

Samuel A. Malone

Organisational & Individual Stress

A Guide for Managers &
Employees Part 2

SAMUEL A. MALONE

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& EMPLOYEES PART 2

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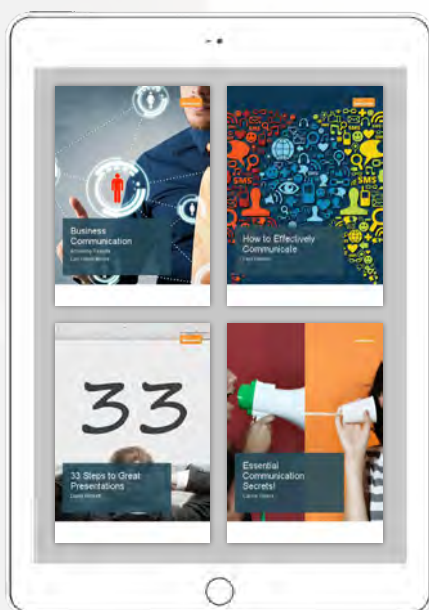
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samuel A Malone is a self-employed training consultant, lecturer, moderator, examiner and author. He has published numerous journal articles in the fields of learning, study skills, personal development, motivation and management. He is the author of 21 books published in Ireland, the UK and worldwide on learning, personal development, study skills and business management. Some of his books have been translated into foreign languages including Russian, Spanish, Danish and Norwegian, and gone into second editions. His most recent book (2014) is titled *Awaken the Genius Within – A Guide to Lifelong Learning Skills* (Glasnevin Publishing, Dublin). He has a M.Ed. with distinction (in training and development) from the University of Sheffield and is a qualified Chartered Management Accountant (ACMA), Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) and a Chartered Secretary (ACIS) and a member of the Irish Institute of Industrial Engineers. He is a Fellow of the Irish Institute of Training and Development (FIITD).

Previous books published by the author include *Why Some People Succeed and Others Fail* (Glasnevin Publishing, Dublin), *Learning about Learning* (CIPD, London), *A Practical Guide to Learning in the Workplace* (The Liffey Press, Dublin), *Better Exam Results* (Elsevier/CIMA, London) and *Mind Skills for Managers* (Gower, Aldershot, UK) and *How to Set Up and Manage a Corporate Learning Centre* (Gower, Aldershot, UK). The last two books become best sellers for Gower in their training and business categories. *Better Exam Results* proved to be a best seller for Elsevier/CIMA and is still in print 30 years after its earliest incarnation. Most of his books are available online from Amazon.co.uk.

The author's latest books have been published online by bookboon.com in 2018/2019 namely:

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- Series of Books on Training Models for learning facilitators
- Series of Books on Marketing for the Non-Marketing Manager
- Learning Maps for Managers
- Lifelong Learning Skills
- Business Communications
- Reading Skills for Managers
- Learning from Mistakes
- Happy Managers: A Business Perspective

INTRODUCTION

Organisational and Individual Stress – A Guide for Managers and Employees is the second of a series of four books on stress management. The major organisational stressors include job roles, environment, strategy, interpersonal relationships and task. The cost of stress is now significant for most organisations. Promotion, demotion, redundancy, and frustrated ambitions are typical stressors that many employees may experience in their lifetimes. Managers unlike workers are considered to have a career rather than a mere job. The time, energy and commitment required to keep a career on target can generate its own unique stress. Dual career families have a difficult and often stressful time balancing the demands of work, home and family life. The demand control model, equity theory, the effort/reward imbalance theory, and the psychological contract are four useful concepts to help you understand some of the conditions generating stress in the workplace.

Work relationships are probably one of the greatest sources of organisational stress. A large proportion of stress at work comes from poor interpersonal relationships, friction, personality clashes, backbiting, misunderstandings, and breakdowns in communications. Type A personality is driven and subject to more stress than a Type B personality, who is laid-back. Optimists cope better with stressful situations than pessimists. In transactional analysis, those who adopt the 'I'm okay – You're okay' life position suffer less stress. Emotional IQ is considered more important than conventional IQ to a successful relatively stress free life. People with an internal locus of control experience less stress than those with an external locus of control.

The personal model of resilience (PMR) is based on the observation that all humans encounter obstacles and setbacks as they go through life. These may derail us if we lack the resilience, confidence, enthusiasm and skills to effectively deal with them. We are more likely to be successful if we develop dedicated powers of persistence, commitment and resilience to handle them. Some people never develop the power of resilience and are unable to cope with the everyday challenges they otherwise could easily surmount if they knew how to do so. Many people are worn down and defeated by the daily hassles and multiple stressors and challenges they face in life.

In non-technical practical language, this book gives you the information, models, techniques and skills necessary to tackle any stress problem you are likely to encounter in the workplace. Each chapter begins with critical questions relating to stress. At the end of each chapter there is a summary learning map. In between there are numerous models and diagrams to help readers understand the key concepts of stress. The text covers the latest findings and research on stress. At the end of the last chapter there are ten activities to help you handle stress. It is hoped all of these aids will assist the learning process and make your journey learning about stress as enjoyable, eventful and fruitful as possible.

1 STRESS IN ORGANISATIONS

- What are role stressors?
- What stressors are due to the work environment?
- How do strategy, structure and style contribute to stress?
- What are interpersonal relationship stressors?
- How do tasks create stress?
- What is the cost of stress?

'Many...have reached the top of the success ladder, but are beginning to suspect it may be leaning against the wrong wall.'

– Sam Keen

1.1 ROLES THAT PEOPLE PLAY

The stressful roles that people experience in organisations include role ambiguity, role conflict, role over-load and role under-load.

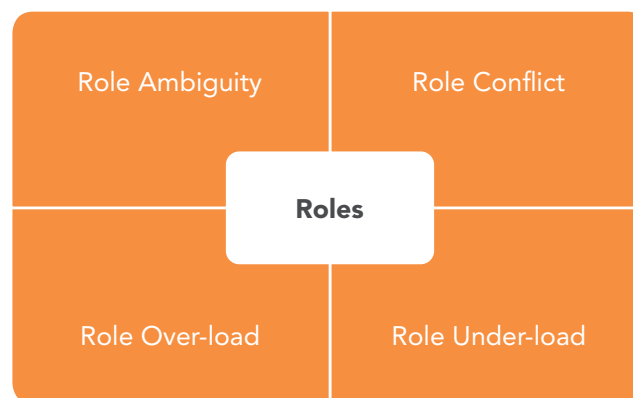


Fig. 1.1 Stressful Roles in Organisations

Role ambiguity

This refers to a lack of clarity causing great confusion, uncertainty and stress about how to perform one's job. It may include uncertainty about goals, how best to achieve them and how performance is evaluated. Ambiguity may be due to inadequate training, poor communication, or the deliberate withholding or distortion of information. For lower level

jobs, a job description can often solve the problem or, alternatively, an explanation about the role, or on-the-job training by the manager to the employee about what the job entails. However, for managerial jobs, the removal of role ambiguity can be more difficult because of a lack of well-defined and specific routines to be carried out. This is particularly so in management jobs requiring a lot of initiative, abstract thinking, policy making, discretion, and non-programmed decision-making.

Role ambiguity differs between different functions, with human resource and sales managers reporting the most ambiguity and production and finance managers reporting the least. HRM managers often do not know the consequences of their decisions because of delayed feedback, while production and finance managers operate within defined financial and budgetary procedures, have measurable targets, and more immediate concrete quantitative feedback. The level of stress caused by role ambiguity varies from one person to another. Some people demand a lot of structure in their lives, while others tolerate, or even thrive on, ambiguity. Structure is found in the civil service and multinationals, while lack of structure is experienced in start-up businesses.

Generally, prolonged periods of ambiguity lead to feelings of stress, futility, anxiety, poor job performance, low productivity, low motivation, unhappiness, lack of purpose, job dissatisfaction and an intention to leave the job. In addition, it may cause duplication of effort, inefficiency and disputes between employees about scope of authority and who should be doing what. *Some ways of dealing with ambiguity include job evaluation, the creation of an employee handbook, a clear job description for each role and a set of expectations, goals and deadlines.* The managers should communicate these expectations and build a structured workplace that doesn't suffer from ambiguity. After all it is the manager's job to clarify roles and responsibilities so that jobs are done satisfactorily in line with the objectives of the company.

Role conflict

Role conflict occurs when an employee experiences conflicting demands from different sources, where compliance with one makes it difficult to comply with the other. The person may also feel the demand is beyond the scope of their job specification. There may be conflict between an employee's values and sense of ethics and that of the company's culture. There may be conflict between the employer's expectations and those of the employee's family.

Most people perform several roles in their lives and, as a result, often find that the demands of one role conflict with another. Professional women often experience conflict between their role as a mother and that of a busy company executive. A shop steward may experience conflict between his role as an employee and a union representative. A supervisor is often put in a 'no win' situation, having to deal with the conflicting expectations of managers and workers simultaneously.

It has been found that introverts react more negatively to role conflict than extroverts; they experience more tension and poor interpersonal relations. In addition, studies have shown that anxious people are more likely to suffer from role conflict than people with a more calm, collected and flexible approach to life.

Role over-load

Role overload may be quantitative or qualitative. Situations where employees are asked to do more work in a specified period of time than they can reasonably handle with the resources available may be stressful for them. Contributory factors, include long hours, time pressures, impossible deadlines, autocratic leadership, unreasonable quotas, travel, noise and frequent interruptions. Similarly, work perceived as being too difficult – where a person feels they lack the requisite education, technical competencies or training to do the job satisfactorily – can also be stressful. For example, a person may be asked to perform tasks for which they have received no training, or may be promoted beyond their level of competence.

For many managers, work over-load may be self-imposed. Lack of assertiveness skills such as the inability to say 'No', poor time management skills, self-discipline, or failure to delegate can worsen the situation. Many managers routinely take work home with them, and work in the evenings and at weekends. In addition, many read journals at home to keep up-to-date, because they find it impossible to get the quiet time to concentrate and reflect at work, due to constant interruptions, phone calls, and noise. These practices have become the norm in many organisations and managers feel they have to adhere to them, as otherwise their commitment and loyalty would be questioned and their promotional chances diminished.

Working professional women are particularly prone to over-load. In a man's world, they often feel they have to work harder and longer than their male colleagues do in order to maintain visibility, get recognition, show their loyalty and commitment, and improve their chances of being promoted. In addition, on the domestic front, they often do more than their fair share of the housework, since the vast majority of men are still reluctant to do so.

