

Work, Stress and Divorce

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Is your job putting you at risk of a divorce? It all depends on what you do for a living and how you do it. The U.S. Census Data identified people who were currently divorced, not those who were previously divorced, so the following numbers are more than likely understated. As a point of reference about ten percent of the population is divorced at any one time. Of course, most know that at some point almost half of all marriages end in divorce. Some jobs are especially risky to relationships and have a much higher rate than the ten percent. The ten jobs with the highest divorce rates, as reported by Business Insider and bases on US Census data are:

1. Dancers & choreographers - 43.05%
2. Bartenders - 38.43%
3. Massage therapists - 38.22%
4. Gaming cage worker (like at a casino) - 34.66%
5. Extruding machine operator (a factory job making soap and cups, etc.) - 32.74%
6. Gaming service worker - 31.35%
7. Factory workers: food & tobacco - 29.78%
8. Telephone operators - 29.30%
9. Nursing, psychiatric and home health aides - 28.95%

Additionally, entertainers and performers, sports and related workers plus baggage porters and concierges are tied at 28.49% divorce rate (Lubin, 2010).

Dancing With Divorced Stars

Looking at those numbers maybe there should be a television show called, "Dancing with the Divorced Stars". Massage therapists can get rubbed the wrong way with their job. Your first thought might be that potential extramarital relations are a risk of

bartenders and massage therapists. Bartending and gambling employees often include late night hours which might also take their toll on relationships. Those high risk jobs also involve long hours, low pay and most importantly a lot of on-the-job stress. High risk occupations like telemarketers, waiters/waitresses, roofers and housekeeping workers also have divorce rates in the high twenty percentages.

But what in the world is it that makes dancers and choreographers such a stressful job? Dancers you might be surprised to learn have one of the highest rates of on-the-job injuries. Plus, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics the pay is not particularly great with the median hourly wage of dancers at \$13.16. Choreographers are not much better off at \$18.11 per hour and the expected job growth is about average. A high school diploma or equivalent is about all you need to get into this occupation. So what you have is a lot of stress, low pay and plenty of competition.

Higher divorce rates are often associated with jobs that have low incomes, less education, poor working conditions and obviously stress. That would seem to be the case for the next highest group of bartenders who according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics only make \$18,680 per year and get paid \$8.98 per hour before tips. During busy hours, they are under pressure to serve customers quickly and efficiently. About half of all bartenders work full time, they often work late evenings, weekends, and holidays. That doesn't sound like a particularly good job for balancing work and home. There is high turnover among bartenders so there can be good job opportunities. There is also strong competition for the better bartending jobs.

Gaming jobs also had the same issues with pay, irregular hours and competition. It's hard to reach a balanced life when your business is open 24/7. Employees work nights, weekends and holidays and again the only thing you need is a high school diploma or a GED.

Massage therapists job growth is greater than normal but the work is physically hard. Additional training after high school and wages around \$34,900 doesn't seem very impressive. These groups along with other top ten risk jobs including nursing, psychiatric and home health aides are part of what is often "helping occupations". You

might feel good about helping others but the work itself is very challenging. Even if you don't work in these high risk occupations you can still feel stress at work and that affects your home life. A 2010 American Psychological Association survey that showed five factors most often cited sources of stress for Americans were money, work, economic outlook, family, and relationships (Coffey, 2011).

Low Risk Jobs

So what's on the other side of the coin? Well, high wages and advanced degrees generally lead to low divorce rate. What occupations have the lowest divorce rates? These include occupations like:

Agricultural engineers: 1.78%

Optometrists: 4.01%

Clergy: 5.61%

Directors, religious activities and education: 5.88%

Sales engineers: 6.61%

Podiatrists: 6.81%

Nuclear engineers: 7.29%

Conservation scientists and foresters: 7.4%

You could see how the middle two occupations of clergy and directors of religious activities would have low rates. Talk about pressure to not get divorced, wow! Occupations like those just listed tend to have low divorce rates tend to have a good bit of status, good wages, and good working conditions or at least less chaotic working conditions. Many low divorce rate jobs also require higher education. Divorce is not likely if you have advanced degrees and make good money. So go to college. But it's not just college degrees.

Divorce rates are generally the highest among young men and women who are under age thirty when they get married. Occupations like dancers and bartenders tend to attract those younger employees. Long hours, shift work and stress also place a toll on a marriage. Law enforcement officials work twelve to sixteen hour days, nights, weekends and holidays, which might be why some surveys show divorce rates as high as seventy five percent.

Are You Fed up?

Of course every job carries a certain amount of stress. Imagine if you were working at either Fed Ex or UPS, if they were to merge, you would then be working for Fed Up! Truth is a lot of employees feel fed up by the pressure at their job. According to a study published in 2007 by the American Psychological Association (<http://tidbitfun.com/04/08/stress-facts>) three out of every four Americans experience symptoms related to stress in any given month. One out of every three Americans feels they are living with extreme stress! Moreover half of all Americans feel that their own stress has increased over the past five years. So what's the big cause of all of this stress? Money and work were cited as the leading causes of stress. You would expect all that stress to affect employee's lives and it does. One in every two American workers says their stress has negatively affected both their personal and professional lives. The American Psychological Association study went on to say that this stress caused more than half of Americans to fight with people close to them. The speed of life and pressure of work make it easy to get out of balance and that can cause trouble at home.

Stress is strongly tied to physical problems like cardiac disease, hypertension, inflammatory diseases, and compromised immune systems, and possibly to cancer but it also carries some relationship baggage. It is just hard to be unhappy at work and not take some of that unhappiness home with you. Workplace stress research has highlighted that more than half of employees say their job demands have interfered with responsibilities at home in the past three months.

