

Stress Policy

Management in GF Inveco Group

Updated December 2024

Stress Policy in GF Inveco Group

How we prevent stress in GF Inveco Group

Declaration of Intent

At GF Inveco, we want to actively and responsibly address how we can best prevent and alleviate stress, thereby creating a better working life for our employees. We will do what we can to talk openly about stress and well-being to break down taboos and ensure a healthy dialogue in this area.

If an employee in the group is affected by stress, it may be due to factors both at and outside the workplace, but stress symptoms often manifest at work, and here we can help each other develop a plan. Stress symptoms require active intervention – regardless of where and why they arose.

This stress policy contains useful knowledge about stress, responsibilities and roles, emergency plans, good advice and ideas, as well as guidelines on how we have decided to address stress in specific situations within our organization.

Knowledge about Stress

Stress can generally be described from two perspectives:

- Stress as a physiological state
- Stress as a state of strain

Stress as a physiological state

Stress is a natural biological reaction that enables us to be alert to potential threats/dangers and to increase the body's tension level and energy so that we can "fight or flee" or "hunt and capture prey." From nature's perspective, stress is meant to be an acute/short-term state, lasting only as long as it takes to handle an extreme situation. This short-term stress is a healthy and natural state without side effects.

Today, our daily lives are filled with demands, opportunities, disruptions, and changes, which are often misinterpreted by our biological stress system as signs of physical danger or "hunting opportunities." Harmful stress arises when this state becomes more or less chronic.

Prolonged stress will initially show as stress signals and over time increase the risk of various illnesses.

Stress as a state of strain

We all have resources that enable us to handle the strains (demands, challenges, and opportunities) we encounter in life. Resources include our experiences, competencies, sense of influence and

meaning, thought patterns, social relationships, and lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise, rest, and sleep.

Strains can include: changes, worries, conflicts, workload, deadlines, ambitions, finances, crises, time pressure, etc.

Stress arises when we experience that the amount and/or nature of strains exceed our resources over an extended period.

Symptoms of Stress

There are many symptoms commonly associated with stress. You may not experience all of them, but most people experience more than one. Many symptoms, such as headaches or fatigue, can also arise from other causes (e.g. dehydration or flu), so the symptoms themselves are not worrying – but they should not persist. If symptoms last for more than two weeks, it is important to address them.

Early signs of stress

Physical signs

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Restlessness in the body
- Palpitations
- Muscle tension
- Tendency to sweat
- Shortness of breath
- Dry mouth
- Infections
- Stomach pain
- Frequent urination
- Changed appetite
- Nausea
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Reduced libido

Psychological signs

- Racing thoughts

- Negative, self-critical, or blaming thoughts
- Worries
- Anxiety
- Mood swings, depression
- Shame
- Guilt, bad conscience
- Irritability, anger
- Fatigue
- Sleep problems
- Memory and concentration difficulties
- Indecisiveness
- Reduced self-confidence
- Tearfulness

Sources of Stress

Stress can stem from one or more external strains, such as too many or complex tasks at work combined with private challenges like illness in the family or divorce – strains that demand a lot over a longer period. It can also come from worries, negative thoughts, a sense of injustice, or lack of overview and control in life.

Whether a given strain is perceived as stressful is largely an individual interpretation, which we must understand to find solutions.

Stress is rarely caused by one factor alone, but rather a combination, for example:

- **Value conflicts** – behavior or surroundings contradicting what you believe in
- **Worries** – unproductive rumination about self-worth, relationships, work, finances, past/future
- **Conflicts/relationships** – with partner, children, friends, family, boss, colleagues
- **Choices** – fear of missing out, prioritizing, dilemmas
- **Repressing feelings** – inner unrest, tension, ignoring feelings
- **Pressure** – own and others' demands, expectations, time, deadlines, ambitions
- **Multitasking** – always “on,” patch solutions, inefficiency, lack of presence
- **Distractions/interruptions** – phone, emails, media, traffic, open offices, noise
- **Unclear boundaries** – lack of feedback/recognition, over-responsibility, perfectionism

Responsibilities and Roles

Organization

- Maintain continuous focus on stress and well-being, updating the policy based on experience.
- Regularly address themes such as stress prevention, well-being, health, exercise, diet, sleep through campaigns, meetings, lectures, courses, etc.
- Include stress, well-being, and other psychosocial factors in climate surveys and workplace assessments.
- Ensure a well-functioning support system with professional help for employees experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, etc.

