

Unit I - Understanding Stress

Meaning

Stress is a normal reaction the body has when changes occur. It can respond to changes physically, mentally, or emotionally.

What is Stress?

Stress is the body's reaction to harmful situations - whether they're real or perceived. When you feel threatened, a chemical reaction occurs in your body that allows you to act in a way to prevent injury. This reaction is known as "fight-or-flight," or the stress response. During stress response, the heart rate increases, breathing quickens, muscles tighten, and blood pressure rises. You have to act quickly, to protect yourself.

Stress means different things to different people. What causes stress in one person may be of little concern to another. Some people are better able to handle stress than others, and not all stress is bad. In small doses, stress can help you accomplish tasks and prevent you from getting hurt. For example, stress is what gets you to slam on the breaks to avoid hitting the car in front of you. That's a good thing.

Our bodies are designed to handle small doses of stress, but we are not equipped to handle long-term, chronic stress without ill consequences.

Symptoms of Stress

What are the Symptoms of Stress?

Stress can affect all aspects of your life, including your emotions, behaviors, thinking ability, and physical health. No part of the body is immune (untouched). People handle stress differently, symptoms of stress can vary. Symptoms can be vague and may be the same as those caused by medical conditions. So it is important to discuss them with your doctor. You may experience any of the following symptoms of stress.

Emotional symptoms of stress include:

- * Becoming easily agitated, frustrated, and moody
- * Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control
- * Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- * Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless (imposter syndrome), and depressed
- * Avoiding others

Physical symptoms of stress include:

- * Low energy
- * Headaches
- * Upset stomach, including diarrhea, constipation, and nausea
- * Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- * Chest pain and increased heartbeat
- * Insomnia
- * Frequent colds and infections
- * Loss of sexual desire
- * Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear, cold or sweaty hands and feet
- * Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing
- * Clenched jaw and grinding teeth

Cognitive symptoms of stress include:

- * Constant worrying
- * Racing thoughts
- * Forgetfulness and disorganization
- * Inability to focus
- * Poor judgment
- * Being pessimistic or seeing only the negative side

Behavioral symptoms of stress include:

- * Changes in appetite - either not eating or eating too much
- * Procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities
- * Increased use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes
- * Exhibiting more nervous behaviors, such as nail biting, fidgeting, and pacing

Work related Stress

Work-related stress can be caused by various events. For example, a person might feel under pressure if the demands of their job (such as hours or responsibilities) are greater than they can comfortably manage. Other sources of work-related stress include conflict with co-workers or bosses, constant change, and threats to job security, such as potential redundancy.

What one person may perceive as stressful, however, another may view as challenging. A person experiences work-related stress depends on the job, the person's psychological make-up, and other factors (such as personal life and general health).

Causes of work-related stress

Stress on the job can have various origins or come from just one aspect of a worker's responsibilities. Its effects are far-reaching: workplace stress can affect both employers and their employees. Downsizing, layoffs, mergers and bankruptcies occur in industries and companies of all types; this means big changes for workers. Even when job loss does not occur, employees may face increased responsibility, higher production demands, fewer benefits, pay cuts and so on. In general, this creates an environment of stress around the office. Some of the causes of job stress identified by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control, the USA) and APA (American Psychological Association) are:

- * **Low morale:** When morale is low, workers often feel powerless. This in turn makes them complacent (proud of oneself), and productivity suffers. Some of the most stressful jobs include secretary, waiter, middle manager, police officer, and editor. These occupations are all marked by the service aspect of responsibilities: These professionals must respond to the demands and timelines of others with little control over events. Common to these types of careers are feelings of too little authority, unfair labor practices and inadequate job descriptions.
- * **Management style:** Another factor in stressful work situations is management style. When a workplace has poor communication and employees are not included in decision-making processes, workers don't feel supported by their co-workers and employers. In addition, a lack of family-friendly policies can lead to increased stress due to effects on work-life balance.
- * **Job responsibilities:** How tasks are assigned and carried out is a big contributor to workplace stress. This includes heavy workload, infrequent breaks, long-hours and shifts, unnecessary routine tasks, ignoring workers' skills and more. When job expectations are uncertain or conflicting, employees feel they have too much responsibility and too many "hats to wear." (6 thinking hats <http://www.debonothinkingsystems.com/tools/6hats.htm>)
- * **Career concerns:** Another factor in workplace stress is career concerns such as job insecurity or lack of advancement opportunities. Rapid changes with little or no learning curve are also identified by the CDC as problematic.
- * **Traumatic events:** While not ideal, it is true that some jobs are more dangerous than others. Many criminal justice professionals, firefighters, first responders and military personnel experience stressful situations and personal risk every day. Occasionally, this

can cause ordinary responsibilities to become difficult. For that reason, positions such as those listed above are particularly stressful.

- * **Work environment:** Most of the previous causes of workplace stress are emotional; however, a subpar (below average) work environment can create physical stress as well. It may relate to noise, lack of privacy, poor temperature control or inadequate facilities. An excellent work setting is critical in lowering workplace stress.

The following are the causes of work-stress

- * Long hours
- * Organisation culture
- * Bad management practices
- * Job content and demands
- * Physical work environment
- * Relationships at work
- * Change management
- * Lack of support
- * Role conflict
- * Trauma
- * Heavy workload
- * Changes within the organisation
- * Tight deadlines
- * Changes to duties (shift work)
- * Job insecurity
- * Lack of autonomy
- * Boring work
- * Insufficient skills for the job
- * Over-supervision
- * Inadequate working environment
- * Lack of proper resources
- * Lack of equipment
- * Few promotional opportunities
- * Harassment
- * Discrimination
- * Poor relationships with colleagues or bosses

- * Crisis incidents, such as an armed hold-up or workplace death.

Work Stress Symptoms

Although it's easy to pinpoint the causes of stress in life, narrowing down the effects is not as simple. Understanding what stress is lets us see how it can negatively affect both the mental and physical health of employees. According to the CDC, stress "sets off an alarm" in the brain that prepares the body to defend against the stressor. The nervous system is put on alert, and hormones are released that sharpen senses, increase pulse, deepen respiration and tense muscles. This is commonly referred to as the "fight or flight" response. It's biologically programmed, which means humans have little or no control over it. When stressful situations are ongoing or unresolved, this response is constantly activated, causing wear and tear on different biological systems. Eventually, fatigue occurs and the immune system is weakened. This increases the risk of disease or injury.

