



STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Today's world most of the individuals are affected by stress. Stress is the result of an interaction between individual emotional, intellectual, social and physical resources and the demands on him or her. Stress is a different phenomenon form of pressure. Stress is something more than mere pressure. Stress can be either temporary or long-term, either mild or severe. Stress can be positive or negative. Stress can be positive when the situations offer an Opportunity for a person to gain something. It acts as a motivator for better performance. Stress can be negative when a person focuses social, physical, organizational and emotional problems. Negative stress can cause diseases such as hypertension, asthma, diabetes, heart ailments, cancer etc., to reduce and control the stress is vital for healthy living. It may seem that there is nothing can be done about stress. In fact the simple realization which helps to control stress. This paper makes an attempt to find out the causes of stress and focuses on strategies to overcome stress.

Key Words: - *Stress Control, Managing Stress, And Problems During Stress.*

What is Stress?

Stress refers to the strain from the conflict between our external environment and us, leading to emotional and physical pressure. In our fast paced world, it is impossible to live without stress, whether you are a student or a working adult. There is both positive and negative stress, depending on each individual's unique perception of the tension between the two forces. Not all stress is bad. For example, positive stress, also known as eustress, can help an individual to function at optimal effectiveness and efficiency.

Hence, it is evident that some form of positive stress can add more color and vibrancy to our lives. The presence of a deadline, for example, can push us to make the most of our time and produce greater efficiency. It is important to keep this in mind, as stress management refers to using stress to our advantage, and not on eradicating the presence of stress in our lives.

On the other hand, negative stress can result in mental and physical strain. The individual will experience symptoms such as tensions, headaches, irritability and in extreme cases, heart palpitations. Hence, whilst some stress may be seen as a motivating force, it is important to manage stress levels so that it does not have an adverse impact on your health and relationships.

Part of managing your stress levels include learning about how stress can affect you emotionally and physically, as well as how to identify if you are performing at your optimal stress level or if you are experiencing negative stress. This knowledge will help you to identify when you need to take a break, or perhaps seek professional help. It is also your first step towards developing techniques to managing your stress levels.

Modern day stresses can take the form of monetary needs, or emotional frictions. Competition at work and an increased workload can also cause greater levels of stress. How do you identify if you are suffering from excessive stress? Psychological symptoms commonly experienced include insomnia, headaches and an inability to focus. Physical symptoms take the form of heart palpitations, breathlessness, excessive sweating and stomachaches.

What causes stress? There are many different causes of stress, and that which causes stress is also known as a stressor. Common lifestyle stressors include performance, threat, and bereavement stressors, to name a few.



Performance stressors are triggered when an individual is placed in a situation where he feels a need to excel. This could be during performance appraisals, lunch with the boss, or giving a speech. Threat stressors are usually when the current situation poses a dangerous threat, such as an economic downturn, or from an accident. Bereavement stressors occur when there is a sense of loss such as the death of a loved one, or a prized possession.

Thus, there are various stressors, and even more varied methods and techniques of dealing with stress and turning it to our advantages. In order to do so, we must learn to tell when we have crossed the line from positive to negative stress.

Good Stress V/S Bad Stress

Stress has often been misunderstood to be negative, with few people acknowledging the importance and usefulness of positive stress. In our everyday lives, stress is everywhere and definitely unavoidable; hence our emphasis should be on differentiating between what is good stress, and what is bad. This will help us to learn to cope with negative stress, and harness the power of positive stress to help us achieve more.

There are 4 main categories of stress, namely eustress, distress, hyper stress and hypo stress. Negative stress can cause many physical and psychological problems, whilst positive stress can be very helpful for us. Here's how we differentiate between them.

Eustress

this is a positive form of stress, which prepares your mind and body for the imminent challenges that it has perceived. Eustress is a natural physical reaction by your body which increases blood flow to your muscles, resulting in a higher heart rate. Athletes before a competition or perhaps a manager before a major presentation would do well with eustress, allowing them to derive the inspiration and strength that is needed.

Distress

We are familiar with this word, and know that it is a negative form of stress. This occurs when the mind and body is unable to cope with changes, and usually occurs when there are deviations from the norm. They can be categorized into acute stress and chronic stress.

Acute stress is intense, but does not last for long. On the other hand, chronic stress persists over a long period of time. Trigger events for distress can be a change in job scope or routine that the person is unable to handle or cope with.

Hyper Stress

This is another form of negative stress that occurs when the individual is unable to cope with the workload. Examples include highly stressful jobs, which require longer working hours than the individual can handle. If you suspect that you are suffering from hyper stress, you are likely to have sudden emotional breakdowns over insignificant issues, the proverbial straws that broke the camel's back. It is important for you to recognize that your body needs a break, or you may end up with severe and chronic physical and psychological reactions.

Hypo Stress

Hypo stress occurs when a person has nothing to do with his time and feels constantly bored and unmotivated. This is due to an insufficient amount of stress; hence some stress is inevitable and helpful to us. Companies should avoid having workers who experience hypo stress as this will cause productivity and mindfulness to fall. If the job scope is boring and repetitive, it would be a good idea to implement some form of job rotation so that there is always something new to learn.

The types of stress are named as eustress and distress. Distress is the most commonly-referred to type of stress, having negative implications, whereas eustress is a positive form of stress, usually related to desirable events in



person's life. Both can be equally taxing on the body, and are cumulative in nature, depending on a person's way of adapting to a change that has caused it.

