



UNIT 2: STRESS MANAGEMENT

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STRESS AND ITS MANAGEMENT

- Our increasingly busy lives cause our minds a lot of stress. Stress is mental tension caused by demanding, taxing or burdensome circumstances. Stress doesn't just affect our mental state and mood; it affects our physical health as well.
- When we are very stressed, a hormone called cortisol is released into our bloodstream, suppressing the functioning of our immune, digestive and reproductive systems. That is why it is so important to practice stress management in order to keep our minds and bodies healthy.
- Stress management consists of making changes to your life if you are in a constant stressful situation, preventing stress by practicing self-care and relaxation and managing your response to stressful situations when they do occur.



STRESS AND ITS MANAGEMENT

- Before we move on to stress management techniques, it's important to note that not all stress is bad. Stress is actually a survival response when our body thinks that it is in danger.
- That is why our sympathetic nervous system kicks in and makes our heart rate increase and gives us a burst of the energy hormone, adrenaline, so that we can deal with whatever situation is being thrown at us. This is also called our flight or fight response.
- The problem is when we deal with constant stress and worry, or when we don't know how to properly manage a stressful situation. That's why stress management is tremendously important for our health, quality of life and relationships.



• BENEFITS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

It has already been said that stress causes mental and physical strain, tension and even illness. It can affect all areas of our lives. Some examples of health problems stress can cause include:

STRESS

The Nation's #1 Killer

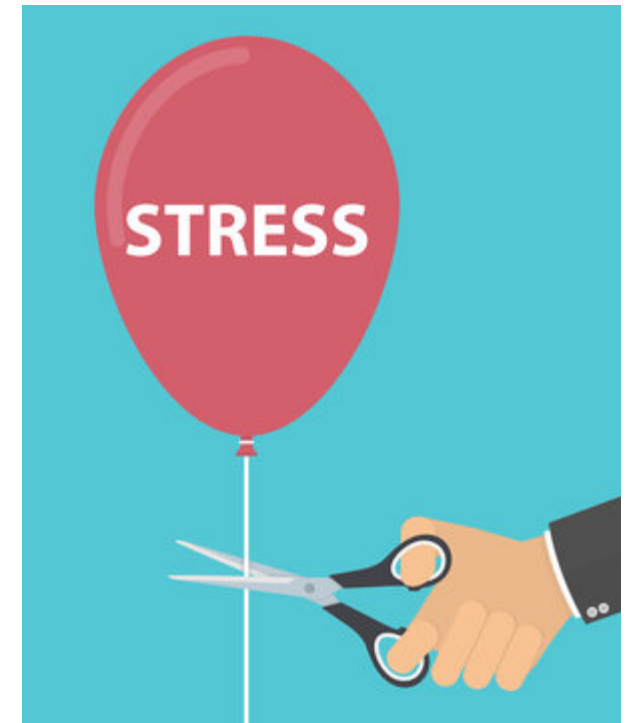
Medically Proven Stress Contributes to:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| * Heart Disease | * Insomnia |
| * Strokes | * Fatigue |
| * High Blood Pressure | * Sex Problems |
| * Colitis | * Skin Diseases |
| * Irritability | * Allergies |
| * Rheumatism | * Overeating |
| * Depression | * Asthma |
| * Migraines | * Kidney Disorders |
| * Diabetes | * Ulcers |
| * Hardening of the Arteries | * Breathing Problems |
| | * Increased Smoking |



• CHANGE THE STRESSFUL SITUATION

- The first thing that you need to consider when encountering a short- or long-term stressful situation is, 'Can I change the situation so that it does not cause me stress anymore?' If it's a person in your life that is constantly negative and critical of you, can you distance yourself from that person? If it is a job that you are doing, can you start making moves to look for a new job or obtain a different position?
- There is a quote by a famous spiritual leader, Eckhart Tolle, that says, 'When you complain, you make yourself the victim. Leave the situation, change the situation or accept it. All else is madness.'



QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK YOURSELF!

1. Are you missing out on deadlines?
2. Have you witnessed a significant drop in productivity?
3. Are you least motivated to work?
4. Have you seen a rise in the workplace stress levels?

Leadership helps to grasp the effects of stress on the employees' daily lives. Prolonged stress harms the mental and physical health of employees. Moreover, if not addressed in time it can lead to chronic stress that can be detrimental in the long run.

WHAT IS STRESS MANAGEMENT?

- Stress management is the broad spectrum of techniques that help a person to control their stress levels. The purpose of stress management is to improve the everyday functioning of an employee and increase job satisfaction.
- It is common to feel stressed. However, if this stress persists on a daily basis, it can impair our ability to perform. Chronic stress can ultimately lead to serious health complications.
- However, one can tackle the issue if one understands the signs of stress and work on resolving it.