In recent decades, researchers have studied the relationship between job stress and physical illness. Examples include sleep disturbances, upset stomach and headache, as well as compromised relationships with family and friends. The signs or symptoms of work-related stress can be physical, psychological, and behavioural.

Physical symptoms include

- * Fatigue
- * Muscular tension
- * Headaches
- * Heart palpitations
- * High blood pressure
- * Indigestion
- * Sleeping difficulties, such as insomnia
- * Gastrointestinal upsets, such as diarrhoea or constipation
- * Dermatological disorders.

Psychological symptoms include

- * Depression
- * Anxiety
- * Discouragement
- * Irritability
- * Pessimism
- * Feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to cope

- * Cognitive difficulties, such as a reduced ability to concentrate or make decisions.

Behavioural symptoms include

- * An increase in sick days or absenteeism
- * Aggression
- * Diminished creativity and initiative
- * A drop in work performance
- * Problems with interpersonal relationships
- * Mood swings and irritability
- * Lower tolerance of frustration and impatience
- * Disinterest
- * Loss of appetite
- * Procrastination
- * Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- * Isolation.

Poor job performance

These signs are easy to recognize, but the effects of stress on chronic disease are less obvious because these ailments develop over time and can be caused by many different factors. However, data is beginning to show that stress plays an important role in many common but serious health problems. According to the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, health care costs are nearly 50 percent higher for workers who report high levels of stress.

The following are some of the long-term negative effects of stress.

- * **Cardiovascular disease:** Psychologically demanding jobs that give employers little control over work processes increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, according to the Encyclopedia of Occupational Health and Safety.
- * **Musculoskeletal disorders:** It is believed that stress increases the risk of back and upper-extremity musculoskeletal disorders.
- * **Psychological disorders:** Several studies suggest that differences in mental health problems for various occupations are due to differences in job stress levels. Such problems include depression and burnout.
- * **Workplace injury:** There is also a concern that stressful working conditions can interfere with safety practices and increase the risk of injury at work.

- * **Suicide, cancer, ulcers, and immune function:** Some studies suggest that there is a relationship between workplace stress and these health problems, but more research is needed to draw firm conclusions.

Self-help for the individual

A person suffering from work-related stress can help themselves in a number of ways, including:

- * Think about the changes you need to make at work in order to reduce your stress levels and then take action. Some changes you can manage yourself, while other changes need the cooperation of others.
- * Talk about your concerns with your employer or human resources manager.
- * Make sure you are well organised. List your tasks in order of priority. Schedule the most difficult tasks of each day to do first thing in the morning.
- * Take care of yourself. Eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly.
- * Consider the benefits of regular relaxation. You could try meditation or yoga.
- * Make sure you have enough free time for yourself every week.
- * Don't take out your stress on loved ones. Instead, tell them about your work problems and ask for their support and suggestions.
- * Drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco, won't alleviate stress and can cause additional health problems. Avoid excessive drinking and smoking.
- * Seek professional counselling from a psychologist.
- * If work-related stress continues to be a problem, despite your efforts, you may need to consider another job or a career change. Seek advice from a career counsellor or psychologist.

Benefits of preventing stress at the workplace

- * Reduced symptoms of poor mental and physical health
- * Fewer injuries, less illness and lost time
- * Reduced sick leave usage, absences, and staff turnover
- * Increased productivity
- * Greater job satisfaction
- * Increased work engagement
- * Reduced costs to the employer
- * Improved employee health and community wellbeing.

Work-related stress is a management issue

It is important for employers to recognise work-related stress as a significant health and safety issue. A company should take steps to ensure that employees are not subjected to unnecessary stress, including:

- * Ensure a safe working environment.
- * Make sure that everyone is properly trained for their job.
- * De-stigmatise work-related stress by openly recognising it as a genuine problem.
- * Discuss issues and grievances with employees, and take appropriate action when possible.
- * Devise a stress management policy in consultation with the employees.
- * Encourage an environment where employees have more say over their duties, promotional prospects and safety.
- * Organise to have a human resources manager.
- * Cut down on the need for overtime by re-organising duties or employing extra staff.
- * Take into account the personal lives of employees and recognise that the demands of home will sometimes clash with the demands of work.
- * Seek advice from health professionals, if necessary.

Stress at the workplace - Questions and answers (For reference)

1. What is a healthy job?

A healthy job is likely to be one where the pressures on employees are appropriate in relation to their abilities and resources, to the amount of control they have over their work, and to the support they receive from people who matter to them. As health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but a positive state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being (WHO, 1986), a healthy working environment is one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions but an abundance of health-promoting ones.

These may include continuous assessment of risks to health, the provision of appropriate information and training on health issues and the availability of health promoting organisational support practices and structures. A healthy work environment is one in which staff have made health and health promotion a priority and part of their working lives.

2. What is work-related stress?

Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope.

Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as little control over work processes.

There is often confusion between **pressure or challenge** and **stress**. Pressure at the workplace is inevitable due to the demands of the contemporary work environment. Pressure perceived as acceptable by an individual, may even keep workers alert, motivated, able to work and learn, depending on the available resources and personal characteristics. However, when that pressure becomes excessive or otherwise unmanageable it leads to stress. Stress can damage an employees' health and the business performance.

Work-related stress can be caused by poor work organisation (the way we design jobs and work systems, and the way we manage them), by poor work design (for example, lack of control over work processes), poor management, unsatisfactory working conditions, and lack of support from colleagues and supervisors.

Research findings show that the most stressful type of work is that which values excessive demands and pressures that are not matched to workers' knowledge and abilities, where there is little opportunity to exercise any choice or control, and where there is little support from others.

Employees are less likely to experience work-related stress when demands and pressures of work are matched to their knowledge and abilities, control can be exercised over their work and the way they do it, support is received from supervisors and colleagues, participation in decisions that concern their jobs is provided.

3. What are stress-related hazards at work?

Stress related hazards at work can be divided into work content and work context.

