My Work is Messing Up My Life!

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A friend of mine, Samiya (not her real name), called me a few days back, sounding exhausted and irritable. Working as a banker at a top financial institution, her work demands long working hours and a hundred percent dedication every day. I was not surprised when Samiya glumly mentioned how reluctant she was to go back to work after the Eid holidays, more so because her 4 year old son had said 'Ammu, please don't go back to work because I miss you and you are always angry with us after you return back home from work in the evening.' Only then did Samiya realise that she was not fooling anyone; her stressful job meant she was spending less time with family and becoming more short-tempered as each day passed.



Get rid of unnecessary stress. courtesy: pro.corbis.com

'My son's words were an eye-opener for me,' says Samiya, 'All this time, I was under the misconception that I was shielding the intolerable stress at work from my family. Only now have I realised that I have been taking out my frustrations at work on my family. I find myself shouting and being difficult most of the time. And this is not the end. Sometimes I wake up at five in the morning, worried sick about whether I will be able to meet deadlines at work, and there is always a constant fear that I shall not be able to live up to expectations. I don't know whether I can cope much longer.'

The symptoms Samiya describes is not uncommon, specially among ambitious young professionals with high octane careers and busy lives. The psychological symptoms of sleeplessness, irritability and fear that Samiya describes are common in those suffering 'work related stress'. Stress in the working environent can cause raised blood pressure, headaches, palpitations and indigestion. If ignored, stress can lead to serious complications such as severe depression and panic attacks.

Samiya tells me, 'I have no one to speak to about the stress I am going through. I don't want to bother my husband as he himself is quite stressed from work. My boss is not ready to hear my problems, all he wants are results and targets. I haven't been eating well, have bad skin and have lost so much weight. I am just too exhausted and don't know how much longer I can go on.' It was obvious that Samiya was slowly cracking under work pressure and it wouldn't be long before she gave up completely.

The solution to dealing with work related stress is certainly not giving up one's job, as this is the means to pay for your rent and expenditures and running your life. If you work in a highly competitive work environment (e.g., bankers, journalists, lawyers) or are responsible for handling a large number of individuals (e.g., teachers, doctors, managers), you are one of those at risk of developing stress. One of the major reasons behind stress in the work place is bottling up one's tension and stress, so it's always useful to have someone to talk to at the office and sharing your thoughts.

It is difficult to draw the line between the pressures of a highy competitive career and one's personal life, and sooner or later, many people start losing sense of their own selves. It is easy to end up feeling unsatisfied with one's performance at work, relationship with close ones and parenting ability when stress starts to eat into one's life.