Role under-load

Just as having too much to do may be stressful, counter-intuitively, having too little to do may be equally stressful. Under-load may also be quantitative or qualitative. Under-load quantitative can lead to boredom and monotony that, in turn, can lead to stress. In many ways there is nothing worse than having too little to do. Doing nothing can be as stressful as doing too much as time seems to drag. However, the degree of job dissatisfaction caused by work under-load differs from one occupation to another as in some occupations it is the norm and part and parcel of the job. It seems to have little effect on the job dissatisfaction of assembly-line workers and policemen but increases job dissatisfaction for administrators.

Role under-load qualitative is where the work is of an insufficient quality to hold one's interest and the lack of mental stimulations may become a source of serious stress and health problems. This is often a feature of routine and repetitive jobs, where the work may be devoid of problem-solving, creativity, new challenges or social interaction. The outcome may be poor job satisfaction, low motivation and high absenteeism. Even in professional jobs there is a certain amount of routine. For example, teachers follow the same syllabus year after year while accountants produce the same information month after month. Bus and lorry drivers often drive the same routes and experience the same frustrations over and over again. *To keep an interest in their jobs, people need variety, new challenges and opportunities to learn new skills through training and development.* In the future routine jobs are likely to be eliminated by computerization, automation and robotics.

But note that many interesting jobs have natural cyclical periods of qualitative under-load, since few jobs provide mental stimulation and challenge all the time. There is no harm in this, as people need time to mentally recuperate and reflect, otherwise they would suffer from mental exhaustion. The Pareto Principle seems to operate in this regard, in that 20 per cent of the work will provide most of the interest, mental stimulation and challenge, with the balance being mostly routine.

Hard work never killed anybody

People who are highly motivated, committed and enjoy their work seem to be able to work long hours without any adverse health problems. Many executives work 60-hour weeks with no apparent ill effects. The problem seems to be work that is routine, monotonous, unsatisfying, soul destroying, and frustrating.

In the Western world, the Protestant work ethic, which proclaims the virtues of hard work, dedication, thrift, frugality and competition – reigns supreme. There is nothing wrong with the Protestant work ethic – however, the extreme application of the concept, without some respite in the form of rest and recreation, encourages work addiction and leads to burnout.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS

There are numerous environmental stressors in the workplace damaging to employee health and potential sources of stress. The better-known stressors are:

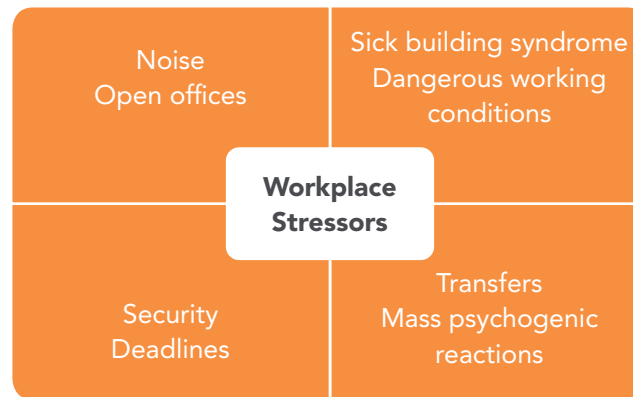


Fig. 1.2 Workplace Stressors

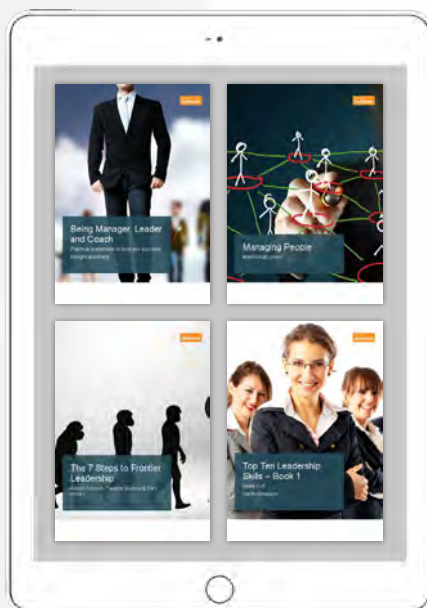
- **Noise.** We are born with an inherent fear of loud noises, which can trigger the stress response, since they suggest something harmful, threatening or dangerous in our environment, raising blood pressure and accelerating the heartbeat. Unpredictable noise is particularly frightening and stressful. *A simple way to counteract the effects of noise is to wear earplugs. For certain jobs, under health and safety legislation, ear defenders are obligatory.*
- **Open offices.** Most employees are not given the opportunity to influence the design or colour scheme of their offices. Private offices are still the norm for executive staff, while clerical and administrative staff work in an open-plan environment. Some people have no problems with working in open offices while others find the experience stressful because of the noise, phones ringing, distractions and interruptions. Once more, stress is often in the eye of the beholder.
- **Sick building syndrome.** The cause of sick building syndrome is said to be poor air quality related to inadequate ventilation, low humidity, high levels of airborne dust and poor temperature control. When it is present, more people than usual suffer from headaches, sore eyes and throats, dry mouth and poor concentration, and begin to complain of feeling unwell. Symptoms increase in severity in direct proportion to the time spent in a particular building. Most notorious are the rare cases of Legionnaire's Disease, which is caused by a bacterium breeding on pools of water in ventilation ducts. In some cases, sick building syndrome can be traced to chemicals in carpeting adhesives, pulsating fluorescent lights and computer screen glare.

- **Dangerous working conditions.** Dangerous conditions including toxic chemicals, radiation, unsafe work practices, crowded work areas and long hours. Many industrial processes produce harmful substances that pollute the air and enter the human body through the mouth, nose, lungs and skin. Exposure over long periods of time may cause serious illness, including cancer, leukaemia and genetic defects. For example, the famous film star Steve McQueen, died from mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer that is caused by exposure to asbestos. McQueen believed his exposure started in the US Marines Corps, then continued during his days racing motorcycles and cars, his passion, when he wore the flame-retardant driver suits.
- **Security of employment.** In the past, having the same job for up to 45 years was not unusual. For some, promotion offered some challenge and variation but with the same degree of security. In the modern work world, there are now no jobs for life. The only certainty is uncertainty and continuous change. Most people expect to change jobs or careers many times in a lifetime. Companies come and go. They downsize, reorganise, merge, and restructure to meet competition. Technology changes rapidly which presents its own insecurities. People are now offered temporary employment, part-time work, and fixed term contracts renewable at the discretion of the employer. This uncertainty and lack of security is a major source of stress.
- **Deadlines.** Constant deadlines can be a major source of stress. People are anxious when they have a lot to do before a deadline; as the deadline approaches, feelings of dread and impending disaster increase. The eustress of occasional deadlines is good for performance and productivity. However, if failure to meet a deadline means losing a valuable contract, or our jobs, then it can be extremely stressful. Many modern jobs are linked to performance standards and expectations which is an added stress.
- **Relocation, transfers, promotion and finding work.** Relocation and moving house can be stressful for both the manager and the family. Transfers may be between departments, between different locations and different functions or even overseas. A transfer overseas can be particularly stressful as the person may be faced with a new culture, new work colleagues, business practices, political system and language. In the short-term, promotion can cause an increase in work demand, complexity and pressure, because of the unfamiliarity of the job and new learning involved. In addition, the added responsibility can be a source of considerable stress. *When taking a new job make sure that you are briefed adequately by the previous incumbent. Moreover, it is only fair that you brief your successor before you leave your old job.*

- **Mass psychogenic reactions.** This is like a disease where the toxic stress is contagious. This is known as emotional contagion. The stress experienced by one person is spread rapidly to others in the group. So that the whole group is eventually affected. For example, the stress experienced by a manager is often transmitted to his staff – some managers seem to create stress for others rather than themselves and are often unaware that they are giving it to others. Those on the receiving end may pass on the stress, like a virus, to others in turn. Similarly, stressed managers often bring their stress home with them to their families adversely affecting the lives of their loved ones making them anxious, upset, inadequate and unhappy.

1.3 THEORIES AND MODELS

The demand control model, equity theory, the effort/reward imbalance theory, and the psychological contract are four useful concepts to help you understand some of the conditions generating stress in the workplace. The acronym **DEEP** can be used to recall the models.



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Fig. 4.3 Theories & Models

Demand control model

This is where high work demand and low job control co-exist. People with high work demands often complain that they work too hard and have insufficient time and resources to get the job done. People with low job control complain that they lack the authority to make decisions about their jobs. They work constantly under psychological pressure to externally-imposed deadlines: either may trigger off feelings of helplessness and lead to stress. People who are consulted about, and have a say in, how they work show improved levels of job satisfaction, commitment, performance and motivation and consequently suffer less stress.

High levels of personal control have positive health and work-related outcomes such as decreased anxiety, depression and absenteeism. Senior managers tend to have more control over their work than middle managers and supervisors, and thus are less exposed to this particular stressor. Middle managers tend to be caught in the middle, having to deal with pressure from above and below. Supervisors have a particularly difficult job, trying to balance the needs of their managers with those of their employees reporting to them. Blue-collar workers are at greater risk of the effects of stress because they have little control over the work they do, which is often noisy, dangerous and dirty. On the other hand, white-collar workers have more control over what they do and thus have less stressful jobs which in contrast work in clean and pleasant environments and generally would have more say over what they do.

Balfour (2002) reports on a 30-year study on civil servants, called the Whitehall Study, carried out by London University. The study found that low control, low involvement in decision-making, high job demands, low social support at work, and high effort combined to low rewards, leads to stress in the workplace. The lowest incidence of heart disease was found among the highest-level employees. This was contrary to expectations, as it was thought these individuals would suffer from executive stress. It seems that senior people have more control and thus are not as prone to heart disease, which got worse in the lower grades. It was discovered that death rates were three times higher in the junior grades among the senior civil servants, but only 40 per cent of the difference could be explained by lifestyle choices, such as diet and exercise. This means that 60 per cent was due to high control and status in the organisation.