Work contents includes - job content (monotony, under-stimulation, meaningless of tasks, lack of variety, etc) - work load and work pace (too much or too little to do, work under time pressure, etc.) - working hours (strict or inflexible, long and unsocial, unpredictable, badly designed shift systems) - Participation and control (lack of participation in decision-making, lack of control over work processes, pace, hours, methods, and the work environment)

Work context includes career development, status and pay (job insecurity, lack of promotion opportunities, under- or over-promotion, work of 'low social value', piece rate payment schemes, unclear or unfair performance evaluation systems, being over- or under-skilled for a job) - role in the organization (unclear role, conflicting roles) - interpersonal relationships (inadequate, inconsiderate or unsupportive supervision, poor relationships with colleagues, bullying/harassment and violence, isolated or solitary work, etc) -organizational culture (poor

communication, poor leadership, lack of behavioural rule, lack of clarity about organizational objectives, structures and strategies) - work-life balance (conflicting demands of work and home, lack of support for domestic problems at work, lack of support for work problems at home, lack of organizational rules and policies to support work-life balance)

Understanding stress and how it affects your workplace – Susan Heathfield

Stress is normal. Everyone feels stress related to work, family, decisions, your future, and more. Stress is both physical and mental. It is caused by major life events such as illness, the death of a loved one, a change in responsibilities or expectations at work, and job promotions, loss, or changes. Major workplace and personal stress are inevitable.

Smaller, daily events also cause stress. This stress is not as apparent to you, but the constant and cumulative impact of the small stressors adds up to a big impact. This impact has an effect on your physical and mental sense of well-being.

The physical impact of stress on your sense of well-being

In response to these daily stresses, your body automatically increases blood pressure, heart rate, respiration, metabolism, and blood flow to your muscles. This stress response is intended to help your body react quickly and effectively to any high-pressure situation.

However, when you are constantly reacting to small or large stressful situations, without making physical, mental, and emotional adjustments to counter their effect, you can experience stress that can hurt your health and well-being. It is essential that you understand both your external and internal stress-causing events, no matter how you perceive those events.

Stress can also be positive. You need a certain amount of stress to perform your best at work. The key to stress management is to determine the right amount of stress that will give you energy, ambition, and enthusiasm versus the wrong amount of stress which can harm your health, outlook, relationships, and well-being.

Important stress causing issues, characteristics, and traits

While each person is different and has different events and issues that cause stress, there are some issues that almost universally affect people. These are the stressors you most want to understand and take measures to prevent.

- Feeling out of control,
- Feeling directionless,
- Guilt over procrastination or failing to keep commitments,
- More commitments than time,
- Change, especially changes you didn't initiate or institute,
- Uncertainty, and

- High expectations of self.

What affects your coping with stress skills?

During times of stress and uncertainty, you can anticipate some predictable issues, problems, and opportunities. For instance, during any change, members of an organization have:

- Different ways of regarding change. Some people have difficulty accepting and adjusting to change and uncertainty; others will relish the changes and view them as great opportunities. Some people initiate change; others prefer the status quo.
- Different amounts of experience and practice in stress management and change management. (What is devastating to one individual may excite another or only mildly irritate a third person.) Theoretically, people become better at managing stress and change with experience.
- Some people need to "talk it out." Others suffer silently. Some find relief in complaining. Some talk and talk and talk, but are really supportive of the change. Others find ways to sabotage changes and undermine efforts to move forward.
- Different levels of stress and change occurring in other areas of their lives.
- During the change, people will experience different amounts of impact from the current changes and stress-producing situations. They will also experience different amounts and types of support from their spouse, significant other, friends, supervisor, and coworkers.

All of these and other issues impact your ability to manage workplace stress and change, to continue to function productively. It is important to recognize that people who are experiencing serious stress and change may not be capable of performing exactly as they have in the past.

Stress can cause physical, emotional, and behavioral problems which can affect your health, energy, well-being, mental alertness, and personal and professional relationships. It can also cause defensiveness, lack of motivation, difficulty concentrating, accidents, reduced productivity, and interpersonal conflict.

Too much stress can cause minor problems such as sleep loss, irritability, backaches, or headaches, and can also contribute to potentially life-threatening diseases such as high blood pressure and heart disease.

During stressful times or situations, people often blame themselves for being weak or for their inability "to handle it." Often managers in organizations do not understand the normal progression of change or stress-producing situations and they expect employees to immediately return to total productivity after a stressful event. It doesn't happen.

Stress results from change

People have deep attachments to their work groups, organizational structures, personal responsibilities, and ways of accomplishing work. When any of these are disturbed, whether by personal choice or through an organizational process from which they may feel quite removed and not involved, a transition period occurs.

During this transition, people can expect to experience a period of letting go of the old ways as they begin moving toward and integrating the new. When you consider stress in the workplace, understanding these components about stress, situations that induce stress and employee responses to stress can help you help both yourself and your staff effectively manage stress and change.

All of these and other issues impact your ability to manage workplace stress and change, to continue to function productively. It is important to recognize that people who are experiencing serious stress and change may not be capable of performing exactly as they have in the past.

<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/understanding-stress-and-how-it-affects-the-workplace-1919200>

For reference only

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Recognition and respect at work: a fundamental human need

Being respected and appreciated by significant others is one of the most fundamental human needs. Consequently, people go through great pain to gain acceptance and approval. Recent research in the domain of occupational health psychology shows that many stressful experiences are linked to being offended – for instance, by being offended or ridiculed, by social exclusion, by social conflict, by illegitimate tasks. Such experiences of being treated in an unfair manner constitute an “Offence to Self”, and this may have quite far reaching consequences in terms of health and well-being. Conversely, being appreciated is one of the most important factors that increase motivation and satisfaction as well as health and well-being. The presentation below covers examples from recent research and draws conclusions concerning the many ways in which appreciation and respect (or lack thereof) can be communicated and how this knowledge can be useful for prevention in the field of health and well-being.

Solutions for Managing Workplace Stressors

Some employers and employees assume that high levels of workplace stress are normal, or that pressure to perform is the only way to stay productive and profitable. However, research tends to challenge these assumptions. The CDC points to studies that show “stressful working conditions are actually associated with increased absenteeism, tardiness, and intentions by workers to quit their jobs — all of which have a negative effect on the bottom line.” In addition, the CDC cites data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics: “Workers who must take time off work because of stress, anxiety, or a related disorder will be off the job for about 20 days.” A healthy workplace is defined as one that has low rates of illness, injury and disability in its workforce while remaining competitive in the marketplace.

Some characteristics of such organizations include

- * Recognition of employees for good work performance
- * Opportunities for career development
- * An organizational culture that values the individual worker
- * Management actions that are consistent with organizational values

There are actions that reduce job stress as well. Stress management training and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) can improve workers’ ability to deal with difficult work situations through understanding the sources of stress, the effects of stress on health and strategies to eliminate stressors. Such strategies might include time management or relaxation exercises. This type of training may quickly decrease stress symptoms such as anxiety and insomnia. It is also a relatively inexpensive and simple way to address the problem. Another way to mitigate workplace stress is by hiring a consultant who can recommend ways to improve the work environment. This is a direct way to reduce stressors at work and involves identifying stressful factors and then reducing them as much as possible. It can also change work routines for the better, increasing productivity.

