

Stress Management

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Abstract

In the modern era the people lived in the world are under the stress. There are so many reasons behind this. Stress due to family, stress due to business failure, stress due to job , stress due to any physical illness etc. It is very important for us to know the different strategies or the ways to manage our stress for the healthy and happier life. So this paper lay emphasis on the causes of stress and what are the different strategies to manage the stress in life.

Introduction

Stress: In a medical or biological context stress is a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Stresses can be external (from the environment, psychological, or social situations) or internal (illness, or from a medical procedure). Stress can initiate the "fight or flight" response, a complex reaction of neurologic and endocrinology systems.

Stress is defined as “a state of psychological and physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual's ability and motivation to meet those needs.”

Dr. Hans Selye, described stress as “the rate of all wear and tear caused by life.”

Stress can be positive or negative:

1. Stress is good when the situation offers an opportunity to a person to gain something. It acts as a motivator for peak performance.
2. Stress is negative when a person faces social, physical, organizational and emotional problems.

Factors that are responsible for causing stress are called stressors.

Causes of Stress

The major causes of stress at work or in organization:

1. **Career Concern:** If an employee feels that he is very much behind in the corporate ladder, then he may experience stress. If he seems that there are no opportunities for self-growth, he may experience stress. Hence, unfulfilled career expectations are the significant source of stress.
2. **Role Ambiguity:** It occurs when the person doesn't know what he is supposed to do, on the job. His tasks and responsibilities are not clear. The employee is not sure what he is expected to do. It creates confusion in the minds of the worker and results in stress.

3. **Rotating Work Shifts:** Stress may occur in those individuals who work on different work shifts. Employees may be expected to work on day shift for some days and then on the night shift. That may create problems in adjusting to the shift timings, and it can affect not only personal life but also family life of the employee.
4. **Role Conflict:** It takes place when people have different expectations from the person performing a particular role. It can also occur if the job is not as per expectation, or when a job demands a certain type of behavior that is against the person's moral values.
5. **Occupational Demands:** Some jobs are more demanding than others. Jobs that involve risk, and danger are more stressful. Research findings indicate, job that cause stress needs constant monitoring of equipments and devices, unpleasant physical conditions, making decisions, etc.
6. **Lack of Participation in Decision-making:** Many experienced employees feel that management should consult them on matters affecting their jobs. In reality, the superiors hardly ask the concerned employees before taking a decision. That develops a feeling of being neglected, which may lead to stress.
7. **Work Overload:** Excessive workload leads to stress as it puts a person under tremendous pressure. Work overload may take two different forms:
Qualitative work overload implies performing a job that is complicated or beyond the employee's capacity.
Quantitative work overload is a result of many activities performed in a prescribed time.
8. **Work Under load:** In this, case, too little work or very easy work is expected on the part of the employee. Doing less work or jobs of routine and simple nature would lead to monotony and boredom, which can lead to stress.
9. **Poor Working Conditions:** Employees may be subject to poor working conditions. It would include bad lighting and ventilation, unhygienic sanitation facilities, excessive noise, and dust, presence of toxic gasses and fumes, inadequate safety measures, etc. All these unpleasant conditions create physiological and psychological imbalance in humans thereby causing stress.
10. **Lack of Group Cohesiveness:** Every group is characterized by its cohesiveness, although they differ widely in its degree. Individuals experience stress when there is no unity among work group members. There are mistrust, jealousy, frequent quarrels, etc., in groups and this lead to stress to employees.
11. **Interpersonal and Intergroup Conflict:** These conflicts take place due to differences in perceptions, attitudes, values and beliefs between two or more individuals and groups. Such conflicts can be a source of stress for group members.
12. **Organizational Changes:** When changes occur, people have to adapt to those changes, and this may cause stress. Stress is higher when changes are significant or unusual like transfer or adoption of new technology.
13. **Lack of Social Support:** When individuals believe that they have the friendship and support of others at work, their ability to cope with the effects of stress increases. If this kind of social support is not available, then an employee experiences more stress.

Stress management

We all respond to stress differently so, there's no "one size fits all" solution to managing stress. But if you feel like the stress in your life is out of control, it's time to take action. Stress management can teach you healthier ways to cope with stress, help you reduce its harmful effects, and prevent stress from spiraling out of control again in the future.