WHAT IS STRESS MANAGEMENT?

With some handy stress management tricks, an employee can:

- ➔ Improve their productivity
- ➔ Maintain healthy relationships with their peers
- ➔ Think rationally and calmly during a crisis
- ➔ Reduce chances of depression and anxiety
- ➔ Focus on their well-being

Managers must understand the severity of what stress can lead to and how it impacts the organization. You need to acknowledge it and recognize stress among employees to further stop it from escalating.

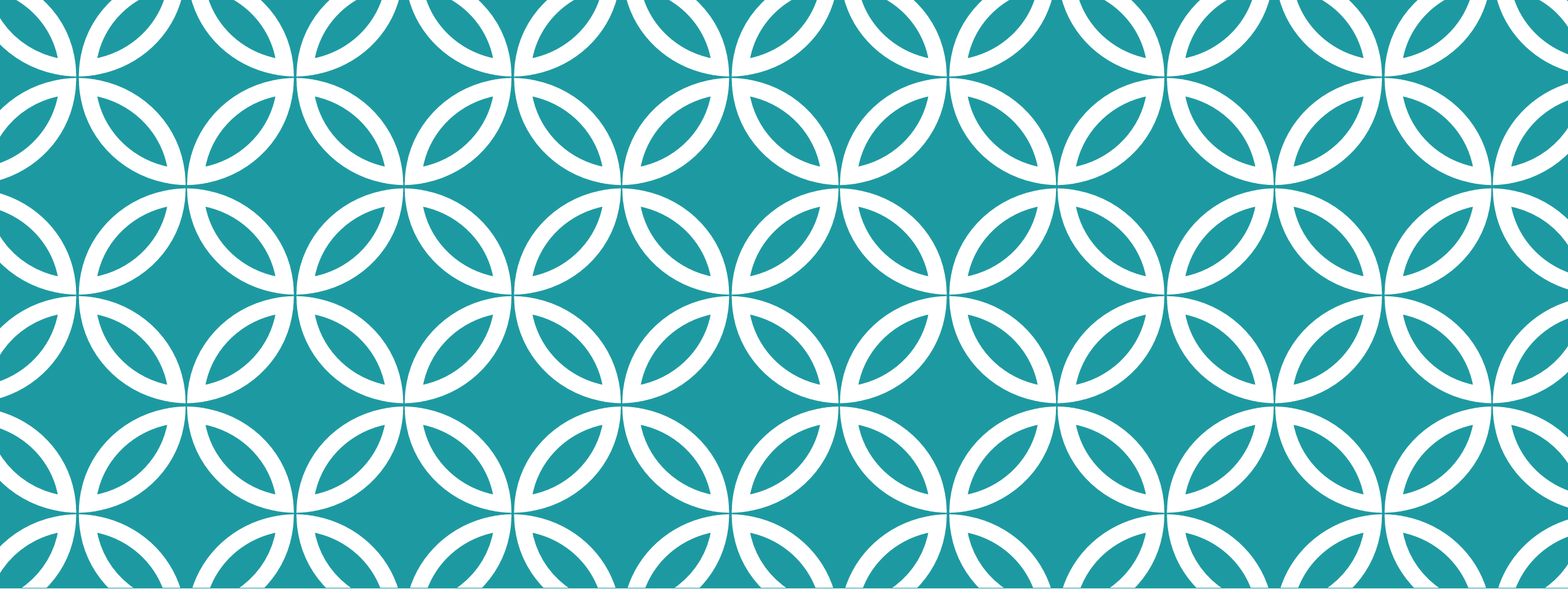
REASONS BEHIND STRESS AT WORKPLACE

- The reasons behind high levels of stress in the workplace can vary. But managers need to selectively emphasize on few of the factors that are troublesome. Below is a list of some common reasons-

- ➔ Increase in workload leading to employee burnout
- ➔ No room for growth and development
- ➔ Absence of recognition culture
- ➔ Lack of resources to complete daily tasks
- ➔ A toxic work environment and inadequate communication

.MANAGER'S ROLE IN STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Survey to find out the reasons for employees' stress
- Create an action plan of solving the problem
- Communicate the plan to the employee. Take their inputs into consideration. It will help them feel like they have power over their stressors.
- Train executives and senior leaders on how to handle burnout and stress among their people



TIPS FOR ENGINEERS TO REDUCE WORK STRESS

1. IDENTIFY THE CAUSE OF THE STRESS

- First, identify the cause of the stress.
- Once the cause of the stress is identified, start tackling ways in which you might reduce that stress.
- If there are concerns about deadlines, create a list of what you need to accomplish in a step-by-step format.
- Review your time management and identify detractors that are preventing timely project completion.