Equity theory

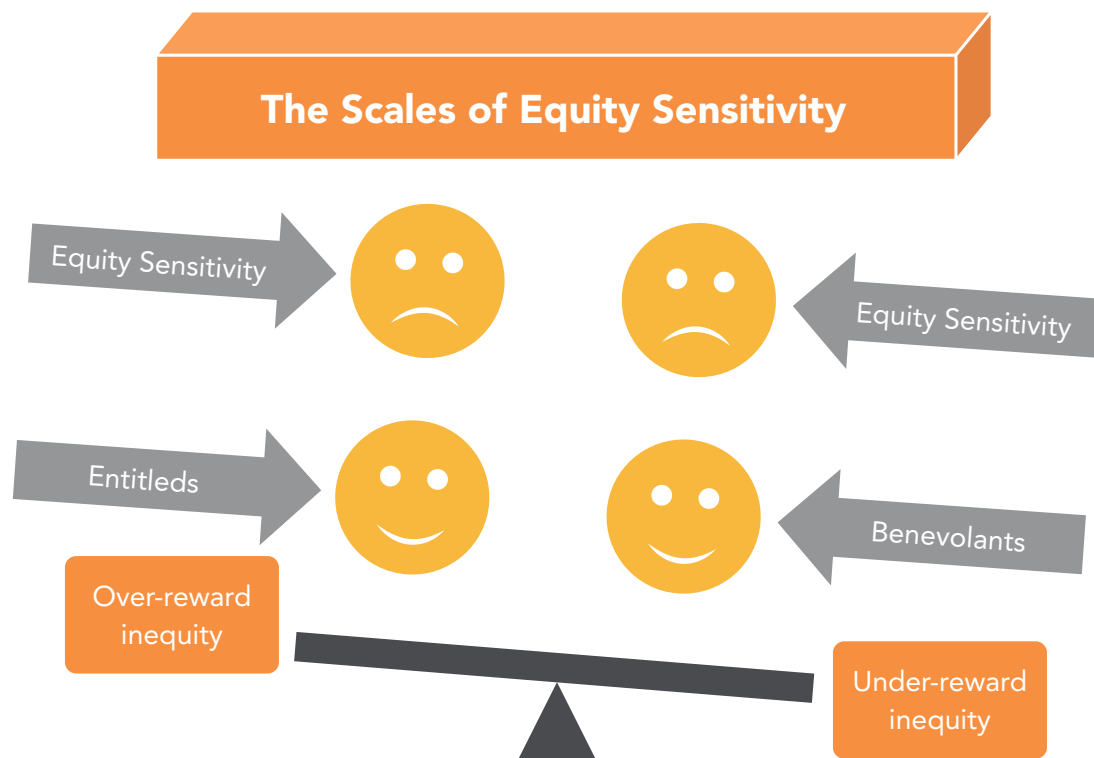


Fig. 1.4 Scales of equity sensitivity

People expect rewards to be in proportion to the effort expended. They expect to be paid fairly in relation to other employees and similar positions outside the company. If not, feelings of relative deprivation are experienced. Having this feeling typically will make you feel frustrated and undervalued. When dealing with others, they also expect to be treated fairly. When they perceive that they have been treated unfairly, they feel distressed and are motivated to restore

equity. This is the prime moving force behind many industrial relations disputes concerning wages and working conditions. It is cited as the reason behind the US Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement which is said to have been inspired by the US movement. People who perceive they are being treated fairly at work and in society generally, are less likely to experience emotional distress.

Effort/Reward imbalance theory

This theory is somewhat similar to Equity theory. Effort is the mental or physical energy expended to achieve work related goals and may include high work load, time pressures, responsibilities, overtime and constant interruptions. Reward is the compensation or acknowledgement in the form of pay, privileges, improved working conditions, status or career advancement. The combination of high work demands, low job security, lack of recognition, few career opportunities and poor reward systems is a major source of negative emotions and stress. It is a major stressor with long-term adverse effects on health. The sense of injustice felt by the perception of poor pay and conditions in relation to the effort put in by works is often reflected in industrial relations disputes including strikes and a discontented workforce. On the other hand, high effort and high reward conditions result in a happy and contented workforce.



Fig. 1.5 Siegrist's Effort-Reward Imbalance Model

Psychological contract

psychological contracts 'iceberg' model



The Psychological Contract	
Employee Effort Time Experience Expertise Knowledge	Employer Pay Training & development Career opportunities Some security Benefits

Fig. 1.5 The Psychological Contract

The psychological contract is an unwritten understanding that employers and employees have about their expectations from each other. The explicit contract is that the employee exchanges time, experience, expertise and knowledge for a reward package. The implied contract includes elements like loyalty, commitment, trust, equity, and security. Under the old psychological contract, people entering employment expected good wages or salaries, training and development, interesting work, career opportunities and security of employment. In return they gave their time, education, expertise, experience, loyalty and commitment to the employer.

Under the new psychological contract, employees are no longer guaranteed jobs for life and are responsible for their own career development. Nonetheless, they are expected to be flexible, accountable, hardworking and committed. Employees must now provide for themselves the security previously provided by employers. This means the employee will try to become as marketable as possible by building a portfolio of skills through appropriate experience and continuous learning and development. Thus, employees are more likely to be loyal to their professional body, own personal development and future careers and less likely to be totally loyal, committed and willing to make sacrifices for the good of the company.

Many employees have seen their own parents being made redundant after many years of loyal service and commitment. This implied breach of trust has given many employees a negative perspective of employers' loyalty to employees. Thus, the modern generation are less likely to give unconditional loyalty to their employers. Thus, if the opportunity arises, they will have no hesitation in moving to a better paying job.

The window of tolerance

This model was put forward by Dr. Daniel Siegel who propounded that our stress levels were bounded by a *window of tolerance*. This is the optimal zone of stress experience when we are challenged rather than bored or agitated and you are able to think calmly and logically. In the window of tolerance, you are alert but not anxious, engaged, interested and insightful. In the *zone of hyperarousal*, you are anxious, fearful, overwhelmed, hypervigilant, withdrawn, disengaged and switched off. Your breathing may become rapid and shallow and your heart might be racing. This has an impact on our ability to relax, often making it difficult to sleep, eat and digest food, and optimally manage our emotions. In the *zone of hypoarousal* you are agitated, frustrated, and stressed. This has an impact on our ability to relax, often making it difficult to sleep, eat and digest food, and optimally manage our emotions. The *hypoarousal state* is characterised by exhaustion, depression, disaffection, numbness, difficulties concentrating, and disconnection. This also impacts on our ability to sleep; in that we want to sleep all the time. It affects our appetite and digestion and may deaden our emotions.

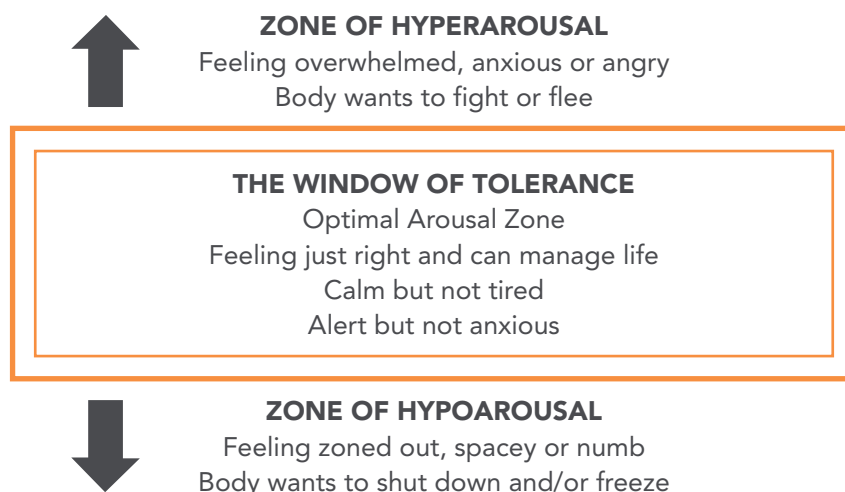


Fig. 4.6 Window of Tolerance by Daniel Siegel

The Hedonic Treadmill

It seems that we have some control rather than complete control over our level of well-being and stress. The hedonic treadmill suggests that interventions to reduce stress and increase our sense of well-being can be effective and there is much research to support this conclusion. However, the hedonic treadmill doesn't necessarily make our lives more pleasant but on the contrary can make us overworked, dissatisfied and thus even more stressed. This theory was developed in 1971 by two American psychologists Philip Brickman and Donald Campbell. It was not until 20 years later that Michael Eysenck updated the theory by comparing the hedonic adaptation to a treadmill which you find difficult to exit from.

Studies show we all have an individual set point for happiness which is determined by our genes, temperament or predisposition. We may have different set points for life events and job satisfaction. It is good to know that our long-term happiness is relatively stable throughout life, helping us to cope with impactful life events experienced by most people at one time or another. The rate and extent of adaptation can vary even to the same life event such as divorce and bereavement. The theory of the hedonic treadmill says that irrespective of what we do such as getting married, moving house, winning the lotto, being promoted or losing a job, suffering a major accident, our level of happiness is transitory and we will eventually return to our unique baseline. People who win the lottery or become paralysed will eventually return to a baseline level of happiness irrespective of the major positive or negative changes in life events. This set point accounts for about 50 per cent of the differences in happiness from one person to another. However, it does mean that we have plenty of scope to make a difference in our lives through our positive attitudes, thoughts, actions and interventions. Interventions can be targeted at the individual, organisational and societal level.

In addition, people have different personalities, different perspectives on life, different sensitivities and different ways of coping with adversity. For example, those who have been exposed to war conditions over extended periods of time may become desensitised to the destruction and misery happening all around them, while others in the same circumstances are highly traumatised and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Similarly, people may respond differently to significant life events such as marriage, divorce and widowhood, depending on individual differences and life circumstances. Some may take these major stressors in their stride while others collapse mentally under the strain.

Some people are prone to positivity while others are prone to negativity. Humans suffer from negativity bias, which means they tend to focus more on negative emotions rather than positive ones. Unfortunately, by paying more attention to negative emotions we remember them better and more vividly, overshadowing our positive experiences. Optimists think about life events and circumstances in positive ways treating them as challenges to be overcome, and thus actively engage in coping strategies, while others ruminate and moan and groan at the least inconvenience and do nothing to alleviate the situation. The things you pay most attention to grow in importance in your mind; so, make sure they are positive. Some people have a natural happy agreeable disposition, no matter what is happening in their lives, while others have a tendency to be negative, dour and disagreeable.

Actions, thoughts, feelings and attitudes account for about 40 per cent of happiness which is quite significant. This means the likelihood is that working less and having more recreational time will make us happier and more stress free. If you earn more it is better to get off the hedonic treadmill by saving for a more comfortable and secure future while retaining your present lifestyle. This is instead of getting involved in the perpetual cycle of selfishness and desire for more and more which is the inevitable result of pursuing a consumerist materialistic lifestyle.