Leader

- Have a formal and ethical responsibility to monitor employee well-being.
- Ensure employees feel they can approach you for support with workload, priorities, conflicts, worries, insecurity, and other factors affecting stress and well-being.
- Act if you suspect an employee is struggling – speak with them or involve HR.
- Activate support systems if an employee experiences stress or crisis.
- Be proactive in periods of high workload, critical projects, or major changes to prevent stress and maintain balance.

Colleague

- Be attentive and show care if a colleague shows signs of stress or reduced well-being.
- Ask how they are if you are in doubt.
- Involve your leader or HR if you believe a colleague needs help.
- Share challenges and involve leader or HR if there is an increased risk of stress (e.g. workload, insecurity).

Employee

- Involve your leader or relevant person if the workload becomes too heavy, if you lose overview or priorities, feel insecure, or struggle in other ways.
- If private circumstances require special attention for a period, consider discussing adjustments with your leader.

Emergency Plan

Stress, crises, and psychological pressure

1. First aid

- Stay calm and let the employee express their situation – listen.
- Show authority – take responsibility here and now.
- If necessary, assist with transport home and contacting relatives.
- Agree on follow-up – when to meet again, who will call when.
- Ensure others take over urgent tasks.
- Contact immediate leader and/or HR.
- Inform the department (in agreement with the employee).

2. Follow-up

- Clarify options for professional help (e.g. health insurance).
- Recommend seeing a GP to assess symptoms.
- If sick leave is needed, agree how to maintain contact with the workplace (e.g. part-time, weekly meeting, phone contact).
- Agree on a realistic recovery period; seek advice if needed.

3. Returning to work

- Aim for openness while respecting the colleague's boundaries.
- Agree on how to inform others about the situation and return.
- Clarify tasks, responsibilities, and working hours.
- Be open to changes needed to ensure well-being and avoid future stress.
- Assign a support person if needed.
- Schedule follow-up meetings.

Good Advice for Mental Balance

1. **Know yourself.** Reflect on your values, boundaries, and vulnerabilities to maintain balance. Share thoughts with someone you trust or write in a journal.
2. **Take care of your body.** Daily physical activity lowers stress. A walk in nature reduces stress hormones, calms the mind, and clears thoughts.
3. **Protect your sleep.** Aim for 8 hours with regular rhythm. Avoid or limit caffeine, alcohol, and “blue light” before bed. Wind down, focus on your body and breathing, and think pleasant thoughts. Seek help if sleep problems persist.
4. **Breathe.** Deep breathing prevents stress, brings calm and clarity. Try lying on your back, breathing deeply through your nose into your stomach, hold briefly, and exhale slowly through your mouth. When busy or anxious, pause to breathe – inhale for 4 counts, hold for 2, and exhale for 5 counts.

5. **Connect with others.** Humans are social beings. Prioritise time with friends, family, and colleagues. Helping and seeking help is crucial for mental health and stress prevention. Think the best of others and be helpful and kind. Anger and envy only increase stress.
6. **Manage worries.** We cannot control the future, but we can adapt to what happens. Most worries are about things beyond our control and often never come true. Focus on what you can influence and let go of the rest. Share your worries – a shared worry is halved.
7. **Find rhythm.** When busy, breaks are vital. Make time for focus without distractions. Avoid multitasking and be present in what you do. End the workday calmly: spend 10 minutes reviewing the day, regaining overview, and prioritising tasks for tomorrow. Breathe and say thank you for today.
8. **Accept that life is sometimes hard.** Pain, insecurity, and adversity are part of life. Remember that everything passes, and crises often bring insight and open new doors. If it becomes too difficult, ask for help.