No matter how powerless you may feel in the face of stress, you still have control over your lifestyle, thoughts, emotions, and the way you deal with problems. Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, taking care of yourself, and making time for rest and relaxation. The first step is to recognize the true sources of stress in your life.

Stress management strategies

Get moving:

Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress, but you don't have to be an athlete or spend hours in a gym to experience the benefits. Just about any form of physical activity can help relieve stress and burn away anger, tension, and frustration. Exercise releases endorphins that boost your mood and make you feel good, and it can also serve as a valuable distraction to your daily worries.

While the maximum benefit comes from exercising for 30 minutes or more, you can start small and build up your fitness level gradually. Short, 10-minute bursts of activity that elevate your heart rate and make you break out into a sweat can help to relieve stress and give you more energy and optimism. Even very small activities can add up over the course of a day. The first step is to get yourself up and moving. Here are a few easy ways:

- Put on some music and dance around
- Take your dog for a walk
- Walk or cycle to the grocery store
- Use the stairs at home or work rather than an elevator
- Park your car in the farthest spot in the lot and walk the rest of the way
- Pair up with an exercise partner and encourage each other as you workout
- Play ping-pong or an activity-based video game with your kids

Regular exercise:

Once you're in the habit of being physically active, try to incorporate regular exercise into your daily schedule. Activities that are continuous and rhythmic—and require moving both your arms and your legs—are especially effective at relieving stress. Walking, running, swimming, dancing, cycling, tai chi, and aerobic classes are good choices. Pick an activity you enjoy, so you're more likely to stick with it. Instead of

continuing to focus on your thoughts while you exercise, make a conscious effort to focus on your body and the physical (and sometimes emotional) sensations you experience as you're moving. Adding this mindfulness element to your exercise routine will help you break out of the cycle of negative thoughts that often accompanies overwhelming stress. Focus on coordinating your breathing with your movements, for example, or notice how the air or sunlight feels on your skin. Getting out of your head and paying attention to how your body feels is also the surest way to avoid picking up an injury.

Engage socially:

Social engagement is the quickest, most efficient way to rein in stress and avoid overreacting to internal or external events that you perceive as threatening. There is nothing more calming to your nervous system than communicating with another human being who makes you feel safe and understood. This experience of safety—as perceived by your nervous system—results from nonverbal cues that you hear, see and feel. The inner ear, face, heart, and stomach are wired together in the brain, so socially interacting with another person face-to-face—making eye contact, listening in an attentive way, talking—can quickly calm you down and put the brakes on defensive stress responses like “fight-or-flight.” It can also release hormones that reduce stress, even if you're unable to alter the stressful situation itself. Of course, it's not always realistic to have a pal close by to lean on when you feel overwhelmed by stress, but by building and maintaining a network of close friends you can improve your resiliency to life's stressors. On the flip side, the more lonely and isolated you are, the greater your vulnerability to stress.

Avoid unnecessary stress:

While stress is an automatic response from your nervous system, some stressors arise at predictable times—your commute to work, a meeting with your boss, or family gatherings, for example. When handling such predictable stressors, you can either change the situation or change your reaction. When deciding which option to choose in any given scenario, it's helpful to think of the four A's: avoid, alter, adapt, or accept.

Alter the situation:

If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** If something or someone is bothering you, be more assertive and communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you've got an exam to study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the stress will increase.
- **Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.

- **Manage your time better.** Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. But if you plan ahead and make sure you don't overextend yourself, you'll find it easier to stay calm and focused.

Adapt the stressor:

How you think can have a profound effect on your stress levels. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation. Regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude to stressful situations.

- **Reframe problems.** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.
- **Look at the big picture.** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- **Adjust your standards.** Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with "good enough."
- **Accept the things you cannot change :** Many sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors, such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.
- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control—particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- **Look for the upside.** When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.
- **Learn to forgive.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

Make time for fun and relaxation:

Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you'll be in a better place to handle life's stressors.

- **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Do something you enjoy every day.** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.
- **Keep your sense of humor.** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

Adopt a healthy life style:

In addition to regular exercise, there are other healthy lifestyle choices that can increase your resistance to stress.

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and you'll sleep better.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don't avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.
- **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

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