2. LEARN TO SAY “NO”

- Sometimes minimizing stress and preventing overload is as fundamental as saying no.
- If you feel like you are being approached with deadlines that are impossible to meet, provide a more reasonable solution.
- Outline what demands can be made by the deadline and provide a time when the rest of the work can be completed.
- It is important to emphasize safety; a rushed engineer may be in danger of making a critical error.

3. HAVE AN END OF THE DAY HABIT

- Set a routine and have an end of the day habit.
- Perhaps this means creating a list for what you will do tomorrow by lining up tomorrow's tasks.
- File paperwork, arrange your office, send end of the day review emails to the team.
- Set yourself up for a successful succeeding day at the end of the day, so that you don't stress in the evening that you're going to have to work double time in the morning.

4. PRACTICE BREATHING TECHNIQUES AND MEDITATION

- You can practice breathing and meditation techniques anywhere.
- If you feel work stress getting to you in the middle of the day, breathe in and count to ten seconds and breathe out for ten seconds. This simple exercise often helps to immediately reduce stress and anxiety.
- On the commute to and from work, visualize yourself as being successful. In the morning, visualize yourself having a successful day.
- And on the way home, meditate and visualize leaving the stress behind so when you walk in your door, you are able to just relax.

5. EXERCISE

- Exercise helps tackle stress. If midday stress is starting to creep in, see if you can take a walk around or outside the office to breathe and meditate.
- Make it an end of the day routine to stop by the gym a couple of nights a week on the way home; consider taking the stairs rather than the escalator or find opportunities to stretch and have a relaxing walk.

6. DEVELOP GOOD TECHNOLOGY HABITS

- There will be times when deadlines have you working after hours. But set a time limit to your day, especially when responding to emails.
- Many employees assume that answering emails throughout the evening shows how dedicated they are to the job. However, this may have a deleterious effect. In doing so, you remove the boundaries of acceptable times for people to contact you and people may think you are available at any hour of the day.
- Prioritize your time, and that includes time needed for yourself.

7. CONFINE YOUR WORK TO A PARTICULAR LOCATION

- If possible, confine your work to a particular location. Make this the location of your productivity.
- Reserve spaces for no work, especially the bedroom or family living quarters. If you are required to work from home occasionally, set a spot in a corner or create a small office. When you leave the office, leave the work be for a while.

8. PRIORITIZE SLEEP

- A sleepy engineer is bound to be a subpar engineer. Prioritize your time for restful sleep. Set an evening routine, avoid responding to work emails in bed and create a space in your room that encourages restfulness. Proper sleep helps reduce stress and has a wide variety of health benefits.
- While work stress may be inevitable, especially in the engineering profession, there are steps you can take to prevent bringing too much work stress home. The role of an engineer is critical to the success and safety of the world that surrounds us; a healthy engineer is a benefit to everyone.

SOURCES OF STRESS

The Environment – the environment can bombard you with **intense and competing demands to adjust**. Examples of environmental stressors include weather, noise, crowding, pollution, traffic, unsafe and substandard housing, and crime.

Social Stressors – we can experience multiple stressors arising from the demands of the different social roles we occupy, such as parent, spouse, caregiver, and employee. Some examples of social stressors include deadlines, financial problems, job interviews, presentations, disagreements, demands for your time and attention, loss of a loved one, divorce, and co-parenting.

Physiological – Situations and circumstances affecting our body can be experienced as physiological stressors. Examples of physiological stressors include rapid growth of adolescence, menopause, illness, aging, giving birth, accidents, lack of exercise, poor nutrition, and sleep disturbances.

Thoughts – Your brain interprets and perceives situations as stressful, difficult, painful, or pleasant. Some situations in life are stress provoking, but it is our thoughts that determine whether they are a problem for us.

TYPES OF STRESSORS

Situations that are considered stress provoking are known as stressors. Stress is not always a bad thing. Stress is simply the body's response to changes that create taxing demands. Many professionals suggest that there is a difference between what we perceive as positive stress, and distress, which refers to negative stress. In daily life, we often use the term "stress" to describe negative situations. This leads many people to believe that all stress is bad for you, which is not true.

