
Fidelity and Stanford study sources of well-being and stress

By Editorial Staff *Fri, May 5, 2017*

64% of people reported feeling less happy and 30% felt worse about their finances during a corporate reorganization, according to the study.

“The top two things you can do to improve your well-being are to pay off debt and start exercising,” said Jeanne Thompson, senior vice president of Thought Leadership, Fidelity Investments. “Debt and experiencing a reorganization at work can have the biggest negative impact on your overall sense of well-being.”

That was the big takeaway from a recent survey by Fidelity and the Stanford Center on Longevity of more than 9,000 employees that sought to understand how certain events affect a person’s health and wealth, as well as their overall happiness and career.

“A key component of living long and living well is about navigating life events that can impact a person’s finances, health, career, overall happiness and ultimately their overall well-being,” said Tamara Sims PhD, director of the Stanford Center on Longevity Sightlines Project, noting that those conclusions are supported by the Stanford Center on Longevity’s Sightlines Project.

Here are five common life events that have significant and wide-ranging impact on a person’s total well-being:

Taking on or paying off credit card debt or a consumer loan.

- Nearly 70% of women said this led to higher stress levels, compared to 47% of men.
- 36% of women sleep worse (21% of men)
- 34% of women gained weight (17% of men)
- 29% of women were less active (12% of men)
- 59% of women said paying off debt made them happier, compared to 50% of men
- 62% of women indicated their lives were improved (53% of men)
- 44% of women reported lower stress levels (37% of men)

Starting or stopping an exercise routine.

- After starting to exercise, 71% of people felt happier, 56% felt less stress, and 38% were more motivated at work.
- After ceasing to exercise, 69% of people felt less happy, 55% felt more stressed and 20% were less motivated at work.

Return of adult children to the family home.

- One in nine Boomer parents surveyed said their kids boomeranged “to the nest” in the past year.

- 68% of parents affected reported they are more stressed, and more than half said they are less happy (53%), less satisfied (54%) and have less leisure time (53%).
- 76% of parents said they face higher expenses; 46% of women reported sleeping worse and 40% reported gaining weight.

A reorganization at work.

- 30% of people surveyed experienced a “reorganization” at work in the past year.
- More employees cited reorganizations as their most significant life event, of the events in the survey.
- 64% of people reported feeling less happy and 30% felt worse about their finances during a reorganization.
- 49% of Millennials reported losing sleep and 63% of women had lower career satisfaction after a reorganization.

Becoming a caregiver.

- One in four women reported becoming a caregiver for a sick or elderly family member in the past year.
- 78% of women indicated they are more stressed as a result, compared to 66% of men
- 50% of women slept worse (33% of men)
- 43% of women gained weight (22% of men)
- 42% of women stopped exercising (32% of men)
- 37% of women report saving less (26% of men)

Being in the ‘sandwich generation’

- Gen X is the new “sandwich generation,” who are simultaneously raising children, saving for college, retirement and long-term care, paying off debt and caring for parents.
- 65% of Gen Xers had a life event that negatively impacted their well-being versus 60% of Boomers and 57% of Millennials.