Other leadership strategies that can prevent job stress include

- * Ensuring that workload is aligned with employee capabilities and resources
- * Designing jobs that provide meaning and opportunities for workers to succeed
- * Clearly defining roles and responsibilities
- * Providing opportunities for professional development and participation in decision-making
- * Improving communication concerning the overall health of the company
- * Providing opportunities for social interaction among workers

- * Establishing schedules that make sense for demands and responsibilities outside of work (work-life balance)

These efforts may vary due to the size and complexity of the organization, along with available resources and the specific stress-related problems at the workplace.

Employees also have the ability to maintain good mental health and reduce stress in their own lives. There are many ways to do this, such as learning to relax, taking short breaks throughout the day, prioritizing, managing time well and communicating effectively with coworkers. Lifestyle changes such as increasing exercise and making healthy food choices are other ways that employees can decrease stress, as these good habits will carry over into the workplace. Though job stress will never be completely eliminated, strategies like these are effective in reducing its occurrence and improving the productivity and morale of employees in all types of organizations.

Individual Stress

Sometimes people may suffer from stress that isn't caused by work-related issues but instead has an external cause from their personal life.

Common external causes of stress include

- * relationship difficulties or a divorce
- * serious illness in the family
- * caring for dependants such as children or elderly relatives
- * bereavement
- * moving house
- * debt problems
- * Remember that personal life causes of stress can also affect you as an owner-manager or self-employed person.

How to manage personal stress?

Unlike workplace stress, you don't have a legal responsibility to tackle personal causes of stress among employees. However, but you should remember that issues can have a significant impact on their performance and affect your whole company. So it's a good idea to adopt a sympathetic and understanding approach.

Offering employees paid time off, or suggesting more flexible working arrangements, can be practical ways to help them deal with their problems. Your approach should be consistently applied. You can develop a written policy if appropriate.

You may want to suggest that an employee seeks professional help from their doctor. You could also point them in the direction of support groups such as Relate or Alcohol Concern.

However, there's a risk you could be seen to be interfering, so it's important to use your judgment to decide whether this is appropriate. Always respect employees' confidentiality if they tell you about personal problems they are facing. Stress whatever its origins may be can lead to mental ill health, including anxiety and depression.

Reducing Stress

Seven steps to help protect yourself from stress

1. Eat healthily

- * Eating healthily can reduce the risks of diet-related diseases.
- * There is a growing amount of evidence showing how food affects our mood and how eating healthily can improve this
- * You can protect your feelings of wellbeing by ensuring that your diet provides adequate amounts of brain nutrients such as essential vitamins and minerals, as well as water

2. Be aware of smoking and drinking alcohol

- * Try not to smoke and drink alcohol
- * Even though they may seem to reduce tension initially, this is misleading as they often make problems worse

3. Exercise

- * Try and integrate physical exercise into your lifestyle as it can be very effective in relieving stress
- * Even just going out and getting some fresh air, and taking some light physical exercise, like going for a walk to the shops can really help

4. Take time out

- * Take time to relax
- * Strike the balance between responsibility to others and responsibility to yourself, this can really reduce stress levels
- * Tell yourself that it is okay to prioritise self-care · Are you needing time out but saying 'I just can't take the time off', if so read more about how taking a break is important for good mental health

5. Be mindful

- * Mindfulness is a mind-body approach to life that helps us to relate differently to experiences. It involves paying attention to our thoughts and feelings in a way that increases our ability to manage difficult situations and make wise choices
- * Try to practice mindfulness regularly

- * Mindfulness meditation can be practiced anywhere at any time
- * Research has suggested that it can reduce the effects of stress, anxiety and related problems such as insomnia, poor concentration and low moods, in some people

6. Get some restful sleep

- * Are you finding you are struggling to sleep? This is a common problem when you're stressed
- * Could your physical or mental health impacting your ability to sleep?
- * Could you amend your environment to help improve your sleep?
- * Could you get up instead of staying in bed when your mind is worrying at night?
- * Could you make small changes to your lifestyle to help your get a restful sleep?

7. Don't be too hard on yourself

- * Try to keep things in perspective.
- * Remember that having a bad day is a universal human experience
- * When your inner critic or an outer critic finds faults, try and find truth and exception to what is being said
- * If you stumble or feel you have failed, don't beat yourself up
- * Act as if you were your own best friend: be kind and supportive
- * Take a few minutes each day to appreciate yourself

Sources of Stress

The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook (Davis, Eshelman, & McKay, 2008) sheds light on four basic sources of stress to consider.

(1) Environment

Our environment is constantly bombarding us with a diverse array of allergens, toxins, pollution, noise, and traffic. Our bodies are constantly adapting to whatever our current environment is throwing at us. While there are aspects of the environment that are more difficult to personally control, it is important to note which aspects of our personal environment we can control. How can you actively make your living and working environment as clean, healthy, and free of unnecessary stress as possible?

(2) Social

There is a wide array of stressors within our social worlds placing demands on our time and attention as well as our mental and emotional resources. This social context is constantly presenting us with interpersonal challenges to juggle: work demands, financial obligations, family life, and loved ones. In order to successfully navigate our social worlds without

becoming overwhelmed by stress, we must learn how to balance obligations, needs, and desires effectively.

(3) Physiological

Our bodies are constantly undergoing changes as we go through the days, weeks, months, and years. Sometimes we nourish our bodies with proper sleep, adequate exercise, and balanced nutrition. Other times we abuse our bodies with lack of sleep, a sedentary lifestyle, and a poor diet. It is true that we are often our own worst enemies when we make ourselves unhealthy through poor lifestyle choices. Many unhealthy choices are made in an effort to achieve “instant gratification” or mistakenly take away stress in the moment. All of those unhealthy choices only come back to increase our levels of stress in the long-term. The trick lies in finding a healthy balance that can be maintained as an ongoing lifestyle.

(4) Thoughts

Our own internal cognitive processes are an incredible source of stress for many people. The way that we interpret changes in our environments has a great deal to do with the subjective levels of stress that we actually experience. Two people could experience the exact same life change, but if those two people have very different thoughts about that life change, their levels of stress will be just as different.