The following Fig. 1.7 is the vicious lifestyle cycle triggered off by the hedonic treadmill. We work hard and because of our unsatisfied needs we need to work harder and get promotion to earn more money to buy more and more goods and services which we desire but don't really need. The happiness boost doesn't last long and habituation sets in so that we become accustomed to our higher expectations and living standards. The human desire for increased levels of comfort is insatiable and so we work harder still to accumulate more luxury goods and services. We now have a house, a car, a yacht and other assets which need to be maintained and paid for. Some of the super-rich even have their own private jets. To keep up with our new lifestyle we need to work harder to earn more money, which we spend on many more things that are superficial and not necessary to our basic needs, and so the cycle goes on until we are stressed and burnt out.

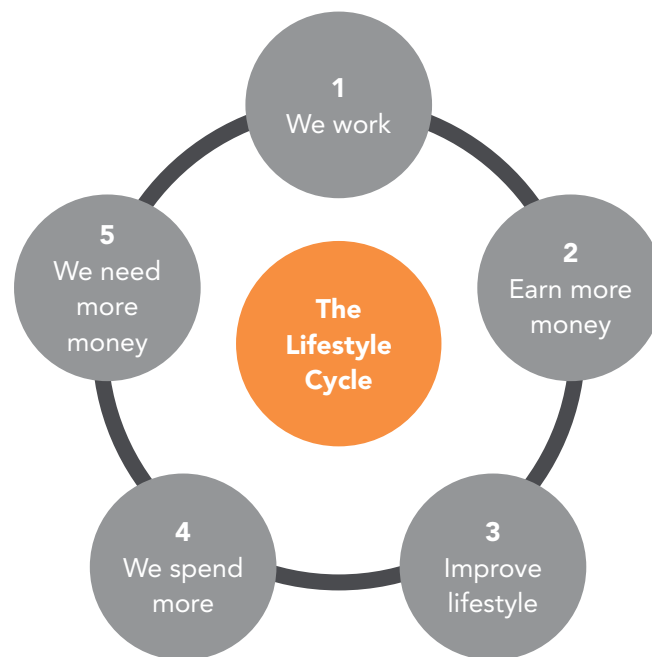


Fig. 1.7 The Lifestyle Cycle

Tal-Ben-Shahar, an American and Israeli writer on positive psychology, who runs a renowned course in Harvard on the topic of happiness, gives the following advice on improving our level of happiness and thus decreasing our proneness to anxiety, depression, stress and burnout:

- As a human you should accept your emotions, including fear, sadness, and anxiety. These are a natural part of living and part of the human condition. Rejecting them only leads to a build-up of frustration and stress.
- Despite conventional wisdom, humans are not genetically designed to multitask. Simplify your life and focus on one thing at a time. It will improve your concentration and increase your productivity.
- Engage on goals which you find meaningful, absorbing, enjoyable and pleasurable. To relax, spend two hours per week on hobbies that you truly enjoy and make time for friends.

- Studies show that you can improve your sense of well-being and happiness by doing a few acts of random kindness each day. This will make you feel good as well as spreading a little kindness and happiness around.
- The mind can only deal with one thing at a time; so, focus on the positive thoughts rather than negative ones. Keep a happiness diary and at the end of each week write down two things you are grateful for. Reflect on these. Counting your blessings does really improve your sense of well-being and reduce stress. Develop a sense of gratitude for the things you have.
- Make time for your partner taking them out to dinner and going away occasionally, and spend more time talking to your children.
- Look after your mind by practising deep breathing, meditation and quiet time. Exercise daily because research shows that it increases the level of serotonin in your brain improving your sense of well-being and happiness, leading to a decrease in levels of depression and stress. Exercise also improves our ability to think clearly and critically, organise our thoughts and manage our behaviour.

1.4 STRATEGY, STRUCTURE & STYLE

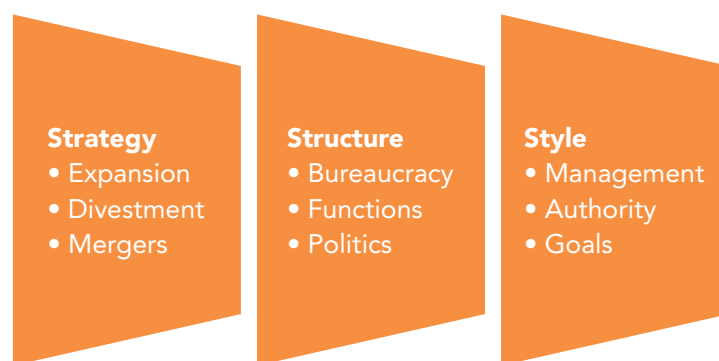


Fig. 4.8 Strategy, Structure & Style

Strategy

In a competitive world, companies are forever trying to discover more cost-effective ways of transacting their business and being more competitive. The reduction of payroll costs is often a prime target with major implications for the living standards of employees affected. Depending on market and prevailing economic conditions, different strategies are appropriate from time to time. Strategies of expansion or divestment can be equally stressful for both managers and employees caught up in them. Mergers, acquisitions and divestments can be especially stressful. Culture clashes and different values between merged companies and cost cutting bring their own stresses.

Redundancies are the most stressful situations for most employees, especially the older ones who will find it difficult to get new employment. For those who remain, reorganisation, extreme disruption, transfers, relocations, increased workloads, and retraining are some of the problems faced.

Structure

The stressors caused by structure include:

- **Bureaucracy.** Bureaucratic structures are inherently stressful for those who have to work in them. Bureaucratic organisations, by their culture and rule-bound nature, standardized procedures and autocratic management styles, stifle initiative and creativity. They attribute blame and punishment rather than encouraging questioning, initiative, creativity and innovation, and celebrating success and learning from mistakes. Close control of activities, encouragement of custom rather than initiative, tight supervision, strict discipline, frequent monitoring of results, rigid hierarchical structures, and lack of participation, all contribute to high levels of stress.
- **Functions.** Some functions, such as finance and marketing, have an interface with many other functions such as production, human resource management and the outside environment. By definition, these jobs have high role conflict and are potentially very stressful. Frequent interactions with people outside one's function such as argumentative suppliers and demanding customers may create stress. In addition, people in other functions often do not understand jobs outside their own areas and, as a result, make unreasonable demands and impose deadlines that are difficult to meet. Because of conflicting objectives, organisational politics, personality clashes and territorial infighting, interdepartmental conflict and power struggles are normal aspects of most organisations and potential ongoing sources of stress.
- **Politics.** Organisational politics has been defined as informal, unofficial and often behind-the-scenes efforts to sell ideas, influence others, increase power, or achieve other targeted objectives. In short, it is organisational savvy. According to Henry Mintzberg, it is just another influencing process along with norms, formal authority and expertise. To achieve anything worthwhile in organisations just as in society generally, one must win the support and cooperation of other people. When used effectively organisational politics can help a company meet its strategic goals and live up to its values, especially during times of change. People achieve objectives by forming coalitions, nurturing common interests and creating networks and alliances with others. Failure to do this successfully

can cause dysfunctional behaviour, frustration, resentment and ultimately stress. People skills such as diplomacy and empathy become more important than technical skills as one climbs the managerial ladder. Research shows that people with political skill have more personal power and control as well as managing stress and job demands, than others who are politically naive. Promotion anxiety is a major stressor for many young executives eager to progress their careers.

- **No training and development.** Often those selected for management positions are specialists or technicians with no prior experience, expertise or knowledge of management. Key skills for managers include financial management, influencing, conflict resolution, negotiating, communicating, presentation skills, and chairing. These skills are normally developed through experience but systematic training and development, coaching and mentoring, including on-the-job training are of considerable help.
- **Non-participation.** People are usually motivated, if they are treated like responsible adults and consulted about work-related issues, and involved in the decision-making process. Employees have a fundamental need for a reasonable amount of say and control over their work and like management to acknowledge and appreciate their efforts at work. Ideally, they should be empowered to make decisions affecting their immediate work responsibilities.



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Style

Management style itself can cause stress to those who are managed:

- **Managerial style.** Managerial styles can be autocratic, democratic, laissez faire, or participative. In practice, the autocratic style is prevalent, even though lip-service is widely paid to the participative style of management. The modern workplace is a major source of stress because of its long hours culture, heavy workloads and (sometimes) atmosphere of bullying, intimidation and harassment. In addition, work is often not appreciated, employees feel undervalued and misunderstood, and have little sense of importance. In practice managers rarely thank or praise their staff for outstanding work or improved performance. A demanding job may not be stressful if the employee is valued, acknowledged, appreciated and supported by management. *Increased social support in terms of leadership, trust, respect, open communication and participation go a long way to reducing organisational stress.*
- **Monitoring stress levels in the workplace.** Managers and supervisors should take responsibility for monitoring and controlling stress in the workplace. Managers who adopt an active and visible managerial style of managing by wandering about will quickly spot problems on the shop floor such as work over-load, dangerous practices, bullying, victimisation, harassment and discrimination. These problems can be quickly spotted and nipped in the bud rather than being allowed to fester and eventually to explode into major industrial relations disputes. *In this regard, prevention is better than cure.*
- **Authority versus responsibility.** Authority must be commensurate with responsibility. A frequent source of managerial tension, anxiety and stress is the mismatch between formal and actual powers. Managers are put in the unenviable position where they are held responsible for something without having the formal power to achieve it. The manager may also have to make decisions quickly without recourse to sufficient information. Because of the uncertainty involved and the responsibility they have for the outcome of such decisions, they find the process unduly stressful.
- **Self-management.** In stressful conditions, managers with the relevant skills, abilities and experience perform better than those without them. *Self-management skills, including time management, problem-solving, delegation, communication, negotiation and conflict resolution, enable a manager to manage more effectively.*
- **Lack of clear goals.** Goals provide a sense of inspiration, purpose and direction. Being committed to worthwhile goals acts as a motivator and an antidote to stress. However, unless goals are supported by an action plan, they remain merely aspirations. Note that unrealistic expectations and impossible goals are a major source of stress.

- **Bad boss syndrome.** Type A managers are often demanding and lacking in interpersonal relationship skills. They work long hours and often their staff feel they have to do likewise, in order to show their commitment and loyalty to the company. Bad bosses often react to situations rather than plan. This crisis management style creates stress for staff. *A variety of policies and programmes are available to reduce potential stressors in the workplace, including counselling services, health promotion programmes, employee assistance programmes, free health insurance, gym and creche facilities, and health and safety compliance.*

1.5 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS



INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS			
Staff with managers	Managers with staff	IPR with colleagues	IPR with customers

Fig. 1.9 Interpersonal Relationships

Work relationships are probably one of the greatest sources of organisational stress. A large proportion of stress at work comes from poor interpersonal relationships, friction, personality clashes, backbiting, misunderstandings, and breakdowns in communications. Managers who lack sensitivity and empathy are a major concern. For example, many criticise staff in front of colleagues or customers, which can be extremely embarrassing, shameful and stressful for the person involved. Learning how to relate to, and interact sensitively with, others is a key managerial skill. A manager needs to be able to relate well with their own managers, their staff, colleagues, customers, suppliers and trade unions.

