

# New Study : Your Work Stress Isn't Your Boss's Fault

A new study says genes are four times more likely than environment to account for stress.

Do you feel stressed at work? Since the global recession hit in 2008, many of us have had to shoulder increased workloads, as our companies have laid off our colleagues and insisted we take on more responsibility. We're working longer hours under more pressure from bosses. Round-the-clock texting and emailing has made things worse. A survey released today by staffing firm Right [Management](#) shows that more than one third of workers (37%) regularly get weekend emails from their bosses who expect them to respond. Another third of workers say that they sometimes receive such emails. How could you not feel stressed in such an environment?

You could be hard-wired to stay calm in a stressful situation, suggests a [study](#) published in the journal, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process*. The study, which looked at nearly 600 sets of Swedish twins, some identical, some fraternal, who were either raised together or separated early and reared apart, found that being raised in the same environment had little effect on stress and stress-related health problems. **Rather, shared genes were four times as important as shared environment.**

The paper's lead author, Timothy Judge, a management professor at the [University of Notre Dame](#)'s business school, said in a statement:

“Assume James and Sandy both work in the same organization. James reports more stress than Sandy. Does it mean James' job is objectively more stressful than Sandy's? Not necessarily. Our study suggests strong heritabilities to work stress and the outcomes of stress. This means that stress may have less to do with the objective features of the environment than to the genetic 'code' of the individual.”

According to Judge, changing jobs to get away from stress probably won't work unless you can accept your own predispositions to feeling beleaguered. This doesn't mean that if you feel overwhelmed by stress, that you shouldn't seek out a less stressful job, he says. “However we also shouldn't assume that we're 'a blank slate' and therefore be overly optimistic about what the work environment can and can't do as far as stress is concerned.” Judge maintains that the level of stress we feel has more to do “with what's inside of us than what we encounter outside in the work environment.”