

## Comments on the Tackling Stress at Work course, 2008-2009

**Seven out of the 18 participants (16 potentials, as 2 have left) were contacted some months after they had attended the course, without giving them any warning, in order to get their immediate response – whether they remembered anything about the course, whether they had been able to put any of the ideas / suggestions into practice, and what would still help them to tackle stress at work.**

“The course was very good, but I haven’t had time to think about what needs to be done – how to implement it. Staff are looking to me, because I’ve been on the course. But the difficulty is find the time to re-read the information, to discuss it and to think about it. I am dealing with staff who are stressed – I’ve just spent half an hour talking to one person who was upset.”

“I remember the documentation about being a good line manager – it struck me with force at the time how hard a job it is to be a line manager, and what the expectations are on me. I’m more aware how much my behaviour affects the team. If I’m stressed, my ‘bad’ behaviour can affect them, and I’m aware that I should be more guarded. It was very useful having the Risk Manager on the course so that we could talk – it was beneficial to mull things over. I’ve just arranged to have a PDR with my line manager, and I will suggest to her to use the tool for assessment of line managers with the staff, to get feedback from them about how they view me as a line manager. I’m a bit fearful about that, but I think it would be helpful. However, as a line manager I feel powerless to get some things done – for example, dealing with heat in the office. We’ve put in numerous requests for blinds but they have still not been done.”

“It helped me to put things into perspective. I’ve changed some of my working habits – I may still work late, but I don’t take work home, and I do take breaks. I’ve got a bit more ‘selfish’ about not saying yes if I’ve got deadlines, I’ll say I’ll help but not this week. I also realise that for some cases there’s not an answer – it’s beyond our control, and we manage as best we can, but not always to everyone’s satisfaction.”

“I did several courses around that time, such as Grasping the Nettle, so it’s a bit difficult to remember each one. I do remember it gave me ideas about dealing with situations in the team, when something or someone is problematic, and I have been able to apply that. We discussed it in a team meeting. I have a folder from the courses I’ve been on, and I do refer to that, and will go through it before a PDR to refresh my memory. I have helped a member of staff with personal problems – we came through that well, drew up an action plan and used some of the techniques and ideas from the course. For example, offering her a solution but helping her to come up with ideas as well, which was empowering for her.”

“I have a better relationship with my manager now, he passes things on more and the two of us [staff side representatives] go to part of the managers’ meeting, so that has improved dialogue and consultation.”

“Lots of things were quite subtle in terms of making changes. I have tried to pass on good practice, such as making sure that staff document their hours, whether they are coming in early or staying late, as an indicator of workload and pressure of work. I haven’t so much

taken things up in a formal way, more creating opportunities for staff to come and talk to me in one-to-ones. People have a lot to get off their chests, and I think that's been helpful for them, that I am more approachable. In a particular case [which had been discussed on the course] it was helpful to discuss this case, and this did lead to a resolution which suited us both. I do remember the course was enjoyable.”

“A lot of the information was very useful, and I have shared it with others. I like the interaction on the course, it particularly helped people to open up. It was very nice being able to reflect on how to handle things. I have had some difficult people to deal with and a bit of conflict in the workplace, and I've been able to put some of the ideas into practice. In particular, in terms of my own response, I've been able to stand back, to cool down, rather than reacting too quickly. I also remember the emphasis on making time for yourself in your free time. I would recommend the course to colleagues, I found it impressive.”

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