

STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: Workplace stress is to be expected. Stress is a natural human response to its environment. Stress itself is not necessarily a bad thing. Moderate level of stress is considered essential motivators. However, high levels of stress have the capacity to greatly impact physical and emotional health. It is these environmental changes that have made stress more pronounced. These days' stress is ubiquitous. None can escape stress. In fact, stress has its origin in the body chemistry, which has remained unchanged since man came on the earth. As leaders, it is our responsibility to assess and manage levels of stress in the workplace to ensure a safe and productive work environment. The aim of this paper is to provide insight that will help the reader further improve his/her management competencies in managing stress in the workplace.

Keywords: job stress, stress management, workplace stress managerial performance, satisfaction, social life, conflict.

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress is man's adaptive reaction to an outward situation which would lead to physical, mental and behavioral changes stress. Stress has become significant due to dynamic social factor and changing needs of life styles. Not all stresses are destructive in nature, appropriate amount of stress can actually trigger passion of work, tap latent abilities and even ignite inspirations. Stress can make a person productive and constructive, when it is identified and well-managed.

Therefore, it is important for employees to identify any signs of stress among their colleagues and themselves early enough to prevent impacts on the organization's performance levels. This will help individuals recognize the underlying problem and seek measures to cope with it.

Excessive stress is also costly. This is owing to the fact that stress leads to low productivity, encourages absenteeism and leads to high turnover, disability pay-outs and an increased worker compensation scheme. Moreover, stress can make a worker become resentful towards his/her employer apart from distracting employee engagement. General speaking, most worker feel some sense of purpose and accomplishment about their jobs, which can be very rewarding and self-satisfying. However, work can also be a tremendous burden, with deadlines to meet, work overload and difficult bosses placing considerable pressure and strain on workers. Therefore, jobs and the work environment commonly produce stress, which if not properly handled, can result in negative and dysfunctional behavior at work.

Stress management is the need of the hour. However, hard we try to go beyond a stress situation, life seems to find new ways of stressing us. Stressors, if not escapable, are fairly manageable. Effective management of job stress can only be achieved under two conditions. First, the individual worker must be able to recognize stressors and understand their consequences and second, organizations must develop stress prevention as well as stress reduction techniques.

Stress management is important for both individual and from the point of view of the organization. Stress can make a person productive and constructive, when it is identified and well-managed. Its objectives are:

1. To study the causes of stress among employees.
2. To know the level of stress on employees.
3. To study the effect of stress on the health of employees
4. To analyze the importance of interventional strategies to manage stress among the employees.
5. To study effectiveness of stress management programme organized by the banks to study causes of stress among employees.

6. To study the effect of stress on productivity of an organization.
7. To study the effect of over load on the stress level of the employees
8. To analyze the importance of interventional strategies at organizational level; to manage stress among employees.
9. To study the role of stress in interpersonal relationship.
10. To study effectiveness of stress management programme organized by the organization.

2. TYPES OF STRESS AND STRESSORS

Stress can be categorized as under:

1. **Eustress:** This stress happens because of sudden overjoy. Fortunately, this type of stress is not long-lasting. Furthermore, it is a state of happiness. Eustress, therefore, is not harmful, being occasional and fleeting.
2. **Distress:** This is the anti-thesis of eustress. Distress is caused whenever a person is suddenly very sad and angry. Distress is caused because of the demands of modern life and anxiety to cope with them. This results in feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, nervousness, loss, etc. this type of stress is harmful. This stress has caused more havoc in the executives' life. This stress justifies the saying "Ulcer is the surest sight of executive success". An atmosphere of objectivity and mutual trust would go a long way in reducing distress.
3. **Hyper stress:** This type of stress is caused because of hyperactivity and travails of life to meet deadlines, etc. targets and eleventh hour rush or continuous overwork cause hyper stress. The key, therefore, to deal with hyper stress lies in good planning.
4. **Hypo stress:** This type of stress is the opposite of the hyper stress. This stress is caused by less than optimum activity. The effects of hypo stress are slower than other types but more penetrating and longer lasting. There are examples when the organization has deliberately created hyper stress by denying stress. Deprive a person of fulfillment of self-esteem needs.