Stress Positive Results

The words 'positive' and 'stress' may not often go together. But, there are innumerable instances of athletes rising to the challenge of stress and achieving the unachievable, scientists stressing themselves out over a point to bring into light the most unthinkable secrets of the phenomenal world, and likewise a painter, a composer or a writer producing the best paintings, the most lilting of tunes or the most appealing piece of writing by pushing themselves to the limit. Psychologists second the opinion that some 'stress' situations can actually boost our inner potential and can be creatively helpful.

Experts tell that stress, in moderate doses, is necessary in our life. Stress responses are one of our body's best defense systems against outer and inner dangers. In a risky situation body releases stress hormones that instantly make us more alert and our senses become more focused. The body is also prepared to act with increased strength and speed in a pressure situation. It is supposed to keep us sharp and ready for action.

Research suggests that stress can actually increase our performance. Instead of wilting under stress, one can use it as an impetus to achieve success. Under stress the brain is emotionally and biochemically stimulated to sharpen its performance.

Stress is, perhaps, necessary to occasionally clear cobwebs from our thinking. If approached positively, stress can help us evolve as a person by letting go of unwanted thoughts and principle in our life. Very often, at various crossroads of life, stress may remind you of the transitory nature of your experiences, and may prod you to look for the true happiness of life.

Organizational and individual programs to help managers and employees cope up with stress have become increasingly popular, as the toll taken by stress has become more widely known. Methods are available to individuals and organizations for managing stress and reducing its harmful effects. Stress management refers to any program that reduces stress by helping people understand the stress response, recognize stressors, and use coping techniques to minimize the negative impact of stress.

Individual Methods

Stress management by individuals includes activities and behaviors designed to eliminate or control the sources of stress and make the individual more resistant to or better able to cope with stress. The first step in individual stress management involves recognizing the stressors that are affecting the person's life. Next, the individual needs to decide what to do about them.

Practical suggestions for individual stress management include the following

- Plan ahead and practice good time management
- Get plenty of exercise
- Develop a sound philosophy of life and maintain a positive attitude
- Concentrate on balancing your work and personal life.
- Learn a relaxation technique.

Organizational Methods

Stress management by organizations is designed to reduce the harmful effects of stress in three ways

- Identify and then modify or eliminate work stressors
- Help employees modify their perception and understanding of work stress
- Help employees cope more effectively with the consequences of stress.



Approaches to Stress Management

Both organization and individuals are highly concerned about stress and its effects. In attempting to manage stress, they have three broad options.

- Prevent or control it,
- Escape from it,
- Learn to adapt it.

Organizations can seek to improve managerial communication skills, empower employees through participation, and redesign jobs to be more fulfilling, or implement organization development programs. These steps are aimed at reducing or eliminating stressors for employees. Some employees can escape stress by requesting job transfers, finding alternative employment, taking early retirement or acquiring assertiveness skills allow them to confront the stressor.

Some people experience stress because they are detached from the world around them, they lack warm interpersonal relationships. Individuals with a driving ambition and a strong need for independence may fail to develop close attachments to friends and colleagues. To achieve their success, they often sacrifice fulfillment to their social needs. Their lack of social attachments may result in anger, anxiety, and loneliness all producing stress in their lives.

Typical Causes of Stress on the Job

- Work Overload
- Time pressures
- Poor quality of supervision
- Insecure job climate
- Lack of personal control
- Inadequate authority to match responsibilities
- Role conflict and ambiguity
- Differences between company and employee values
- Change of any type, especially when it is major or unusual
- Frustration
- Technology with training or support

Why Should you Learn to Cope With Stress?

In the best of all possible worlds, when a stressful situation ends, hormonal signals switch off the stress response, and the body returns to normal. Unfortunately, stress doesn't always let up. If you tend to harbor anxiety, and you worry about daily events and relationships, your stress response never shuts down. Studies show that long-term activation of stress symptoms can have a hazardous, even lethal effect on your body. When the signs of stress persist, you are at risk for many health problems that people often do not realize are, in large part, attributable to stress.

How to Manage Stress Better?

Identifying unrelieved stress and being aware of its effect on our lives is not sufficient for reducing its harmful effects. Just as there are many sources of stress, there are many possibilities for its management. However, all require work toward change: changing the source of stress and/or changing your reaction to it. How do you proceed?

Stress Management Strategies

The following are tips on how to maintain a healthier lifestyle and to prepare you to cope with the stress of everyday living.

- Structure each day to include a minimum of 20 minutes of aerobic exercise.
- Eat well-balanced meals, more whole grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables. Substitute fruits for desserts.



- Avoid caffeine. The substance may aggravate anxiety, insomnia, nervousness and trembling.
- Reduce refined sugars. Excess sugars cause frequent fluctuation in blood glucose levels, adding stress to the body's physiological functioning.
- Reduce alcohol and drugs. These substances may add to headaches and swelling, decrease coping mechanisms and add to depression.

Studies prove that stress is becoming a major area of concern to managements particularly to HR managers. Unfortunately, avoiding or removing stress altogether from workplace is an impossible task. However, HR managers must make efforts to identify sources of stress, particularly organization induced in order to minimize them. If left unassessed or unattained, it may become a formidable block in realizing the potential of employees apart from resulting in improper functional effects to the organization.

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