Relationship of staff with managers

If the manager is seen as considerate, approachable and supportive, then the staff in return will give their friendship, trust, respect and loyalty to the manager. They are more likely to go beyond the expectations of their manager. Managers who are low on consideration and high on task lack people management skills and are insensitive to the emotional needs of their staff. Staff of such managers experience more job pressure. Such managers do not give criticism in a helpful way, but instead play favourites with staff, pull rank, belittle staff in front of other staff and clients, and take advantage of their staff whenever they get the chance. Staff want impartial managers who can inspire them with a vision that they can buy into.

Relationship of managers with staff

People are more stressful and difficult to manage than things. Managers from technical backgrounds are often lacking in people management skills. They are used to computers, machines and equipment that do not talk back rather than people that do. Managing other people means you must communicate with them, praise and motivate them, and reward and reprimand them as appropriate. Building rapport with people and gaining their respect can be a very time-consuming process, requiring great patience and diplomatic skills from the manager.

There is a maxim in management that you can delegate authority but you cannot delegate responsibility. Thus, the manager is ultimately responsible for decisions made within his area of control and will be held accountable for the decisions of their staff. One should ensure that the people delegated to are willing, qualified and able to perform satisfactorily the work delegated. However, employees often complain that their managers are reluctant to delegate interesting and worthwhile tasks which they feel only they can perform right. Thus, the manager is overworked and sometimes stressed and the staff do not get the opportunity to acquire new skills and grow and develop. Delegation is a visible way of demonstrating trust and faith in your employees and developing them to reach their full potential.

These days, managers are expected to adopt a participative approach to management. This puts further demands on the interpersonal relationship and diplomatic skills of managers. Some managers do not wish to participate, as they see it as undermining their power base. They do not wish to empower their staff to make decisions at the manager's expense. They see their role as making decisions – sharing this role with staff is viewed as a dilution of power and a source of further stress for the manager.

Relationship with colleagues

These can be a source of great support or a source of great stress. Social support and friendship at work is essential to one's health and wellbeing. One spends a lot of time at work, so it's important to surround oneself with people that one respects, trusts and gets along with. Competition for promotion, office politics, backbiting, misunderstandings, poor communication, wilful deceit, and personality clashes are just some of the things that can go wrong and cause stress in the workplace.

Relationships with customers

Customers now expect the highest standards of customer care and service and demand to be treated in a courteous, helpful, respectful and professional manner. People who work in departments that interface with customers and suppliers have a difficult job to do which requires interpersonal relationships skills of the highest order including listening, solving problems, empathy, patience and diplomacy. However, sometimes customer expectations are not met and the customer's reaction may be disappointment, frustration, annoyance, anger, loss of repeat business and, on rare occasions, violence.

When Relationships Go Wrong

Just as there are dysfunctional relationships within families, there are also dysfunctional relationships within the workplace, caused by disruptive behaviour, violence, stereotyping, conflict, status, and diversity issues.

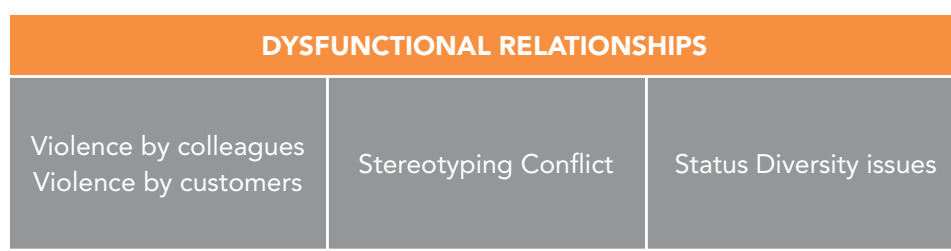


Fig. 1.10 Dysfunctional Relationships

Violence by work colleagues

Authoritarian management styles, excessive discipline, lack of trust, tight controls and strict job performance standards, giving employees little control and scope over their jobs, are thought to be some of the factors that trigger off workplace violence. Communication problems between management and workers are often the root cause of violence in the workplace. Employees may feel they are being treated unjustly, talked down to by management in a paternalistic way, and generally resent the lack of respect they experience in the workplace. Violence is not confined to physical harm, but also includes mental abuse such as verbal intimidation, lack of respect, psychological abuse, stalking, bullying, threats and sexual harassment.

Stressed work colleagues, customers or members of the public may perpetrate violence. On average, 20 workers are murdered each week in the USA, making murder the second highest cause of workplace deaths and the leading one for women. There is a rising incidence of violence in US colleges and public places fuelled by a culture of the right to bear arms and the availability of firearms. Disgruntled students and maladjusted youths, armed with guns have murdered fellow students, teachers and members of the public. The violence is aided and abetted by the lax gun laws operating in the USA. Postal workers in the USA have experienced so many fatalities due to violence brought on by job stress that the term 'going postal' has crept into the language. 'Going postal' is American slang referring to the condition of being extremely and uncontrollably agitated and angry, often in a violent way, and usually in a workplace environment. US Postal Service workers have shot and killed managers, fellow workers, and members of the police and general public in acts of mass murder.

Violence by customers/members of the public

In the retail business, including banks and post offices, employees are often the subject of violence due to armed robberies. Incidents include syringe attacks, kidnapping for ransom, pistol whipping, and the use of knives, iron bars and sledgehammers. Some employees have been badly injured or killed in such attacks. Workstress.net (January 2003) reports that nearly half of shop workers have taken time off because of violence. USDAW, the shopworkers' union, claim that thousands of its members live in daily fear of physical attack and verbal abuse by customers.

Verbal and physical abuse is a daily event in more than a third of stores, most commonly when young people are refused alcohol. On average, at least one shop worker is attacked every hour of the working day. the USDAW maintains that managers should play a crucial role in dealing with the problem, and should be trained to reduce risks at work, deal with dangerous situations and support and offer counselling to staff after an attack. USDAW is campaigning for adequate staffing levels, extra security at opening and closing times,

closed circuit television and well-lit car parks. In our hospitals nurses and hospital staff are frequently attacked by patients. According to the Irish Examiner (December 6, 2016) more than 600 hospital staff in the Irish Republic are assaulted and verbally abused each year with nurses bearing the brunt of workplace violence. Some patients become extremely agitated and stressed when faced with the prospect of life changing events.

Aircraft cabin crews are sometimes exposed to stress brought on by unmannerly, disruptive, unruly, disagreeable, abusive, and violent passengers acting out air rage often worsened by the consumption of alcohol. Scientists maintain that air rage is due to cabin pressure, oxygen levels, and the stress of being in a confined space with many others. However, workers on the front line maintain excessive alcohol consumption is the most common cause, with another cause, the fear of flying which is very stressful for some people.

Stereotyping

Blondes are dumb. Americans are loud and arrogant. Scots people are mean. Germans are hardworking. Irish people are fond of alcohol and potatoes. Jews are greedy. All Arabs and Muslims are terrorists. All Blacks are good at sports. Women are warm, kind, emotional, gentle, understanding, able to empathise and be helpful to others. On the other hand, men are aggressive, forceful, strong, rational, self-confident, competitive and independent. Old people are set in their ways and incapable of learning new things especially new technology. These are just some of the stereotypes that one frequently comes across on a daily basis. They are based on misinformed opinion and prejudicial views rather than scientific fact. For example, men and women, apart from the obvious physical and physiological differences, are remarkably similar.

To stereotype people is to categorise them according to a preconceived idea about the groups that they belong to. Stereotypes are often applied to members of a particular religion, race, class, group, occupation or gender. Stereotyping influences the way we perceive and behave towards other people. Because of stereotyping men and women are channelled into particular roles and occupations. Stereotyping may result in prejudice, hate, bullying, victimisation and discrimination causing extreme unpleasantness and stress for the victims. A work culture where everyone is treated fairly with respect and dignity and where bullying and harassment are not tolerated will provide a healthy and pleasant work environment for employees.

Conflict

Conflict is the antagonism or active warfare that exists between individuals, groups, professions or departments within a company. Personality clashes between managers and employees are a major source of stress in organisations. Office politics and competition and rivalry between departmental managers may be intense. Different professions and trades frequently vie with each other for status and power; demarcation arguments over who should do what are a frequent source of industrial relations disputes. Competition for promotion and power, and scarce budgetary resources may be a source of conflict.

The adversarial tradition between unions and management, professions and occupations are a constant source of tension, friction and stress in organisations. Role relationships, such as those between boss and subordinate, are a primary source of conflict. Grievance, disciplinary matters and performance appraisal are major sources of conflict between management and staff. Shoddy goods and services are a frequent source of conflict between organisations and customers.

Status

Another source of conflict is status differences between departments. Depending on economic circumstances and the prevailing corporate culture, some departments have greater status, prestige and power, than others. The reasons for this may be historical and traditional. For example, in some organisations, marketing may have the greatest influence and power whereas, in others, it may be finance. The perception by other functions that finance, through its oversight, budgeting, cash and auditing responsibilities, has a policing role causing resentment, and stress in many organisations. Production people often resent the fact that marketing people have a greater profile within the company and stereotypically spend their time wining and dining clients. Sometimes, power differences are based more on perception rather than reality.

Diversity

Managing a diverse workforce requires many different skills such as sensitivity to other peoples' culture, traditions, beliefs and values. For example, a manager may have to make special arrangements to cater for the religious and dietary needs of staff who are members of the Muslim community. Similarly, a tolerance and acceptance for the way people from other cultures dress may need to be encouraged and supported in the workplace. *It is important that managers in charge of a diverse workforce are appropriately trained and educated.*

1.6 TASKS



Fig. 1.11 Task issues that cause stress

Lack of job satisfaction, poor job design, shift work, mobility and sub-standard job performance are the key issues relating to tasks that cause stress in the workplace.

- **Job satisfaction.** Lack of job satisfaction due to repetitive routine work, as computers, machines, automation and robotics have replaced many jobs previously conducted by humans. In many manufacturing jobs, employees have become equipment minders and screen monitors, following procedures without much initiative and discretion, rather than technical experts.
- **Poor job design.** Little control over work, no consultations and insufficient reward and recognition for the efforts expended are three major sources of work stress. The principles of method study, job enrichment and ergonomics can be used to improve the design of work. The objective of job design is to reduce or overcome job dissatisfaction and employee alienation arising from mind

numbing, boring, repetitive and mechanistic jobs. The idea is to make jobs as meaningful, comfortable and interesting as possible to do without suffering undue operator fatigue. Jobs are meaningful if the job holder believes they are making a difference and adding real value to the company. Techniques of job design include job rotation, job enlargement and job rotation.

