Stress Reflection Journal

Assignment

This assignment will give you a chance to reflect on any recent stressors you have experienced and give you to opportunity to critique how you coped and select adaptive strategies.

Please fill in your answers below each question in full sentences.

1. List and describe in detail, one situation that you can recall, that resulted in a **distress** reaction. (Distress is negative stress that may feel overwhelming or create unhappiness or pain.) Explain what happened, who was involved, why it occurred. (8 marks)

A situation occurred at work where I was asked to complete a task to allow for a more secure method of logging into a service for staff. I made the change after work hours as this is protocol for larger modifications to any given service’s processes. The next morning, I do not get to sit down at my desk without being angerly spoken to about the issue some staff were having. I scramble to get my laptop open and start understanding the root of the problem when my boss decides to have another go at me. This put stress on me as I do not tend to make mistakes and was getting reprimanded for something I did not even know the details of yet. Once I was able to take a look, it turns out that this issue only effected 12 staff members out of the 1000+ staff members and this issue occurred due to other admin staff, outside of the IT department, manually modifying the affected accounts before hand. These modifications rendered my implementation ineffective, locking them out. I resolved all 12 accounts in 10 minutes, but my whole day was ruined. I feared that I would make another mistake the whole rest of the day and get angerly talked to again.  
  
  
  
Describe the physical, emotional, cognitive and/or behavioural symptoms that you experienced. (2 marks)

I was younger and was not used to getting talked to like this by my boss. I experienced heightened focus as I tried to figure out the issue and resolve it. My speech suffered to produce coherent retorts to my boss’ words as I was shaking any caught off guard. I felt as though my body was shaking which shook my voice. I went from heightened focus to exhausted to angry for being spoken to in that way. This distress reaction changed my mood for the rest of the day where I was much less wanting to complete other tasks and procrastinated on a few most definitely.

(10 marks total)

1. List and describe in detail, one (1) situation that you can recall that resulted in a **eustress** reaction. (Eustress is stress that is beneficial for you and may challenge or motivate you to do better. The experience of eustress may result in feelings of fulfillment or satisfaction.) Explain what happened, who was involved, why it occurred. (8 marks)

The first time I was asked to generate reports caused me to experience a eustress reaction. I know how to code in Java, but did not know the underlying structure of the SQL database holding our student information. School was starting in a few weeks at the K-12 school board I work at, and I had my regular duties to complete before the school year starts. The stress was not created by anger, but by expectations and the want to complete all tasks assigned to me. This was reinforced by multiple supervisors and co-workers depending on me so they can look good to their higher ups. Stress flowed down and I was able to use this stress to quickly learn the SQL database and create the necessary reports.

What were the physical, emotional, cognitive and/or behavioural symptoms that you experienced? (2 marks).   
Although, I ultimately was doing it to feel good about the work I do and to make my supervisors look good to their supervisors, I felt motivated to complete a new challenge. It wasn’t a burst of heightened focus like I felt when having a distress reaction, but I did have slightly heightened focus that was longer lasting. I did not feel exhausted from doing my work, I felt like I could keep going as long as I didn’t continue to get more tasks put on my plate. I was more serious doing my work, not procrastinating often, and had higher overall satisfaction than usual.

(10 marks total)

1. **Reflect** (min. 1 paragraph).
   1. Which symptom group (physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioural) did you experience the most? (1 mark)
   2. Describe how that symptom group feels like for you when it was at its strongest/most difficult period in time. (1 mark)
   3. Explain how those symptoms impact the way you handle stressful situations, as well what impact it may have on others. (2 marks)
   4. Why do you think you experience that symptom group the most when you’re stressed? (2 marks)

(6 marks total)

I experienced the cognitive symptom group the most when I feel stressed. When it is at it’s strongest, I have a short burst of high focus which allows me to problem solve and ignore most, if not all, negative influences that would slow me down. The short burst is followed by mental exhaustion. These symptoms tend to positively impact my ability to get through stressful situations by helping me complete what is necessary for the stressful situation to pass. I can sometimes be in too serious of a mood which affects others around me when I respond in a short, dismissing way. I believe I experience the cognitive symptom group the most when I am stressed because of how I was raised. My parents did not inflict much stress on me, but still told me that I was capable. This belief in that I was capable even though I did not necessarily know how to do a task caused me to stress about how I would go about completing said task. I would furiously try to figure things out and as a child the stress would get out of hand at times, but eventually it would steer me into finding confidence in my problem-solving abilities. I luckily have learned, slightly, on how to use this stress to get me through tough problems.

