

redundancies, drops. And it's those people who have had a history of facing difficult times in the workplace who are most affected.

"These people, for example, who through no fault of their own have been made redundant before, or who have had a difficult time finding a job in the first place, are particularly susceptible to post-downsizing stress syndrome."

A big concern of experts like Shore is that those affected go on to engage in "extreme working", in which employees afraid of losing their jobs work through illness or work longer hours for less pay. According to corporate healthcare company HSA's Healthy Working Report, three-quarters of human resources professionals say they are aware of this phenomenon in their organisation.

The report also found that 22 per cent of employees surveyed know of a colleague who works through illness and 15 per cent of those questioned said they would come to work even if they had flu symptoms or diarrhoea.

One director of a North West-based specialist engineering firm says that it is common in his company. "Back at Christmas, all looked well and we were given generous bonuses. Then, in the first two months of this year, sales collapsed. In a bid to survive, we were all asked to take a pay cut of 20 per cent.

"There has already been one round of redundancies. And the pay cut will remain for those who have not been made redundant. That's a 20 per cent pay cut with almost twice the workload. We don't have a union because we were told we would never need one. We've actually tried to create employee committees to make sure that what's

happening is within the law. But to be honest, people on the committees, myself included, are so stressed about the possibility of not getting jobs in the very near future or at all that we don't really challenge management.

"It's understandable to play safe when you've got mortgages to pay and families to look after. The atmosphere is awful at the moment but we have to put up with it. If I'm laid off, I can probably survive for a little while, say six months, but then our mortgage still has 15 years left and that's a big problem, even though we're all angry at the management about how this has been handled."

A manager of a large Leeds branch of a major retail chain is also concerned about the stress staff face after experiencing redundancy.

"I can't speak publicly as a representative of the company or I'd be lynched by those above me but the sheer cost to many people who work here has been huge. I'm working longer hours than ever before because I'm



Hodson: emotional impact enormous

afraid of what might happen. Any of us could go. If you ask me, the top brass would have done better to keep a few people back and save on senior managers' bonuses."

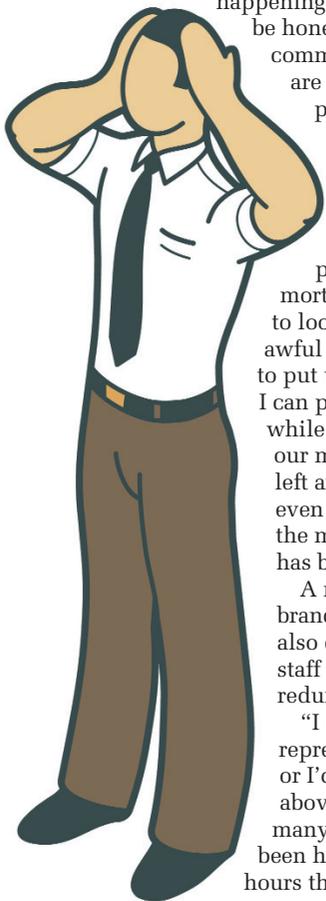
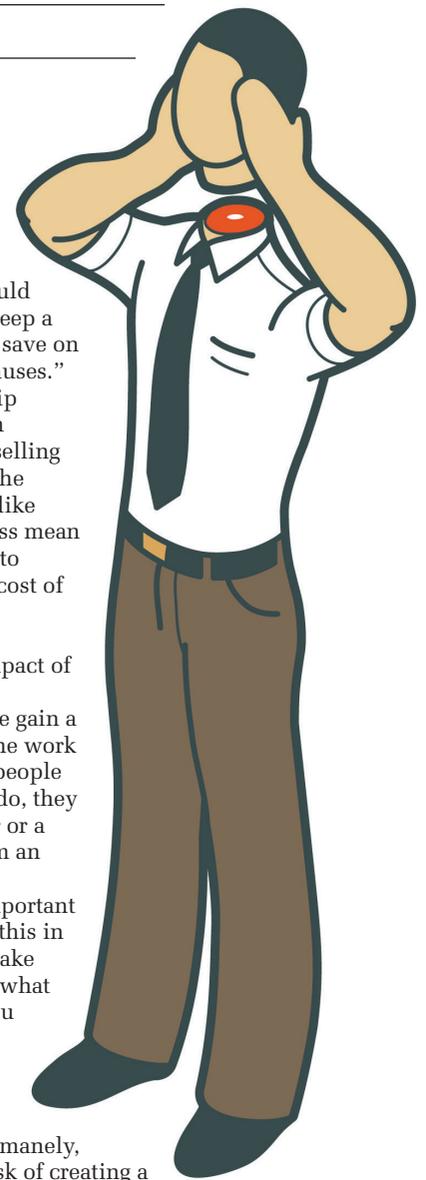
According to Phillip Hodson of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, the emergence of trends like post-downsizing stress mean that employers need to consider the human cost of redundancies more carefully.

"The emotional impact of redundancy can be enormous because we gain a lot of identity from the work we do. Often, when people are asked what they do, they don't say I'm a father or a husband, they say I'm an engineer.

"The reason it's important that managers factor this in when they have to make redundancies is that what you do with those you don't want is closely observed by those you do. If employees don't get loyalty or are not dealt with humanely, employers run the risk of creating a mentality of 'I'll get what I can' from those employees who remain.

"Some managers might say that they're not qualified to deal with emotional issues like stress after redundancies have occurred. But the other side of the argument would be that dealing with emotional distress is part of management because it's part of life.

"And when you are affecting people's very sense of identity by making them redundant then it's a big deal. My argument throughout my career has been that you need to pick up the emotional pieces as part of your responsibility as a manager." ■



"I began to feel this overwhelming sense of guilt that I had survived the chop."

Not so neat

The government must ensure its promise of training or work for young people out of a job is well funded, said TUC general secretary Brendan Barber last week as new figures showed youth unemployment rising.

The number of people aged 18-24 not in education, employment or training - so-called Neets - rose to 835,000 in the second quarter of 2009, a rise of more than 100,000 from the same quarter last year.

Neets aged 16-18 were up in number from 209,000 to 233,000 in the same period.

Gordon Brown reiterated his promise of education or training for all 16-17 year olds from next month, and a job, training or education for all long-term unemployed from the beginning of next year.

Barber warned that demand would be high. "Neets are likely to have low skills and poor experience so the training and work on offer must be meaningful," he said. "Otherwise it will just be a stopgap before further unemployment."