For example, if two people both received an e-mail from their boss or professor asking to speak with them privately at the end of the day, there are very different thoughts that could occur. One person might think, “Oh no, I just know I’m going to get fired!” While the other person thinks, “I must have done really well with that presentation!” It is easy to see how subjective levels of stress will be quite different for these two individuals.

What recent life changes have you experienced (positive or negative) that have impacted your current level of stress? Do you feel that you typically experience higher levels of stress in any one of these four basic categories? Sometimes we don’t even realize how many changes we may have experienced recently until we take a moment to pause and reflect on recent life changes. It is helpful to practice directing compassion towards yourself during times of intense stress, and remember that all changes (even the happy ones) bring with them levels of stress as we adapt.

Consequences of Stress

When suffering from an excess of ongoing stress, the body is unable to recuperate and remains in an alert and active state. The body will prioritize maintaining this state over other

bodily functions like the digestive and immune systems. This may cause all sorts of physical and psychological complaints. In addition, work behaviour changes:

Physical complaints: increased blood pressure, raised blood cholesterol level, sleeplessness, palpitations, muscle aches, headaches, constant weariness, bad appetite, decreased resistance to diseases, and gastrointestinal diseases.

Psychological complaints: depression, losing the ability to enjoy life, testiness and vexation, decreased interest, indecisiveness, feelings of powerlessness, agitation, being very emotional, and anxiety.

Behavioural changes: eating too much, smoking more, drinking while on medication, problems concentrating, constant talking, complaining a lot, cynicism, bitterness

At work: decreased production, more error-prone, indecisiveness, decreased motivation, increased short-term absence, internal friction and conflicts.

All these complaints are alarm signals. The sooner you recognize the complaints and start taking measures to tackle their cause, the smaller the odds of becoming overworked. Take these complaints seriously!

Burnout

The term “burnout” was coined in the 1970s by the American psychologist Herbert Freudenberger. He used it to describe the consequences of severe stress and high ideals in “helping” professions. Doctors and nurses, for example, who sacrifice themselves for others, would often end up being “burned out” – exhausted, listless, and unable to cope. Nowadays, the term is not only used for these helping professions, or for the dark side of self-sacrifice. It seems it can affect anyone, from stressed-out careerists and celebrities to overworked employees and homemakers.

What is burnout?

Burnout is a state of chronic stress that leads to:

- * physical and emotional exhaustion
- * cynicism and detachment
- * feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment

When in the throes of full-fledged burnout, you are no longer able to function effectively on a personal or professional level. However, burnout doesn't happen suddenly. You don't wake up one morning and all of a sudden "have burnout." Its nature is much more insidious, creeping up on us over time like a slow leak, which makes it much harder to recognize. Still, our bodies and minds do give us warnings, and if you know what to look for, you can recognize it before it's too late.

Symptoms of burnout

Each of the three areas described above is characterized by certain signs and symptoms (although there is overlap in some areas). These signs and symptoms exist along a continuum. In other words, the difference between stress and burnout is a matter of degree, which means that the earlier you recognize the signs, the better able you will be to avoid burnout (If you do something to address the symptoms when you recognize them).

Signs of physical and emotional exhaustion

Chronic fatigue: In the early stages, you may feel lack of energy and feel tired most days. In the latter stages, you feel physically and emotionally exhausted, drained, and depleted, and you may feel a sense of dread for what lies ahead on any given day.

- * **Insomnia.** In the early stages, you may have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep one or two nights a week. In the latter stages, insomnia may turn into a persistent, nightly ordeal; as exhausted as you are, you can't sleep.
- * **Forgetfulness/impaired concentration and attention.** Lack of focus and mild forgetfulness are early signs. Later, the problems may get to the point where you can't get your work done and everything begins to pile up.
- * **Physical symptoms.** Physical symptoms may include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal pain, dizziness, fainting, and/or headaches (all of which should be medically assessed).
- * **Increased illness.** Because your body is depleted, your immune system becomes weakened, making you more vulnerable to infections, colds, flu, and other immune-related medical problems.
- * **Loss of appetite.** In the early stages, you may not feel hungry and may skip a few meals. In the latter stages, you may lose your appetite all together and begin to lose a significant amount of weight.
- * **Anxiety.** Early on, you may experience mild symptoms of tension, worry, and edginess. As you move closer to burnout, the anxiety may become so serious that it interferes in your ability to work productively and may cause problems in your personal life.
- * **Depression.** In the early stages, you may feel mildly sad, occasionally hopeless, and you may experience feelings of guilt and worthlessness as a result. At its worst, you may feel trapped, severely depressed, and think the world would be better off without you. (If your depression is to this point, you should seek professional help immediately.)

- * **Anger.** At first, this may present as interpersonal tension and irritability. In the latter stages, this may turn into angry outbursts and serious arguments at home and in the workplace. (If anger gets to the point where it turns to thoughts or acts of violence toward family or co-workers, seek immediate professional assistance.)

Signs of Cynicism (an inclination to believe that people are motivated purely by self-interest; scepticism.) **and Detachment**

- * **Loss of enjoyment.** At first, loss of enjoyment may seem very mild, such as not wanting to go to work or being eager to leave. Without intervention, loss of enjoyment may extend to all areas of your life, including the time you spend with family and friends. At work, you may try to avoid projects and figure out ways to escape work all together.
- * **Pessimism.** At first, this may present itself as negative self-talk and/or moving from a glass half-full to a glass half-empty attitude. At its worst, this may move beyond how you feel about yourself and extend to trust issues with coworkers and family members and a feeling that you can't count on anyone.
- * **Isolation.** In the early stages, this may seem like mild resistance to socializing (i.e., not wanting to go out to lunch; closing your door occasionally to keep others out). In the latter stages, you may become angry when someone speaks to you, or you may come in early or leave late to avoid interactions.
- * **Detachment** is a general sense of feeling disconnected from others or from your environment. It can take the form of the isolative behaviors described above, and result in removing yourself emotionally and physically from your job and other responsibilities. You may call in sick often, stop returning calls and emails, or regularly come in late.