A Balancing Act

So where does this stress leave working parents? One in three working dads say they would leave their jobs if their spouse/partner could financially support the family while another thirty percent would take a cut in pay to spend more time with their children (CareerBuilder Inc., 2009a). That's a pretty big indicator that a lot of parents, including dads are frustrated with the inability to balance the demands of work with those of raising a family. This dissatisfaction has also been shown to affect work issues like productivity, absenteeism and turnover.

Even well paid occupations like physicians, nurses, psychologists and other medical professionals can have high divorce rates due to the inherent job stress. Many people working in these fields often take their work home with them. You can expect high divorce rates when couples live separate lives. Today's world can just spin at a dizzying pace.

A 24/7 World

It was Thomas Jefferson who said, the happiest moments of his life were those he spent at home with his family. It was easier to be at home when there was no electricity and the world didn't operate 24/7. Even just a few decades ago there wasn't much to do after about nine o'clock pm. Everything was closed on Sunday. You just stayed home. Recently it was interesting to hear from kids in the news that talked about what it was like after Super Storm Sandy struck the U.S. northeast coast. With no electricity some kids said they grew closer to their family and enjoyed being outside more because they couldn't watch TV or play video games. But what happens when the lights come back on? We can internet shop at all times of the day and night. We go to the grocery at 10 p.m. At work, it just seems like it never ends. There is always something that needs to be done. There is no escape.

E-mails and high-speed Internet give you no excuse to not work any hour of the day. Unfortunately, important bonding rituals like evening family dinners are rapidly disappearing. Ringing cell phones, faxes and e-mails have blurred the lines between work and home. Work needs to be 24/7, but people don't function well 24/7. We need

boundaries, we need balance or else our family and non-work life suffers. So what can you do?

What's Really Important?

Having fun should be one of those things we shouldn't lose in our stressful lives and some companies have recognized the need to lighten up a bit. Fortune 500 companies such as IBM, AT&T, Lockheed Aircraft, Kodak, Ford Motor Company, General Electric, Southwest Airlines, Bank of America, and many others have adopted "humor" into their workplaces as a tool to increase morale and improve the bottom line. But, what if you don't work for one of those places? You can change your situation.

You can go back to school. You can make a life style change. Too often we instill our own barriers. Far too many people get "needs" and "wants" confused. Kids think they "need" cell phones and believe their social life would end without them. Adults don't "need" a half a million dollar house. You don't "need" to always be working just so you can buy more stuff. Most Americans lack for very little but we all want or feel we "need" to have more. Time is one of the few things you really need. You need something to eat, you need a place to stay, you may need something to do but very little of our lives are spent with needs. We just think our wants are our needs.

So ideally you can get a better job. But if you are stuck, it's important to recognize that most jobs are not really going to change much. It's going to be up to you to change. It is all about setting **personal priorities**. If you want to reduce your stress and improve your personal life, sit down and really think about what you need. Spending quality time at home should be one of those high priorities. You can't expect a happy family and happy kids if you're not there, not just your body, but really there in mind and heart.

Begin now. Make a list of what is essential. You should find, if you're being honest, that about eighty percent of what you do is not essential. Out of this list of ten to fifteen activities isolate the twenty percent that is critical to you and your family. Parents mistaking think their kids "need" to be involved in every sport, every dance class or piano lessons. Good parenting is not about spending lots of money. It's about

the quality of the interaction you have with your family. Think about it for a moment. You drop your kids off at piano lessons, then drop them off at ballet or you drop them somewhere else but when are they really “with” you?

So make a real effort to focus on what is you really **need** to do. Today’s families spend so much time coming and going that parents don’t really develop a quality relationship. You need to create your own Super Storm Sandy event and think about what is really important. Being busy should not be an excuse for not parenting or spending time with the family. Do you really need to do all that stuff? Enjoy your children at home. Spend time together. Play games at home. Make a list of the things you do, look at how much time is devoted to each category, then ask yourself, is it appropriate.

You can find some free helpful tools and information on my supporting website under the Single Dad and Parenting Tab at dkeithdenton.com. Go to the “Instructions for Using Pareto Tools”. Choose the ones you like, modify it for your situation and start focusing on your “critical few”. This should include your significant other and kids if you have them.

Remember prioritize what you really need, rather than what you simply want. What is the cost in lost time with your family and yourself? Nice cars, a nicer house, a nice vacation — what is the cost of having more stuff? You need insurance, you need food and you need shelter; that is about it. The important point is to not treat everything the same. Make a list of your three or four most important issues in your family or work life and stay connected. Keep a balance in your life and you will have less stress.

Put Work in Its Place

Obviously, if possible find less stressful work. One that pays more or has more structured hours would also be nice. Having job flexibility has been shown to reduce work-family conflict. If you can’t leave your work, work with what you have now. Establish boundaries for work, set aside one-on-one time with the family, and for yourself. You might also want to take a course on how to learn how to cope with stress

at work. If your work does not offer them check out the stress management classes at local colleges. Time management courses, books and training can also be good.

Changes in lifestyle may be needed. Do you work to buy stuff or do you work because you have to survive? Expensive vacations, bigger homes and the latest fashions are not needs, they are wants. Changing what you buy and don't buy can mean you can have a job that is not as stressful. So when you make a list of what's important, first have clear priorities. Is it clothes and stuff that is important or is it you, your family or your kids? Is it money or doing something you enjoy? Work and stress are always going to be a part of your life. But true stress comes from what you "want" not from what you "need". Decide to make a change and you're less likely to become a divorce or stress statistic. Winston Churchill said, we make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give, so give your time to what truly matters and not to what you think you **need**.

References

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