- **Shift work.** Many employees today work on a shift basis, often over 24 hours. The EU established the European Working Time Directive (EWTD) in 2003 to avoid the exploitation of employees with a limit on the number of working hours, 4 weeks paid annual leave, and mandatory rest periods in every 24-hour shift. In 2004 junior doctors came under its remit. Their working week was limited to 58 hours and further reduced to 48 hours in 2009. The debate has centred around the ability of doctors to function optimally if they are sleep deprived. The central themes are patient safety, training and work-life balance. The arguments in favour of shorter hours include doctor fatigue and well-being, the risk of error, and ultimately patient safety. It is now recognised that shift work is an occupational stressor and frequently-changing shifts are stressful psychologically, biologically, socially and emotionally. Shift work affects blood pressure, metabolic rate, mental efficiency and sleep patterns. People have a limited attention span and need plenty of rest and sleep. Family life is disrupted and because, of the unsocial hours, social life is severely hampered. It is ethically irresponsible to have those engaged in dangerous activities or in charge of other peoples' lives, work unduly long and unbroken shifts. The most efficient system of shifts has 'day people' who work always during the day, and 'night people' who always work during the night. The night people get used to working at night and sleeping during the day; it takes several weeks for a person's circadian rhythm and metabolism to adapt.
- **Mobility.** Some companies expect their executives to be mobile and to move around the country or even around the world without hesitation at their behest. Many managers comply because they fear that they might lose their jobs or their careers might suffer, as mobility and job flexibility is seen as an inherent part of career development. In practice, the manager's family life, marriage and children's school life are often disrupted and put at risk. Moving house several times in one's career can be very distressing and unsettling for a family as a whole because of the transition problems involved. Changing schools can be very disruption emotionally for children. Managers are not encouraged to get involved in the local community, because of lack of time and the knowledge that they will be moving on in a few years' time. Social relationships and friendships are sacrificed in exchange for careers. In dual career families, this type of lifestyle is rarely sustainably particularly if the wife is equally as career ambitious as the husband.

- **Job performance.** Performance appraisal can be stressful for the manager and the employee being appraised. It is considered the most unpopular of all management practices. Appraisal in relation to performance-related pay is particularly stressful. The manager has an onerous responsibility of making a judgement regarding the employee's job performance and suitability for career advancement, which has long-term implications for the employee's standard of living and future in the company. From the employee's point of view, a once-a-year performance appraisal is less equitable and will be more stressful for the employee than continuous assessment. Many organisations are now doing year-round feedback rather than annual performance reviews so that corrective action can be taken on an on-going basis by employees. *Managers should be trained in how to run effective appraisals and in particular, how to give constructive feedback to the employee, enabling them to do their job more effectively. Listening, empathy, and rapport building skills are particularly useful. Managers need to be particularly sensitive, tactful, diplomatic and honest in giving bad news. Trained proficiency in this area will reduce the manager's exposure to potential stressors.*

1.7 THE COST OF STRESS

It is now accepted that stress-related illnesses cost organisations a great deal of money each year. Workstress.net (Winter 2002) reports that a survey by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in the UK found that work-related stress reported to unions has increased 12-fold in a year. Nearly 6,500 people made claims for stress in 2000 compared with 5,000 in 1999. Compensation awards in 2001 were £321 million, slightly more than the previous year. Public sector staff are most likely to claim work-related stress, but there are also claims from middle managers in manufacturing. The TUC called on employees to prevent work-related stress by assessing risks and adapting jobs to workers, rather than workers to jobs.

A 1996 report from the UK's Institute of Management maintains that an estimated 270,000 people take time off work each day due to work-related stress. This represents £7 billion annually. This figure has more than likely increased substantially since then. *A cost/benefit analysis should be undertaken by the company to identify the costs involved in a stress management programme compared with the benefits and savings involved. This analysis will show that stress management programmes make economic sense and make a significant contribution to bottom line results.*

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS	
Costs	Benefits
Legal claims	Lower costs
Medical Expenses	More productive staff
Health & safety issues	Sick pay reduced
Alcohol/drug misuse	Legal costs reduced
Low productivity	Reputation enhanced

Fig. 1.12 Cost/benefit analysis

Costs

The following are some of the costs associated with stress in the workplace:

- Increased accident rate and legal and compensation claims pursued by employees who have been injured.



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- Poor company image due to bad publicity in the media such as litigation concerning stress-related illnesses. The loss of business as a consequence.
- Medical expenses of employees who have suffered injuries requiring medical intervention.
- Health and safety issues, such as a poor accident and safety record. Breaking health and safety laws and rules.
- Misuse of drugs, medication and alcohol due to stress induced problems.
- Absenteeism through lost working days and the costs of operational disruptions.
- High labour turnover, sick leave and early retirement and the training costs of replacements.
- Low productivity due to poor morale.
- Poor timekeeping and missed deadlines resulting in missed profitable opportunities.
- Poor employee and customer relations. This could result in the loss of business due to angry and indignant customers.
- Suicide – in Japan, *karoshi* or death from overwork, is recognised as a fatal combination of stroke, high blood pressure, and stress.
- Divorce, marriage breakdowns and separations.
- Stress related diseases including long-term disability.
- Premature death.
- Stress management programmes.

Benefits

There is nothing philanthropic about an organisation taking measures to counteract stress in the workplace. It just makes good business, ethical, economic and commercial sense to do so. Effective stress management will reduce the number of grievance and disciplinary disputes. As a result:

- The organisation will have lower costs for support services, like counselling and industrial relations.
- Staff will spend more time at work being productive rather than being absent due to stress-related illnesses.
- Sick pay and administrative support costs will also be saved.
- The costs of litigation against the company will be reduced. Substantial damages have been awarded by the courts against companies for cases of work over-load that lead to nervous breakdown, bullying, sexual harassments or discrimination.
- The reputation of the company will be enhanced making it easier to recruit able and suitable people for work requirements.

Many of these savings can be quantified and compared with the costs of running stress management and employee assistance programmes including stress counselling interventions.

1.8 CAREER MANAGEMENT

Managers are considered to have a career, as opposed to a mere job. This presupposes a high degree of commitment and loyalty to the company and to one's own personal and career development. Managers develop their careers by moving horizontally between departments to gain experience of different functions and vertically up the hierarchy to more senior posts.

High commitment and loyalty are part of the development process and is considered essential if one wants to get promoted up the management structure. This means that a management career is going to absorb most of a person's time, with little time and energy left to devote to personal, social, recreational and family life. A manager's sense of identity often becomes totally absorbed in their job. This is the hidden psychological contract and the price the manager must pay if he or she has ambitions to get to the top.

Four stages of career development

The psychologist Super (1957) identified four career stages:

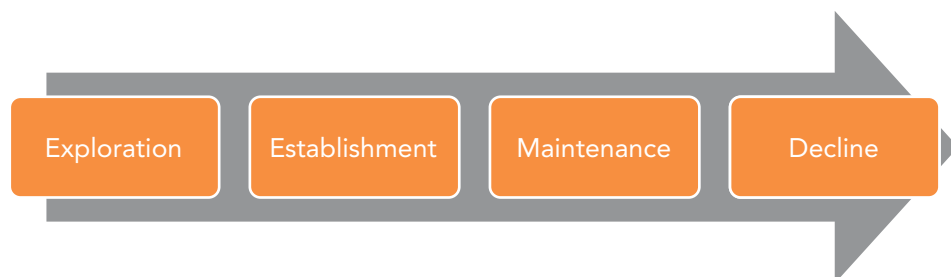


Fig. 1.13 Donald Super's (1957) Four Career Stages

- **Exploration stage.** This occurs between the ages of 15 to 24. During this time, individuals explore career opportunities and make choices regarding the type of organisations they wish to work in. They try to match their innate abilities, interests, needs, competencies, academic achievements and dreams with the jobs on offer. This is often a time of great excitement, enthusiasm, innovation, and creativity in one's life. Commitment to the job may be strengthened or weakened depending on the experience and the training actually provided in

their first job. If weakened the person involved may leave the organisation and begin the process all over again.

- **Establishment stage.** This occurs between the ages of 20 to the early 40s. During this period, individuals are concerned with establishing themselves in the organisation, in their profession, and in society in general, and with progressing up the management hierarchy. They also have the onus of providing for the financial and emotional needs of their family. Managers sometimes take up part-time studies at this time, such as MBAs or professional qualifications, in order to help them stay intellectually sharp and up-to-date in their careers. This can be rewarding both financially and psychologically opening up unforeseen opportunities that otherwise would not be available. Together with holding down the responsibilities of a full-time job, this puts many an executive under severe time pressures. Frustration may be experienced when advancement is not forthcoming in line with expectations.
- **Maintenance stage.** This is the age from mid-40s to retirement. For most, this is a period of consolidation and reflection rather than trying to progress further. As one makes progress up the hierarchy there is more competition and career opportunities are few and far between. In the meantime, people are expected to keep up to date with business developments and technological change. For some health and family demands may create additional stressors. Most managers reach stagnation or a plateau in their careers at this stage, maybe because they have reached their level of incompetence, and may settle for a less demanding role such as mentoring in the company enabling them to live a fulfilling but more stress-free life.
- **Decline stage.** This is the stage where people start thinking about retirement, disengagement from their job, the challenges involved and a life beyond work. This period is characterised by a decreasing involvement and participation in work and is usually reached between 60 and 65. Physical and mental powers decline and the manager gradually withdraws from the onerous and intellectually demanding work they once did. When they finally retire some people devote their time to a life-long hobby which they always found interesting but never had the time to devote significantly to, or get involved in voluntary work. Men's sheds have been set up throughout Ireland to give men the opportunity to meet and share their hobbies and skills with likeminded others in a supportive friendly environment. It is a great outlet for men with time on their hands to practice their skills and talk to men with similar interests. Others like to stay in touch with former work colleagues and meet them occasionally for a coffee and chat. Those who have practised lifelong learning will continue their process of general education and growth in retirement.

All of these stages bring their own problems, adaptations and challenges. Awareness of the stages should help a manager anticipate and plan for the stressors likely to be encountered at each stage. Retirement comes easily and pleasantly to some while to others it is a period of great disappointment, frustration and boredom. This is why it is so important to plan for it so that retirees have meaningful activities to devote their time to.