This is why stress is known as a "non-specific" response of the body to the situation.

3. STRESSOR

A stressor is any event, experience or environmental stimulus that causes stress in an individual. These events or experiences are perceived as threats or challenges to the individual and can be either physical or psychological. Researchers have found that stressors can make individuals more prone to both physical and psychological problems, including heart disease and anxiety.

Stressors are more likely to affect an individual's health when they are "chronic, highly disruptive, or perceived as uncontrollable". The more stressors, the more severe they are and the longer the exposure to them, the more demands are placed upon the person to cope.

There are three broad categories of stressors:

1. **Organizational stressors:** Organizational membership is a dominant source of stress. The concept of organizational stress was first evolved in the classic work and attention is drawn to the organizational stress in general and role stress in particular. Some organizational stressors are intrinsic to the job. They are boredom, time pressures and deadlines, exorbitant work demands and technical problems.

Some organizational stressors relate to the role in the organization. They are role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, etc. Some organization stressors relate to the organizational structure and the climate. They are lack of participation in decision-making. Lack of responsiveness and appreciation, pressure to conform, etc.

2. **Life stressors:** Life stressors can be categorized in three classes:

- a. Life changes
- b. Daily stressors
- c. Life trauma

Human beings have a tendency to maintain equilibrium. Any changes occurring in life is a reason to get stressed. Research shows that even the minor or the trivial occurrences in life stress.

3. Personal stressors: Personal stressors relate to the personal health and the familial life of an individual. They are like menopause or male menopause, commuting problems, reduced self-confidence because of aging, etc. the consequences of personal stress result in an individual finding it difficult to adjust with others. In extreme cases it results in divorce too. Stress at the individual level also results in medical problems. Most of all it affects an individual's decision making capacity.

Even though stress has multifarious deleterious effects on individual and organization, stress cannot be done away with. Every success has its roots in stress. Stress propel a man to do something that ultimately results in success. Stress is like the voltage on an electric bulb. High voltage fuses the bulb; at the same time less voltage dims the bulb.

Stress is a necessary evil. However, it has bad effects. Therefore, the only thing a man can do is to keep the stress from harming him. One must manage stress.

4. MANAGEMENT OF STRESS

Since stress effects an individual's body and mind, that individual must do something about his stress.

1. Know your personality type: Stress can affect different people in different ways. Two types of personalities can be identified in relation to coping stress.

Type A people are the people who create unnecessary stress for themselves. On the contrary, type B people are the ones who are mild mannered and take life as it comes. Type B persons are not stress-prone individuals. Also the relationship between personality and health problems is unclear.

2. Recognition is half the solution: One must remember an important fact of stress. Most of the time a person does not understand that he is under stress. Self-report measure provides clear indication that people who know us closely and observe us frequently can say with certain degree of accuracy. Correct detection is possible by these people because of some specific symptoms when stress still operate at behavioral and psychosomatic level. Awareness of these symptoms will help us to recognize when we are under stress.

Some behavioral symptoms of stress are:

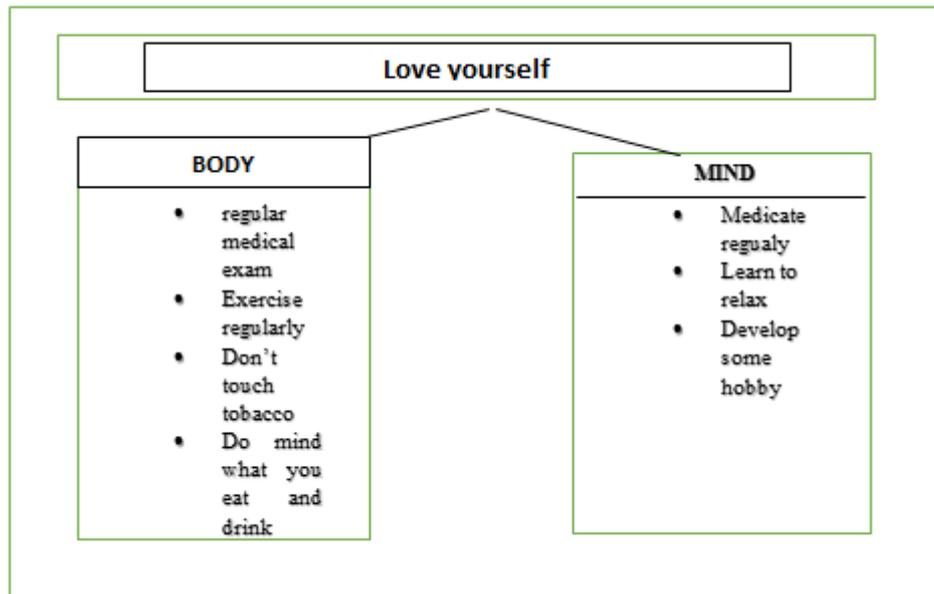
- a. Low productivity, decreased work performance.
- b. Tendency to remain absent from work.
- c. Interpersonal conflict.
- d. Tendency to remain isolated.
- e. Sudden change in habit.
- f. Talking around a subject.
- g. Poor eye contact while talking.
- h. Making others look ridiculous.
- i. Brooding, feeling worthless.
- j. Frequently references to death, suicide, etc.