Signs of Ineffectiveness and Lack of Accomplishment

- * **Feelings of apathy and hopelessness.** This is similar to what is described in the depression and pessimism sections of this article. It presents as a general sense that nothing is going right or nothing matters. As the symptoms worsen, these feelings may become immobilizing, making it seem like "what's the point?"
- * **Increased irritability.** Irritability often stems from feeling ineffective, unimportant, useless, and an increasing sense that you're not able to do things as efficiently or effectively as you once did. In the early stages, this can interfere in personal and professional relationships. At its worst, it can destroy relationships and careers.
- * **Lack of productivity and poor performance.** Despite long hours, chronic stress prevents you from being as productive as you once were, which often results in

incomplete projects and an ever-growing to-do list. At times, it seems that as hard as you try, you can't climb out from under the pile.

- * If you're not experiencing any of these problems, that's great! However, you should keep these warning signs in mind, remembering that burnout is an insidious creature that creeps up on you as you're living your busy life.
- * If you are experiencing some of these symptoms, this should be a wake-up call that you may be on a dangerous path. Take some time to honestly assess the amount of stress in your life and find ways to reduce it before it's too late. Burnout isn't like the flu; it doesn't go away after a few weeks unless you make some changes in your life. And as hard as that may seem, it's the smartest thing to do because making a few little changes now will keep you in the race with a lot of gas to get you across the finish line.

Six Sources of Burnout at Work - Are you at risk?

- * **Lack of Control.** Your sense of control over what you do is undermined or limited and you don't have a lot of say in what's going on. One study measuring job demands and lack of control found that the one combination that was most detrimental to health and morale was high job demands in combination with low control. Individuals in this category experienced much higher rates of coronary disease and depression than those in other categories (Karasek, R., et. al, 1981).
- * **Values Conflict.** There is a disconnection between your own core values and the core values of the organization. Many companies flash their mission statements and values on websites and marketing materials, but few actually walk the talk.
- * **Insufficient Reward.** You feel taken for granted, not recognized, and/or undercompensated. Many companies survived the Great Recession by demanding employees do more with less, and that often meant having one person do the work of two (or more). While this may have been a strategy necessitated by the severity of the economic crisis, it's unreasonable to expect this to work as a long-term strategy.
- * **Work Overload.** Your workload is too much, too complex, or too urgent. When I was practicing law, I had a client who categorized the priority of his work for me as "nuclear," "super-nuclear" and "catastrophic." I still don't know what the difference is in the three designations, and I suspect he was so busy that even he didn't really know – he just wanted me to take care of matters urgently. The stress created by work overload is not something to be ignored. According to the most recent Gallup survey on employee engagement, 50% of workers report being "not engaged" while another 20% report being "actively disengaged" (Sorenson & Garman, 2013).

- * **Unfairness.** You or others are treated unfairly, there is a culture of favoritism, and assignments and promotions are made in an arbitrary fashion and discussed behind closed doors. One of the things that make a company great, according to a recent Harvard Business Review article, is that employees are told what's really going on. Nothing shuts down morale more than whispering behind closed doors.
- * **Breakdown of Community.** You have to work with patronizing colleagues, there is no mechanism for conflict resolution, and feedback is non-existent. One study found that the number of people saying they have no one with whom to discuss important issues has nearly tripled between 1985 and 2004 (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Brashears, 2006). We spend so much time at work – building better relationships should be a main goal for all employees and managers.

Ways to Prevent Burnout and Live a Balanced Life - Find out how to sharpen your productivity saw by living a balanced life.

Stephen Covey (1989) describes the concept of “sharpening the saw.” After repeated use and without proper care, a saw will become dull and unable to perform its function of cutting wood. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to cut down a tree with a dull saw? It can be just the same with us if we do not take care of ourselves and live a balanced life - we become like the dull saw and are not able to effectively tackle all the tasks that surround us. We have to fight our natural tendency to want to throw every ounce of our time and energy at the daunting tasks ahead. Instead, we need to take out some time each day to be balanced - these investments will pay large dividends for your overall ability to be productive since a sharp saw can cut infinitely better than a dull one. I believe there are four main areas in which we should try to spend some time to stay in balance: physical health, intellectual stimulation, self-introspection, and social interaction. Here are some ideas for being balanced in as time efficient manner as possible:

- * **Physical Health:** Regular exercise / yoga / gym. Eating healthy food, sleep well.
- * **Intellectual Stimulation:** You are probably already doing a lot to work your mind. However, don't limit yourself to just your area of research focus or even your particular field of study. You'll be a much more interesting conversation partner and will keep your mind sharp with new ideas through audio books or podcasts. You can keep up on current events and burn through several books that will help you improve yourself and your perspective all while exercising, commuting, cleaning, or doing other mundane tasks that you needed to do anyway. Your public library will be an excellent resource and you can

also download books that are in the public domain for free through sources such as **LibriVox**. Keep reading both within and outside your discipline.

- * **Self-Introspection:** According to Socrates “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Take some time each week for reflection and self-introspection. This could include journaling, going out in nature, meditating, praying or reading religious texts (if you are religious), or doing some other activity that will help you engage in self-introspection. Looking at the broader picture of your life will keep you going and pay huge dividends.
- * **Social Interaction:** Research can be very isolating at times and we all need to recharge our batteries by regular interactions with people who care about us. You may consider joining a volunteer organization to both broaden your social network and provide you with a meaningful way to serve other human beings. Consider building your talents and gifts while interacting with others by joining a public speaking club (www.Toastmasters.com), a sports team, or a choir, taking art or music classes, etc. These types of opportunities can enrich you both personally and socially.

Finally, remember that close friends and family members spell love T-I-M-E. Just as a garden will wither and die without water and attention, your most important relationships will not last without your time and attention. Nobody on their deathbed ever wished that they’d spent more time at the office. Keeping up with your physical, mental, self-introspective, and social needs will be worth the time you invest and will refresh you and keep you going on your career path!

Sometimes we are so focused on the next goal that we fail to adequately celebrate the great milestones of achievement we have made. In *Publish and Prosper* the author writes, “When you celebrate your achievements, it is like waving a large carrot in front of your subconscious, which can then help push you on to even greater heights of accomplishment” (p. 73). Conversely, when we fail to celebrate our accomplishments we can often lose our drive and get burned out. Make it an extremely pleasant experience next time to reach your next milestone and you’ll find yourself motivated to continue to strive for more.

Stress versus Burnout

When you’re stressed, your whole nervous system reacts and releases specific hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) into your blood stream. These hormones speed up your heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure and metabolism. This can be a good thing as it can motivate you or help you get through a tough situation.

Changes in your body as a result of stress can increase your ability to feel:

- * alert

- * energised
- * switched on
- * motivated
- * more resourceful.