Promotion, demotion and frustrated ambitions

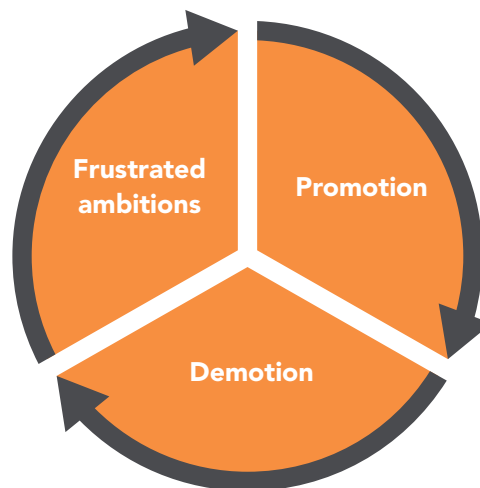


Fig. 1.14 Promotion, demotion and frustrated ambitions

These are all potential stressors likely to be encountered by ambitious managers:

- **Promotion.** Learning a new job, getting used to the unfamiliar - context, duties and people - and taking on more responsibilities is a great challenge for most people but can be stressful for some. Over-promotion is where a person is given responsibility beyond their capabilities. The Peter Principle states that people are ultimately promoted beyond their level of competence, to the point where the requirements of the job exceed their capabilities. This, of course can be a source of considerable stress. Under-promotion is where the job under-utilises the person's ability and thus, they have no opportunity to use their talents, education, expertise and experience. Like over-promotion, this may be a source of frustration and ultimately stress.
- **Demotion.** Most people identify strongly with their jobs. Thus, demotion and the loss of identity, pride and status involved in relation to peers can prove to be very stressful for some people. Demotion can also have difficult financial consequences for the person concerned because of the loss of income and lower standard of living it entails. As people get older, demotion or lateral transfer may be the only option apart from redundancy.

- **Frustrated ambitions.** Many people in organisations have not attained the position that they desire or aspire to. Perhaps they are in the wrong jobs or working for the wrong organisation or lack the competencies, aptitudes and political skills necessary for advancement. When people's job or career aspirations are not met, bottled-up feelings of frustration, bitterness, unhappiness and disappointment cause tension and, ultimately, stress.

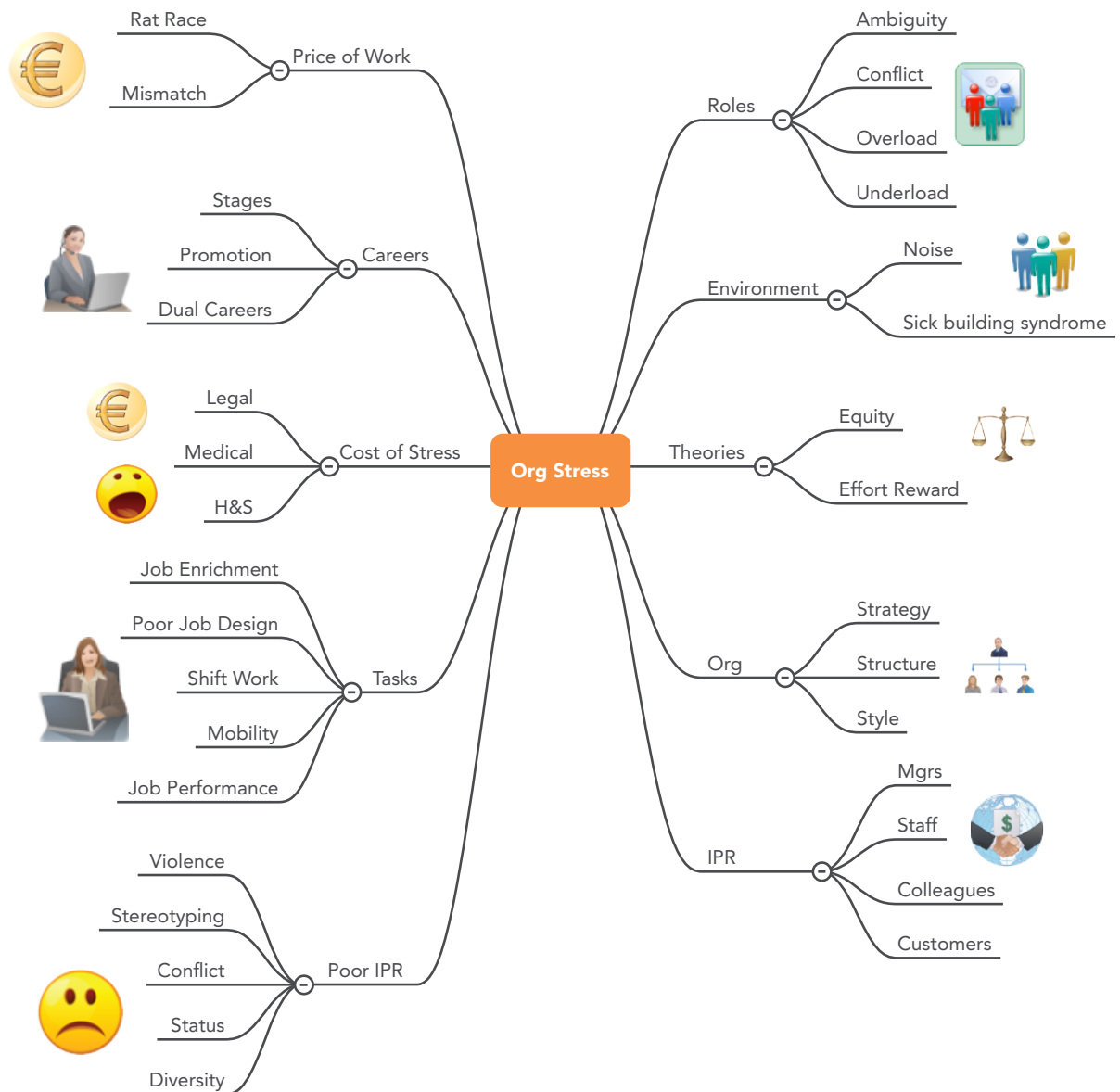
Dual careers

How to balance the demands of dual careers with raising a family is one of the key issues of modern living. The changing role of women in society means that they are now holding down jobs as responsible as, or even more responsible than, those of men. There is now less time to take care of family responsibilities because of work. In addition, in the past, wives often provided an emotional supportive and caring role for their husbands. This antidote to stress cannot now be expected if they are both equally committed to their careers and work long hours.

Male attitudes have not kept pace with the changing role of women, so that working wives often carry the major burden of household duties resulting in a great deal of stress for them. This is taking its toll in the health of career women, who are now as prone to men to getting cancer and heart disease. Promotion involving relocation may be a source of friction and tension between those with dual careers, causing further stress. Women are no longer willing to meekly follow their husbands' careers, as they have their own career paths and interests to pursue. Disagreement and friction between the dual career partners are the ultimate result since the male ego still believes that a man's career should take preference over that of a woman's career.

Because of the aging population profile, and the demise of the traditional extended family and the support of neighbours, there are an increasing number of employees who also carry the burden of looking after elderly relatives in addition to dual career responsibilities and their own family. Many psychologists and sociologists believe that dual careers are one of the main reasons for the high rate of divorce in the Western world. Few organisations offer the type of flexible working arrangements and family friendly policies that dual career families need to support their lifestyles.

1.9 SUMMARY LEARNING MAP OF ORG. STRESS FOR CHAPTER 1



2 STRESS IN INDIVIDUALS

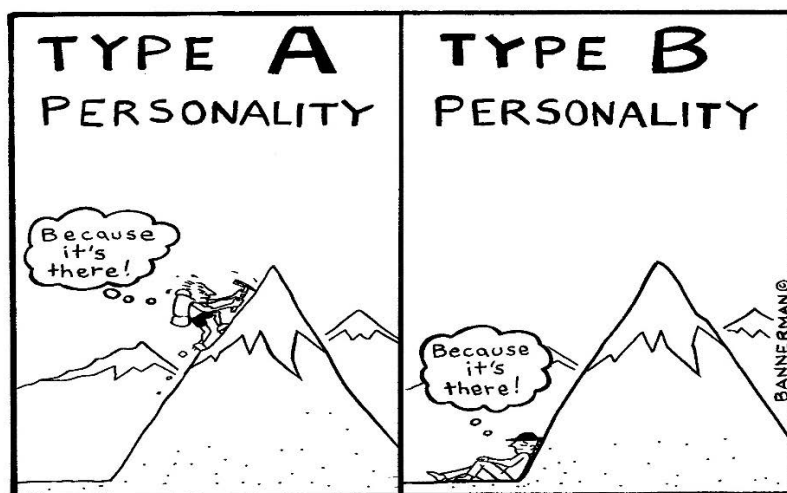
- What is a Type A and Type B personality?
- How does attitude affect stress?
- What is transactional analysis?
- How does ability affect stress?
- What is the locus of control?

*'We have to change our patterns of reacting to experience.
For our problems do not lie in what we experience, but in
the attitude, we have towards it.'*

– Akong Rimpoche

2.1 TYPES OF PERSONALITIES

Type A and type B personalities are based on research by Friedman Rosenman (1974).



TYPE A versus TYPE B personalities	
Type A characteristics include: Driven by goals Aggressive Ambitious Competitive Driven	Type B characteristics include: Easygoing Cooperative Patient Not competitive Collected

Fig. 2.1 Type A versus Type B personalities

Type A characteristics

These include:

- Driven relentlessly by goals.
- Aggressive, hostile, and sometimes arrogant. They don't tolerate fools gladly.
- Blindly ambitious and impatient.
- Competitive, and preoccupied with status.
- Tries to do several things at a time.
- Driven by the clock: they have an obsession with achieving more and more in less and less time.
- Workaholics, unable to wind down, relax and enjoy leisure time.

The type A personality is frequently found in managers on the way up. It is a most useful personality for one who is very ambitious and hopes to move rapidly up the management ladder and doesn't mind what people they upset when on the way up. Because of their blind ambition and aggression, type A personalities are not renowned for their patience, grace and good interpersonal relationship skills. It is not type A characteristics of themselves that are injurious to one's health, rather it is the cynicism, hostility, aggressiveness, anger, and time urgency frequently inherent in this type of personality which is resented by others that does the damage.

