

# Genes could be powerful predictor of our capacity to deal with stress, study shows

September 14 2012, by Shannon Chapla

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(Medical Xpress)—Work stress, job satisfaction and health problems due to high stress have more to do with genes than you might think, according to research by Timothy Judge, professor of management at the University of Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business.

The lead author of [Genetic influences on core self-evaluations, job satisfaction, work stress, and employee health: A behavioral genetics mediated model](#), published in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, Judge studied nearly 600 twins – some identical, some fraternal – who were raised together and reared apart. He found that being raised in the same environment had very little effect on personality, stress and health. Shared genes turned out to be about four times as important as shared environment.

"Assume James and Sandy both work in the same organization," Judge says. "James reports more stress than Sandy. Does it mean that 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."

The battle of nature vs. nurture shows that even at work, nature wins. Changing a job to free yourself of stress is probably not going to do the trick unless you appreciate your own predispositions toward stress.

"This doesn't mean we shouldn't do things as employers or individuals to

avoid stressful jobs," Judge 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. More of it has to do with what's inside of us than what we encounter outside in the work environment."

**More information:** [www.timothy-judge.com/document...ionandworkstress.pdf](http://www.timothy-judge.com/document...ionandworkstress.pdf)

Provided by University of Notre Dame

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