into the private act of crying — when, how long and why the women experienced their outbursts. The participants reported crying sessions lasting an average of eight minutes, either alone or in the presence of one other person. The majority of crying occurred in the living room, and the women said the main reasons for their tears were conflict, loss and empathy over another's suffering.

Meredith Melnick is a reporter at TIME. Find her on Twitter at [@MeredithCM](#). You can also continue the discussion on TIME's [Facebook page](#) and on Twitter at [@TIME](#).

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