Some psychosomatic symptoms of stress are:

- a. Sleep disturbance.
- b. High blood pressure.
- c. Stress diabetes.
bowel irritation.
- d. Backache.
- e. High blood pressure.
- f. Sexual dysfunctions.

5. WAYS TO OVERCOME STRESS

The figure below gives the strategies that can be adopted by an individual to cope with the stress.



Managing Stress:

1. **Love your body:** Our body is the vehicle that enables us to perceive, understand the world. It is through our body that we experience the world. It is only when we love our body that we will take proper care of it. Loving is not pampering. The following are some tips to deal with stress by making our body strong.
 - a. **Have a regular medical checkup:** A regular medical checkup is a preventive measure, especially, when one is beyond 40s. It is advisable that if a person is below 40 he must have a medical checkup at least once a year. Beyond 45 years of age, the health checkup should be at least twice a year.
 - b. **Exercise regularly:** To effectively cope with stress, a healthy body is a must. One can raise defenses against stress by regular exercise. One may take any type of exercise, for example, walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, etc.
 - c. **Don't touch tobacco:** Medical research has amply demonstrated that tobacco is a carcinogenic substance. Research also says that passive smoking is more harmful than active smoking.
 - d. **Mind what you eat:** One must be careful about what one eats. What we are largely depends on what we eat. As far as possible pungent food should be avoided.
 - e. **Drink adequate water:** Drink minimum three to four liters of water daily. Avoid alcoholic beverages. Alcohol contains calories but has no food value. Especially the use of tobacco with alcohol is injurious to health.
2. **Love your mind:** Happy as well as unhappy situations cause secretion of adrenaline. The remedy is to keep the mind tranquil. It is realized that keeping the mind tranquil is easier said than done. The Indian tradition has always been stressing on the importance of meditation. The idea is that in mediation a person takes away his mind for some time from the usual surroundings, which serves as a respite.

Organizational strategies for managing employees stress are:

- i. Creating supportive organizational climate.
- ii. Convincing employees that their contributions are significant.
- iii. Rotating employees out of potentially stressful positions and not allowing them to overwork.
- iv. Organizing training programmes to help employees cope with stress and providing employees counselling.

Remember one who “DARES” stress conquers it. DARES stands for:

D - Diet

A – Activity

R - Relaxation

E - Empathy

S – Spirituality

6. CONCLUSION

Stress is well- managed when an individual identifies it in a productive and constructive manner. In times of great stress or adversity, positive attitude and mediation will be helpful for coping the stress. Stress can be minimized if companies take the right steps.

Stress takes a heavy toll on person’s health and his capacity to adjust with others. Modern life is full of stressors. The job life contains many stressors. Some of the stressors are intrinsic to the job life: some relate to the structure of the job and so on. Stress-free employees perform better, work harder, feel happier and have a long-term commitment to the organization.

Stress is a naturally occurring phenomenon which can act as a motivator under the right circumstances and at right time. As leaders and managers, we are good to identify various sources and types of stress.

Let us hope that we will be successful in making distress into eustress for our healthy lifestyle as well as organizational well-being.

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