3 Ways to Reduce Employee Stress During the Holidays

Career Development

For many, the end of year brings joy, celebration, and anticipation for the new year. It is a time for festivities, (over) eating, and much celebration. Unfortunately, it is also a time when many employees face the worst loneliness and depression of the year. A Healthline survey found three causes of

holiday stress:

- Financial demands,
- Negotiating family dynamics, and
- Managing personal diet and health habits.

Holiday activities that cause the greatest stress include cleaning the house, cooking, and gift shopping — selecting the right gifts and maneuvering through lines and crowds to buy them. Since it is difficult to truly compartmentalize, holiday stress is likely to bleed into the workplace and affect employee morale and performance.

When dealing with employee claims and misbehavior daily, it is easy for employment lawyers to become jaded or immune to the human factors that affect the lives of employees this time of year. Even you may be dealing with family and other drama that may cause you to be less patient and effective at work. Being sensitive to these realities can be instrumental in resolving issues early that may otherwise become unnecessarily contentious.

1. Step up the empathy

In its simplest form, empathy is the ability to understand another's perspective in a situation and recognize another's emotions. Empathy is not some squishy, fluffy concept; it can yield specific benefits in the workplace when used effectively.

Empathy can influence various work-related factors, including how long employees stay with an employer, how well they perform, and their level of engagement. Opportunities to practice empathy can present themselves in such ordinary interactions as below:

- An employee tapping his heel or incessantly twisting his fingers might be nervous or deeply stressed. When faced with this employee, you have the choice to ignore the emotion and plough forward with your meeting agenda, or you can address it and have a different conversation that may result in a calmer and more effective employee, even if the issues were unrelated to work.
- When delivering bad news to your boss, empathy can define when you deliver the news and how you frame it. "We have a problem because this happened," will garner a more negative reaction than "I just wanted to let you know that this happened, here's what we've done about it, we expect the issue to be resolved in this amount of time, and I'm all over it."

2. Practice gratitude

> *"You move toward the strongest impression in your mind."*
>
> *– Zig Ziglar*

Put a different way: what you seek, you will find. If your mind is focused on the stressors in your life, family interactions you are dreading, or the loneliness brought on by memories of past holidays gone wrong, you are more likely to find more reasons to be unhappy as the holidays draw near.

On the other hand, if you count your blessings and remember all the reasons to be grateful, you are more likely to feel optimistic and cheerful. This mindset does not ignore vexing family members or

pretend that memories of disappointment didn't happen, but you can simply choose not to allow negative thoughts to penetrate the walls of your mind and propagate like ivy.

We tend to attract what we reflect. If you are stressed at work, your mindset may permeate other areas of your work and impact your working relationships with internal clients and colleagues. Beginning from a place of gratitude in your own mind can reap rewards in the ease with which you are able to move through your day and address issues that come across your desk.

3. Look at your job as an outsider

If you are no longer enamored of your job, enumerating reasons to be grateful for it might free you to focus on the positive aspects. If that is insufficient, below are some ways you can imagine an outsider's perspective to help.

- Remember how much you wanted this job when you applied for it.
- Remember what a dream it was to work for your company when you were on the outside hoping you'd get the job.
- Consider the line of candidates who would immediately raise their hands for your job if you left.
- Tally the positives of the job. For example, your salary, bonus, and benefits enable you to do so much for yourself and your family.

Of course, if all that fails and you hate your job, it may be time to look for a new role elsewhere. But until that job materializes, performing your best in your current role will be less painful than marking time and waiting for the next opportunity.

The end of the year provides a unique opportunity to connect with colleagues and clients in the workplace in a positive way through empathy. Begin by assessing your own well-being and harnessing your own sense of gratitude and positive energy to flow to those who need your support and assistance.

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