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UK men already seriously hit by bird flu

Exotic winged creatures pose the latest threat to the health of British men, but native flightless females are already making a pretty good job of keeping them away from the office: UK males miss a total of a least one million working days a year because they've been struck down by good old lovesickness.

A new survey shows that the initial throes of passion have caused a quarter (24%) of men to pull a sickie, and the same percentage does so after a break-up. No data is available on whether the love bug forced them into bed (alone or in company).

The impact of this particular social disease was highlighted by a poll of single people in Britain, commissioned by PARSHIP.co.uk, the UK's first compatibility-based online dating service.

With the number of unpartnered people amounting to 8.5 million, we're talking an epidemic. The figures also bear out a recent survey by the CBI, which revealed that employers fear that 25 million working days were lost last year through skiving – especially on a Monday or Friday, as people look forward to or recover from a heavy weekend.

When you ring in 'sick' and do those Oscar-winning coughs, splutters and moans, don't fall for any holier-than-thou stuff from your boss: it turns out that more than a third of senior managers – the highest proportion for any working group – admitted to taking time out to get over an emotional split. But be gentle with your superior if he or she is getting in extra-early or burning the midnight oil: it could be the result of a broken heart, since 40% of senior managers claimed to have worked longer hours after a nasty split.

Is one of the secretaries still happily stuffing the Krispy Kremes, but not filling out her sweater quite as well as a week or two ago? Then ask her if she has a new boyfriend. 31% of women said they lost weight after falling in love. They'd agree that vigorous physical activity outside working hours beats the Atkins diet any day.

On the other hand, if a female workmate is looking a bit sad and either lardy or skinny, you should keep your mouth shut, unless you want her running off to the loo in tears. Nearly a third of women put on weight after a break-up and nearly 40% dropped a few pounds.

All these ups and downs must cause of a different sort of heartache for your HR supremos. Emotional swings and absenteeism aren't conducive to productivity. What's more, nearly a third of single people are caught in a vicious circle, making the love bug come around far more frequently than the office Christmas party ... On the rebound from a split, nearly a third (31%) of single people have gone out with someone completely unsuitable. When you look at the figures more closely, it turns out that just 25% of men think they've made this mistake, while no less than 38% of women feel they made a bad choice. Just what are the fellas doing wrong? Don't make yourself sick trying to find the answer.

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