1. **Analyze** (min. 1 paragraph).
   1. What type of situations cause you a lot of distress? Explain. (Ex. Whenever I’m speaking to strangers, whenever I’m driving, whenever I think about my future etc.) (1 mark)
   2. What do those situations tell you about how you perceive stress? (1 mark)
   3. In the eustress situation from question 2, how did the stress motivate you to perform better? (1 mark)

(3 marks total)

The types of situations that cause me a lot of distress tend to be during work when supervisor’s reactions to issues do not align with the severity of an issue, driving in downtown Toronto, and thinking about the unfortunate state of the economy. These situations tell me that I perceive stress as a type of threat. I tend to feel more stressed when I cannot control the outcome. I was motivated to perform better when I was stressed from being assigned a challenging task along with my normal duties since it allowed me to focus and put in extra effort to overcome the situation.  
  
What were the physical, emotional, cognitive and/or behavioural symptoms that you experienced? (2 marks).

Physically, I felt energetic, my blood pressure was risen. Emotionally, I felt motivated to do my best work. I was slightly worried at the same time, but this worry was dampened by the want to complete all tasks to my greatest ability. Behaviourally, I was more serious and this was evident in my speech and my movements from and back to my desk. My speech turned more concise when spoken to and my movements were purposeful, not sporadic – an example of this would be if I was going to lunch, I did not speak to anyone, I got my lunch, ate it, then back to work.

1. **Assess** (min. 1 paragraph).
   1. Name a stressful situation you think you’ll have to experience frequently. (1 mark)
   2. Briefly explain how you think you could handle it differently the next time it happens. How do you think it will help to minimize your stress reaction? (2 marks)

(3 marks total)

A stressful situation that I will have to experience frequently is the meeting of new project deadlines while maintaining the projects that I have already established. The list of responsibilities keeps increasing and new projects are inevitable in the IT realm. I think I can handle the stress I get from deadlines by communicating with my supervisor about the inflation of my responsibilities compared to co-workers in the same role as well as reassuring myself that this is my first step in my career, not my middle or last step.   
I believe speaking to my supervisor will help as when others speak to him around the same topic, there usually is a change. I won’t feel as stressed if I do not have as much work to do. Readjusting the way that I look at my life will reduce my overall stress as I will relinquish control over my immediate position to focus on how to improve my life in the long term.

1. **Create & Commit** (min. 2 paragraphs).
   1. Pick one relaxation technique that you think could help you manage your stressors better, and explain in detail how it is performed. (2 marks)
   2. Describe why this technique would be useful in helping to manage your stress symptoms. (2 marks)

(4 marks total)

I believe practicing regular deep breathing will help me manage my stressors better. There are variations and multiple steps of intricacy that deep breathing can be practiced. I believe I will have the best chance at making it a habit with a basic form of deep breathing. To practice basic deep breathing, I would get comfortable by lying on my back in bed, breath in through my nose and bring air down towards my stomach, then breath out through my nose. I would repeat this with my hand on my stomach to reinforce my body and mind connection to the exercise.

Deep breathing will help me as the exercise influences the parasympathetic nervous system in a positive way. The parasympathetic nervous system can change the mental effects of anxiety and stress. While doing deep breaths, the parasympathetic nervous system would signal the prefrontal cortex to lessen the amygdala’s attempts at creating a flight-or-flight response as well any stress symptoms that may already be experienced. For me, I believe that deep breathing will help me to calm my high blood pressure and racing mind when I need to de-stress from a particular event that occurred or from a day filled with different stressors.

*[Communication: Up to 4 marks will be given on how clearly the assignment is written using full sentences and consideration for appropriate grammar and correct spelling.]*

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Note: Remember to cite your sources, APA style if you used any and to use your own words. All assignments will be automatically scanned for plagiarism and/or AI generated content.  
  
References:

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The University of Toledo. (n.d.). Deep Breathing and Relaxation. Utoledo.edu. https://www.utoledo.edu/studentaffairs/counseling/anxietytoolbox/breathingandrelaxation.html#:~:text=Deep%20breathing%20and%20relaxation%20activate,oxygen%20to%20the%20thinking%20brain