In the long term, though, the pressure that stress puts on your body is bad for both your physical health and emotional wellbeing. Eventually, too much stress on your body over a long period of time can cause you to burn out. Burnout is a state of complete mental, physical and emotional exhaustion.

Ongoing Stress

It's easier to prevent burnout if you're able to identify early on the signs of experiencing too much stress. If you're too stressed for too long, you might feel:

- * angry or annoyed for no reason
- * anxious or worried all the time
- * like you want to withdraw from people
- * extra-sensitive to things that wouldn't normally get on your nerves
- * useless or incapable.

Or you may notice physical effects, such as:

- * stomach issues, such as indigestion or even diarrhoea
- * headaches
- * muscle and back pain
- * problems with getting to sleep
- * eating more or less than usual
- * raised heart rate.

You might not experience all of these signs, but any one of them could be an indication that your stress level is getting too high.

Burnout Long-term stress is exhausting, and can prevent you from taking part in activities that you normally find meaningful. This is burnout. Some of the signs of burnout include:

- * feeling exhausted and unable to perform basic tasks
- * losing motivation in many aspects of your life, including your work and friendships
- * feeling unable to focus or concentrate on tasks
- * feeling empty or lacking in emotion
- * losing your passion and drive
- * experiencing conflict in your relationships with co-workers, friends and family

- * withdrawing emotionally from friends and family.

Essentially, when you've reached the point of burnout, it can feel like you've had the life sucked out of you. You no longer feel capable of caring about what's important to you, to making any effort, or staying motivated.

What can I do about it? If you're burnt out, you can help yourself by:

- * taking regular time out, including setting aside some time each day to 'switch off' from technology
- * developing skills such as problem solving to help you handle tricky situations
- * setting boundaries, so that you avoid overextending yourself
- * keeping an open line of communication with colleagues, family and friends about how you're feeling
- * reaching out for support, whether it's from friends and family, colleagues, or a health professional
- * re-evaluating your goals and priorities, so that you tip the balance back to including activities that make you feel happy.

What can I do now?

- * Take some time out for yourself and do something you enjoy.
- * Learn about relaxation.

Models of Stress

Stress can be understood in terms of the following models:

Tiredness/mental fatigue

Stress can be understood at the simplest level as our minds not having enough time to recuperate or heal following a period of activity. Just as after a very busy day we want to chill out and do nothing physically, we need similar breaks for our minds as well. Unfortunately our minds never rest. Even during periods of rest and sleep the mind is constantly thinking and planning. The only time when our mind rests fully is when it is awake and is in an emotionally neutral state - neither too happy nor too sad. Unfortunately we are always seeking some or the other activity/situation to feel happy thereby giving little time for the mind to heal itself.

Unfulfilled potential

Not being able to do what one is capable of or supposed to do can result in stress. This is the opposite of the tiredness model and relates to not doing something rather than doing things. Each individual is unique and it would be reasonable to assume that nature has given each one of us a unique potential to carry out certain tasks in this world. Due to our unique individuality and the situation in this world there are certain things that only we can do. Not doing what we are

supposed to do will result in guilt and depression. However it may be a difficult task to know one's true calling, the purpose why we are here.

Desire

Desires are the spice of life, without them we wouldn't want to live. This makes us invent new desires when the old ones are fulfilled. In fact a desire free state would be the most relaxed state to be in. We do not feel okay when nothing much is happening in our lives. As a result our minds are never free from thinking, planning, seeking, creating new emotions and excitement etc. These apparently positive endeavours also result in stress, which we can describe as a positive stress. If the desires that we carry in our minds are not fulfilled it causes enormous stress, especially if we cannot forgo them or work towards alternative goals in life. If the desires are fulfilled it creates further stress as each desire attained sows seeds for further desires.

Relationship model

Relationships can cause stress in two totally opposite ways i.e. as a result of not feeling connected or feeling isolated and as a result of being in an enmeshed relationship.

Existential model

Existentialism is a branch of philosophy that believes that stress is an integral part of life and cannot be avoided. It goes a step further in saying that the real stress of being a human being is much greater than we normally appreciate.

It is not difficult to understand that apparently life seems unfair. It is difficult to comprehend why people are struck with tragedies, sickness, and financial ruin for no fault of their own. Very carefully planned lives are shattered by the cruel hand of destiny. A good life is guaranteed to no one and in spite of our best efforts, we remain subject to chance and uncertainties. How can we feel secure in this world? We probably live in denial for most of our lives and organise our lives in such a way that we do not confront this existential stress that is linked with our mortality, meaning of life, sense of responsibility, freedom of choice and ultimate fate. According to existentialism a constant awareness of this type of stress is desirable as it makes us more human and our lives richer. Inability to acknowledge and accept this stress can result in clinical anxiety.

Strong negative emotions

This model is very close to the desire model as unfulfilled desires lead to negative emotions. It is not the intensity of the negative emotions that is linked to stress but our inability to digest or process these negative emotions. This is closely linked to our value system, world view, cultural beliefs, core identities and life goals. These factors dictate what would/would not be acceptable to us.

Control model

Wanting to be in control of our own and others lives all the time can result in high levels of stress. We do not have full control over the results of our actions as a lot of outside factors come into play in deciding the outcome. We can only control our actions. It is therefore important to make a distinction between our actions and the results, and change our focus from being result-oriented to action-oriented. Surrendering the issue of results to higher forces can be helpful in this regard.

Physiological model

Our nervous system is composed of two different subsystems: the central nervous system and the autonomic nervous system. The autonomic nervous system has been divided into two further groups: the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system.

We experience stress at the body level in the form of sympathetic nervous system over-activity or an imbalance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system activation.

Normally both these systems work in harmony, very much like the accelerator and the brakes in our car. But in stress situations there is an imbalance between the two. It is possible to correct this imbalance by means of biofeedback treatment and certain mind-body therapies.

Spiritual/religious model

In everyday life we tend to identify ourselves with the apparent systems that are finite i.e. our body, mind, possessions, environment and people but at a deeper level our existence is linked with and supported by the infinite cosmic forces that support our life on this planet. Finding a meaningful connection with the infinite is considered very important for our well being in most spiritual traditions. Losing this connection can make us vulnerable to stress that can result from the vicissitudes of life.

Genetic/biological model

For some individuals genetic and biological factors play a major role compared to the environmental ones in producing stress. These factors modulate release of certain chemicals such as serotonin and adrenaline which are involved in producing anxiety and depression.

