

11

Stress

Learning objectives

This unit is about stress in the business world.

Students begin by discussing a cartoon and the attitudes to stress that the cartoon shows. They then consider their own experience of attitudes towards stress in the workplace. They listen to a talk on stress management and complete a chart showing the effects of stress on performance. They listen again and match photos of work environments to the three levels of stress.

Students then consider their own levels of stress. They read an article on helping colleagues manage stress and match headings to the correct paragraphs. They then consider appropriate and inappropriate behaviour when counselling colleagues about stress.

Students listen to eight short dialogues of meetings between managers and their employees. In each one, the manager is dealing with a situation in which the employee is stressed. Students decide if the manager is doing things correctly or incorrectly. They listen to the recording again and complete some useful expressions.

Finally, students take part in a roleplay to practise helping a colleague in a stressful situation.

Digital resources: Unit 11

Online Workbook; Extension worksheets; Glossary; Student's Book answer key; Student's Book listening script; Fast-track map

1:1

Before starting this unit, discuss the culture of your student's current workplace to see if they think it is stressful and, if so, why. For example, there may be unrealistic sales targets, too few employees, etc. If it isn't a stressful place to work, find out why not. Ask: *What factors make it stress-free?* This discussion will also provide you with useful background information about the student's company and working life.

Warm-up

Write the word *stress* on the board and ask students to build up a word map of useful phrases, such as: *stressful, stressed, to de-stress, to deal with stress, stress-related, etc.*

1 Put students in pairs to discuss the cartoon and answer the questions. Elicit students' ideas.

SUGGESTED ANSWERS

- The woman is stressed and aggressive. She is shocked by the man's reaction.
- The man is relieved that the woman's stress-related condition will not have a negative effect on work. He is unsympathetic and insensitive; he does not realize or care that training a replacement will only increase the woman's level of stress.
- The woman clearly feels that the company/management are responsible for her stress. The man feels that managing stress is a personal issue for the employee to resolve, one that cannot be allowed to interfere with productivity. In other words, any stress an employee suffers from should not be allowed to affect their performance at work.

2 Tell students to think about the difference in attitude shown by the man and the woman in the cartoon – they are good examples of how employees can react when there are different levels of sympathy to stress. Attitudes to stress are likely to vary in different work cultures, and between management and employees. Ask students to think about places they have worked and discuss the question about attitudes to stress with a partner. Ask some students to share their experiences.

3 Tell students that they are going to study a chart and then interpret it. Give them a moment to look at the chart. Elicit what each axis represents (the vertical axis shows employee performance from low to high; the horizontal axis shows levels of stress). Ask students to discuss with a partner their ideas on what it shows. Elicit students' ideas, e.g. no stress may mean poor performance; there is a level of optimum stress; too much stress is negative. Find out if students agree with the idea that a certain amount of stress can be a good thing.

4 2.36 Tell students they will hear part of a talk on stress. Play the recording so that students can listen and label the coloured areas on the chart. Check answers with the class. Find out if the term *eustress* is new for anyone.

ANSWERS

- Under-stressed
- Eustress or good stress
- Distress

2.36

Now, this next slide shows how performance varies with the level of stress. At very low levels, as shown by the yellow area, performance, health and motivation are low. This state is referred to as Under-stressed; it may be experienced by people who are unemployed, or who have very boring jobs with too little to do.

As the level of stress increases, in the green area, performance improves and people feel more motivated. This state is known as Eustress, that's E-U-S-T-R-E-S-S, or 'good stress'. Many people need

