

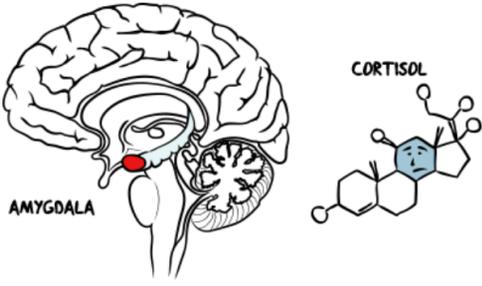


# THE NEUROSCIENCE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS

Exploring the effect on our brains of an unhealthy workplace

## The science of our brain

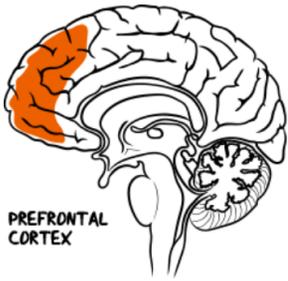
## In an unsafe environment



The **amygdala** processes emotions such as fear and anxiety, and the stress hormone **cortisol** is released in response to threats

**Impact** - The amygdala can become hyperactive and cortisol levels can increase leading to feelings of chronic stress and anxiety

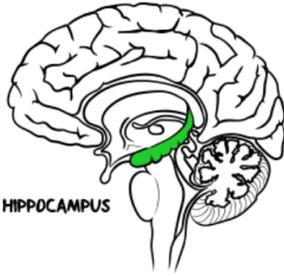
**Result** - Employees may feel constantly on edge, worried about potential conflicts or criticisms, and struggle to focus on tasks



The **prefrontal cortex** is responsible for executive functions such as decision-making, problem-solving, and emotional regulation

**Impact** - Chronic stress and anxiety can reduce prefrontal cortex functioning, diminishing cognitive abilities & rational decision-making

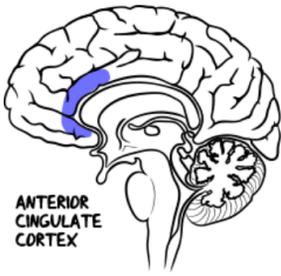
**Result** - Employees may have difficulty concentrating, making sound decisions, or controlling emotional responses to challenges



The **hippocampus** plays a key role in learning and memory consolidation, including long-term memory formation and retrieval

**Impact** - Ongoing stress exposure can damage the hippocampus, reducing hippocampal volume, impairing memory & learning

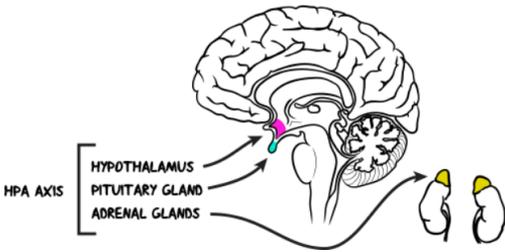
**Result** - Employees may struggle to retain new information, leading to reduced performance and difficulties adapting to workplace changes



The **anterior cingulate cortex (ACC)** is involved in conflict monitoring, emotional regulation, and empathy

**Impact** - The ACC's functioning can be disrupted, increasing conflict, reducing empathy, and impairing emotional regulation

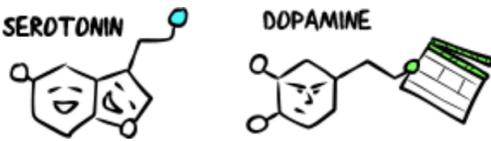
**Result** - Employees sensitivity to disagreements may be heightened, they may struggle to empathise, or overreact to minor issues



The **hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis** regulates the stress response and helps maintain homeostasis in the body

**Impact** - The HPA can become dysregulated, leading to raised cortisol levels and negative effects on memory, learning & immunity

**Result** - Employees may suffer more frequent illnesses, have trouble recalling important details, or difficulties acquiring new skills



**Serotonin** is neurotransmitter that helps with mood regulation, while **dopamine** is involved in motivation and reward

**Impact** - An imbalances in levels can add to mood disturbances, reduced motivation, and decreased job satisfaction

**Result** - Employees may feel demotivated, experience mood swings, or struggle to find joy in their work



**Oxytocin** is known as the "bonding hormone" and plays a crucial role in trust, empathy, and social interactions

**Impact** - Can inhibit the release of oxytocin, leading to reduced trust, impaired empathy, and difficulties building strong relationships

**Result** - Employees may feel isolated, disconnected from co-workers & struggle to collaborate effectively on team projects

Source - Driven article <https://bit.ly/3Kps5Oc>

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