Autonomic Nervous System and Stress

Our nervous system consists of two separate parts, one that is under our control called the central nervous system which controls functions such as hand movements, and the other that is not under our control is called the autonomic nervous system which is responsible for regulating the functions such as gut movements, heart beats, blood flow in our arteries, respiratory rhythms, skin temperatures, brain waves etc. Until recently it was believed that apart from very few functions such as respiration, muscle tension etc we cannot control these functions but with the

advent of biofeedback treatments it has become possible for us to control these functions as well. This research has had important implications in stress management as the stress that we experience inside our bodies results from alterations in the autonomic functions

The autonomic nervous system can be broadly divided into the following two subsystems:

1. Sympathetic nervous system: that is involved in dealing with emergencies such as fear, fight and flight. It puts our system in hyper drive by accelerating the heart rate, blood flow in to muscles and our respiratory rate. This enables us to deal with any emergency.
2. Parasympathetic nervous system: plays an important function of healing, regeneration and nurturance in times of peace. It slows down the heart and respiration rates and increase movements of intestines. It also results in increased blood flow to skin thereby increasing skin temperature.

It is important for normal functioning of our psyche that these two systems function in harmony with each other. Any imbalance in the two systems can result in illness. An increase in sympathetic activity can result in anxiety/panic attacks, hypertension, irritable bowel disease, premature ejaculation etc and a hyperactivity of parasympathetic activity can result in illnesses such as bronchial asthma, syncope, chronic fatigue syndrome.

Summary of the causative factors

So far we have discussed stress mainly in terms of a mental reaction to something and this mental reaction is a consequence of how we perceive and judge different things in this world. One can ask, why in the first place, one person reacts in a certain way and not in other ways? Apart from genetic predisposition, we can understand this in terms of early childhood experiences. According to psychoanalysis, the software of our minds are written in the first five years of our lives and during the rest of our lives we keep re-playing that software. However, more recent theorists believe that we can change that software by will later on.

Strategies for coping stress (individual and organizational strategies)

When we look at stress from organizational point of view, management may not be concerned about the low to moderate levels of stress experienced by the employees. The reason is, that some functional level of stress is necessary to improve employee performance. But high levels of stress and sustained low levels of stress are a cause of action by the management. But when we look at stress from individual's point of view even the low levels of stress are perceived to be undesirable. Keeping this in mind we can discuss the individual and organizational approaches towards managing stress. Before discussing these approaches, we must keep in mind two points:

(i) Firstly, we must not make any generalization. Each of us have different limits, different optimum stress levels and will perceive the sources of stress differently. One person's overstress may be another person's challenge and optimum stress.

(ii) Secondly, we need to differentiate between what we can do to equip ourselves and to organise our environment to prevent us from becoming over or under stressed. We label this as **Prevention**. Yet, however, well, we prepare ourselves and try to control our environment from time to time; we will still experience undesirable stress. It is then that we need to have developed **Management Skills**.

The individual's and organizational approaches to managing stress

Individual approaches

As we know that stress has got a number of negative consequences for the individuals that is why every individual should take personal responsibility for reducing his or her stress level. There are a number of ways by which a person can avoid stressful conditions, change them or learn to cope with them. Stress can be managed by an individual, which will enable him to regain control over his life. Some of the stress reducing strategies from individual's point of new are:

1. Knowledge about Stress: in the first stage, an individual should become knowledgeable about stress. He should know about the process and effects of stress. He must find out the major sources of his stress. He must anticipate stressful periods and plan accordingly in advance. He must be honest with himself and decide what he can cope with what he cannot.

2. Physiological Fitness: Exercise in any form can help people in coping with the stress. Non competitive physical exercise such as aerobics, walking, jogging, swimming, riding a bicycle, playing softball or tennis has been recommended by physicians as a way to deal with excessive stress levels. There is evidence to suggest that individuals who exercise are much less likely to suffer from certain types of stress related exercises. With proper exercise, diet control and nonsmoking habits, blood pressure and cholesterol become controlled and the body becomes more resistant to pressures. People are more likely to get physically sick or emotionally depressed if they are overweight or poorly nourished.

3. Time Management: Most of the people are very poor in managing the time. They do not know that what must be done and when it would be desirable to do so. The result of poor time management is feeling of work overload, skipped schedules and tension. A well organized person can often accomplish twice as much as the person who is poorly organized. Therefore, an individual must understand how to manage his time so that he can cope with tensions created by job demands.

A few of the well known time management principles are:

- (i) Preparing a daily list of activities to be attended to.
- (ii) Prioritizing activities by importance and urgency.
- (iii) Scheduling activities according to the priorities set.
- (iv) Knowing your daily schedule and handling the most demanding parts of a job when you are most alert and productive.

4. Assertiveness: An individual should become assertive. He should not say 'Yes' when he wants to say 'No'. He should start saying No to people or managers who demand too much of his time. Being assertive is an important factor in reducing stress.

5. Social Support Network: Every person should have people to turn to, talk to and rely upon. Good friends become highly supportive during times of stress and crisis. Social network includes friends, family or work colleagues. Expanding your social support system can be a means for tension reduction because friends are there when needed and provide support to get the person through stressful situation.

6. Readjust life Goals: Every individual must know what he really wants to do. This should relate to not only the major decision of the life but to all activities in our life. He must know what is important for him. Because of the severe competition in life to go ahead, most individuals set very high standards and goals for themselves. These high expectations and limited resources to reach such expectations result in stress. Accordingly, every person must readjust his goals and make sure he has ability and resources to reach such goals. Perhaps the goals should be established after the resources have been analysed.

7. Relaxation Techniques: Every individual must teach himself to reduce tension through relaxation techniques such as Yoga, meditation, hypnosis and biofeedback. 15-20 minutes a day of deep relaxation releases tension and provides a person with pronounced sense of peacefulness. Deep relaxation condition will bring significant changes in heart rate, blood pressure and other physiological factors. Yoga is probably the most effective remedy for stress. Studies have revealed that Yoga has cured several stress related diseases.

8. Plan Your Life in Advance: So many times, people create situations which induce stress because they either did not plan or did a bad job of planning. The traditional Indian attitude of "Whatever will be, will be" a way of accepting the unexpected difficulties in life. This attitude may be relevant in those situations over which we do not have any control like death in the family, but for other events in life, it is better to plan in advance, so that we can confront them with confidence when they occur.

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