Positive stress has the following characteristics:

- Motivates, focuses energy
- Is short-term
- Is perceived as within our coping abilities
- Feels exciting
- Improves performance

In contrast, negative stress has the following characteristics:

- Causes anxiety or concern
- Can be short or long-term
- Is perceived as outside of our coping abilities
- Feels unpleasant
- Decreases performance
- Can lead to mental and physical problems

INTERNAL SOURCES OF STRESS AND ANXIETY

- Stressors are not always limited to situations where some external situation is creating a problem. Internal events such as feelings, thoughts, and habitual behaviors can also cause negative stress.
- Common internal sources of distress include:
 - Fears (e.g., fears of flying, heights, public speaking, chatting with strangers at party)
 - Repetitive thought patterns
 - Worrying about future events (e.g., waiting for medical test results or job restructuring)
 - Unrealistic or perfectionist expectations
- Habitual behavior patterns that can lead to stress include:
 - Over scheduling
 - Failing to be assertive
 - Failing to set and maintain healthy boundaries
 - Procrastination and/or failing to plan ahead

COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF STRESS AND ANXIETY

Anxiety is a feeling that we commonly experience when faced with stressful life events. Anxiety can be one of the most distressing emotions that people feel. It is sometimes called “fear or nervousness”. Common reactions to anxiety include:

Physical Symptoms:

- Sweaty palms
- Muscle tension
- Racing heart
- Flushed cheeks
- Light headedness

COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF STRESS AND ANXIETY

Behaviors:

- Avoiding situations where experiencing anxiety might occur
- Leaving situations when feelings of anxiety begins to occur
- Trying to do things perfectly or trying to control events to prevent danger

Moods:

- Nervous
- Irritable
- Anxious
- Panicky

Thoughts:

- Overestimation of danger
- Underestimation of your ability to cope
- Underestimation of help available
- Worries and catastrophic thoughts

. SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS OVERLOAD

- Three common ways that people respond when they are overwhelmed by stress are:
 1. An angry or agitated stress response. You may feel heated, keyed-up, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.
 2. A withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.
 3. Both a tens and frozen stress response. You “freeze” under pressure and feel like you can’t do anything. You look paralyzed, but under the surface you may feel extremely agitated.

• COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- ❖ Memory problems
- ❖ Inability or difficulty concentrating
- ❖ Poor judgment
- ❖ Seeing only the negative
- ❖ Anxious, racing, or ruminating thoughts
- ❖ Constant worrying

• EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- ❖ Moodiness
- ❖ Irritability or short-tempered
- ❖ Agitation, inability to relax
- ❖ Feeling overwhelmed
- ❖ Sense of loneliness or isolation
- ❖ Depression or general unhappiness

• BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- ❖ Eating more or less
- ❖ Sleeping too much or too little
- ❖ Isolating yourself from others
- ❖ Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- ❖ Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- ❖ Nervous habits (nail biting, pacing)

1. Start off your day with breakfast.
2. Occasionally change your routine by meeting a friend or co-worker for breakfast. Allow time to relax and enjoy it.
3. Find some time during the day to meditate or listen to a relaxation CD.
4. Instead of drinking coffee all day, switch to fruit juice.
5. Organize your work - set priorities.
6. Don't try to be perfect. Don't feel like you must do everything.
7. Avoid trying to do two, three, or more things at a time.
8. Develop a support network.
9. If possible, reduce the noise level in your environment.
10. Always take a lunch break (preferably not at your desk).
11. Optimize your health with good nutrition, sleep and rest.
12. Get regular exercise.
13. Celebrate birthdays and other holidays. Turn more events into special occasions.
14. Look at unavoidable stress as an avenue for growth and change.
15. Avoid people who are "stress carriers."
16. Avoid people who are "negaholics."
17. Don't watch the 11 p.m. news.
18. Give yourself praise and positive strokes.
19. Develop a variety of resources for gratification in your life, whether it's family, friends, hobbies, interests, special weekends or vacations.
20. Treat yourself to "new and good things."
21. Be assertive. Learn to express your needs and differences, to make requests, and to say "no" constructively.
22. Seek out the emotional resources available to you such as co-workers, partner, friends and family.
23. Don't be afraid to ask questions or to ask for help.
24. Allow extra time to get to appointments.
25. Take deep breaths when you feel stressed.
26. Try to find something funny in a difficult situation.
27. Take an occasional "mental health day."
28. Adopt a pet.
29. Take a mindful walk.
30. Understand that we do not all see or do things in the same way.
31. Practice mindfulness - learn to live in the moment.
32. Become a less aggressive driver.
33. Show kindness and consideration. Open a door for someone, pick up litter, etc.
34. When stressed, ask yourself "Is this really important?" and "Will this really matter a year from now?"
35. Resist the urge to judge or criticize.
36. Become a better listener.
37. Be flexible with change - things don't always go as we planned.
38. If spiritual, pray; speak to God, a higher power, or your inner guide.

38 STRESS BUSTERS