

Stress Awareness Month has been held every April in the UK since 1992, in order to raise awareness of the causes and cures for our modern stress epidemic.

[The Stress Management Society](#) has identified that 65% of people in the UK have felt more stressed than ever before since the COVID-19 restrictions began in March 2020.

And in 2021, the HSE reported that there were an estimated 822,000 workers affected by work-related stress, depression or anxiety. This represents 2,480 per 100,000 workers. And in 2020/21 work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 50% of all workrelated ill health (Source: [Work-related stress, anxiety or depression statistics in Great Britain, 2021 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)).

Workplace stress in particular has many associated costs. It can lead to other mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, as well as impacting on absenteeism and workplace productivity.

A valuable part of creating a workplace that enables employees to feel stress-free and productive is the workplace environment. These principles can be applied to modern office settings as well as hospitality and foodservice environments.

Creating A Low-Stress Work Environment

Biophilic Design

Biophilic design has become increasingly popular in the last few years – incorporating natural materials and plants in to workplace and hospitality environments as a way of helping employees (and visitors) to re-connect with the natural world. The concept was introduced in 1984 by E.O. Wilson through his book Biophilia.

Biophilic Benefits

- Live plants improve air quality
- Creativity, and especially cognitive ability, can improve by up to 45%
- A biophilic work environment reduces stress and improves wellbeing
- Biophilic design improves people's overall happiness

(Source: [Research news - Office plants boost well-being at work - University of Exeter](#))

Nature & Natural Views

Having no window view was significantly related to greater levels of reported stress. In contrast, window views of greenery and water were linked with lower levels of stress. Consider the position of individual desks & group spaces in order to maximise window views, ensuring employees have a visual link to the outdoors.

Across the world, those who work in offices that provide natural light, live plants, and greenery along with water features, report significantly higher levels of well-being than those who work in environments devoid of nature.

Accent Colours

Employee well-being is positively impacted by offices that incorporate nature-resembling colours such as green, blue, and brown. This could be achieved through subtle pops of colour to create zoning within the space. It was also found that the use of grey colours within the workspace had a significant negative impact on employees' levels of stress.

Light And Spacious Workspaces

Those who report that their work environment provides a sense of light and space report greater levels of well-being in comparison to those who do not feel that their work environment is light and spacious. Removing traditional suspended ceiling grids, where space allows, can create a more spacious and contemporary environment.

Biophilic design suggests that nature contact has a restorative effect on people, helping them deal with day-to-day stress and work to maintain their work performance.

(Source: [HUMAN SPACES: The Global Impact of Biophilic Design in the Workplace.](#))

Pet Therapy

Finally... according to a study by the [University of Southern California](#), allowing pets in appropriate workplace settings helps employees to feel happier, lowers stress levels, and creates a comfortable, flexible environment.



Poppy Jones, CDGS's Office Dog