Type A's self-esteem and sense of identity depends on their achievements and status. If they fail to achieve something, they become disappointed, frustrated and angry. Being aware of type A characteristics will help you identify them in yourself so that you can take steps to modify them if you wish to do so. This is possible because type A characteristics are mostly learned and thus, with some effort, can be unlearned. While type A characteristics may get you to the top, it is the type B characteristics that will keep you there. The most successful senior executive tends to be type B because they are cooperative, patient and good empathetic listeners.

Type B characteristics

These include:

- Easy-going: able to set time aside for fun and relaxation without a feeling of guilt.
- Collaborates rather than competitive with others: believes the best in people rather than the worst.

- Patient and considerate.
- Not easily irritated.
- Speaks in modulated style.
- Has a more balanced, sensible approach to life: work is only one of many interests.
- Concentrates on one thing at a time rather than multi-tasking.

Type B's are less likely to suffer from stress-related illnesses. They tend to be calm and content, laid-back, take things in their stride, are good at delegating, trustworthy and cooperative with others and like themselves with a good attitude towards life. Health-wise, it would pay every one of us to acquire type B characteristics, as type B people are less prone to anxiety, heart disease and other stress-related illnesses. With the proper mental discipline, type B characteristics can be learned.

2.2 OUTLOOKS ON LIFE



Fig. 2.2 Outlooks on Life

Optimism

Optimists see the glass as half-full. They see things in a positive light and expect to experience favourable outcomes and results. High self-esteem, self-efficacy and a sense of self-worth mean that optimists naturally exploit opportunities and seek out challenges. People with high self-esteem feel good about themselves. Such people are less likely to interpret an event as stressful. In addition, they cope better when stress does occur. This creates a positive reinforcement cycle that further enhances their self-esteem and ability to cope with stress.

Self-efficacy means that a person believes that they have the necessary ability, competencies and skills to successfully carry out a particular course of action. Such people use problem-solving strategies and seek out social support. People who feel competent to act correctly and successfully in specific situations within their area of expertise are less likely to experience stress. Those with low self-efficacy, believing their skills and abilities are poor, find such situations stressful.

Optimists take a broader perspective and are more stress-resistant than pessimists. For example, if a person with an optimistic outlook is asked to do a difficult but challenging project at work, they are likely to think, 'It will be a lot of extra work, but I know that I will succeed. Moreover, it will give me an opportunity to meet new people, learn new things and develop my skills further. It may also further my chances of promotion in the future.' This individual may experience some stress but, unlike the pessimist, it is unlikely to lead to distress, and will only serve as a positive motivator to do a good job.

Studies show that optimists work harder, go further in their careers, make more friends, make more money and are more likely to be creative than pessimists are. It seems that optimists are particularly equipped to handle the everyday trials and tribulations of life. It's a question of when the going gets tough, the tough get going, and the 'tough' are more likely to be optimists and have the resilience to bounce back when things go wrong.

Two American Cognitive Behavioural therapists Christine Padesky and Kathleen Mooney suggest four steps to resilience:

1. Discover and identify the strengths you already possess which can be used to build a personal model of resilience (PMR). Strengths are strategies, skills, beliefs and personal resources that you can use to help build up your resilience. In addition, imagery and metaphors can be used to make your PMR more creative and memorable. For example, you may have good problem-solving skills, build suitable metaphors for resiliency situations, visual positive outcomes, or the ability to enlist the help of others.

2. Build a personal model of resilience (PMR) based on your strengths. This will help you build positive qualities and attributes to deal with life's obstacles, setbacks and challenges. Resiliency skills built up in one area of life can be transferred to other areas.
3. Consider how you might use your PMR to stay resilient and bounce back in situations that cause you anxiety and when stress become overwhelming.
4. Practice resilience by viewing setbacks as opportunities to test your PMR, learn from your efforts and take pride in your successes. Obstacles and setbacks present opportunities to learn and practice resilience.

The PMR model is based on the observation that all humans encounter obstacles and setbacks as we go through life. These may derail us if we lack the resilience, confidence, enthusiasm and skills to effectively deal with them. We are more likely to be successful if we develop dedicated powers of persistence, commitment and resilience to handle them. The following is a four-stage personal model of resilience (PMR) which is a useful addition to your tool kit of models to fight stress.

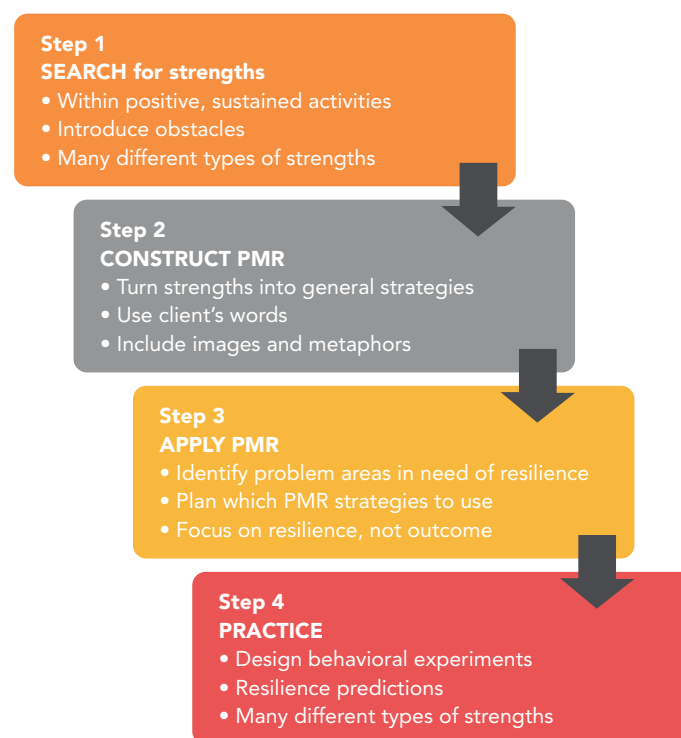


Fig. 2.3 A Four-Step Model to Build Resilience by Padesky & Mooney.

There are many advantages to fostering resilience:

- Resilience helps us fight and manage positive and negative life events.
- Resilient people persist in the face of life's obstacles, hassles, challenges and stressors.
- Resilience acts as a buffer to protect us from psychological and physical health consequences during difficult times in our lives.

Resilience research by Davis (1999) has identified seven areas of competence underpinning resilience:

- Good health and a calm temperament.
- A connection with and trust in other people.
- Interpersonal relationship skills including the ability to avail of help when needed.
- Cognitive competence including reading skills, ability to plan, self-efficacy and intelligence.
- Emotional competence including empathy skills and the ability to control one's emotions.
- The facility to collaborate with others.
- Believing that your life matters and has meaning.

Some people never develop the power of resilience and are unable to cope with the everyday challenges they otherwise could easily surmount if they knew how to do so. Many people are worn down and defeated by the multiple stressors and challenges they face in life.

Pessimist

Pessimists see the glass as half-empty. They view situations negatively and expect to experience unfavourable outcomes and results. They moan, groan and complain and dole out nothing but doom and gloom. They usually have self-limiting beliefs that prevent them from moving forward and undertaking new challenges. They avoid goals that they feel are too difficult and will cause stress to achieve.

A person with a pessimistic outlook, if asked to take on a difficult project, is likely to view the increased responsibilities negatively, thinking, 'I'll never be able to do this project and the boss will realise how stupid and incapable I am and fire me.' Anxiety and distress may follow, leading to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and depression. In the future, this individual is likely to procrastinate when faced with perceived difficult tasks.

The average person is reputed to have about 50,000 thoughts a day. Negative thoughts make up about 60 per cent. Reduce them by substituting positive thoughts for negative thoughts, stop and say to yourself: 'I will remain serene and calm in this challenging situation.' This thought-stopping and substitution strategy is effective for coping with stress.

2.3 TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS

Harris (1969) describes four fundamental life positions:

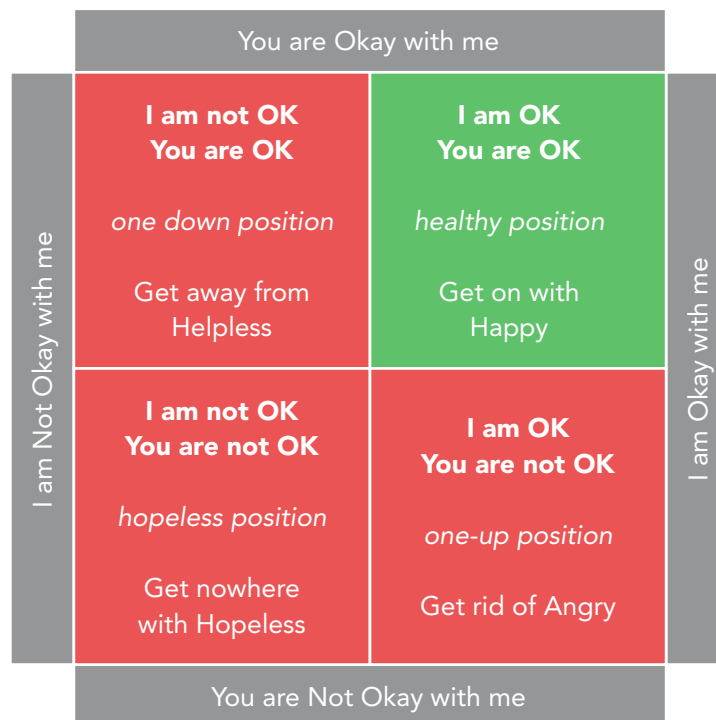


Fig. 2.4 Harris (1969) four life positions

- **I'm not OK – You're OK.** People who adopt this life position have an inferiority complex. They lack self-confidence and have low self-esteem. If they have problems, they are to blame because they are helpless, incompetent or lack sufficient influence to change events.
- **I'm OK – You're OK.** People who hold this position see themselves as independent with others and their environment. They are self-confident, happy, and comfortable with themselves. They view others likewise. They are more likely to be contented and seek social support and network with others. They have no difficulty asserting themselves, being open and discussing their problems with others. Because they see others as okay, other people will like them and reciprocate in a similar fashion.
- **I'm not OK – You're not OK.** People with this life position consider themselves and others equally worthless. They are consumed with negative and hopeless feelings. They feel disconnected from others and from their environment. They tend to become loners obsessed with their own problems and concerns.
- **I'm OK – You're not OK.** People who adopt this position consider that they can only rely on themselves. They consider other people as worthless and potential enemies. They are angry with the world, suspicious of others and blame everybody else for their problems. They consider it pointless to speak out, as nobody will do anything about it anyway.

From a work point of view, adopting the 'I'm OK – you're OK' life positions mean that you are positive about yourself, assertive and capable of delegating. These three skills are particularly appropriate if you want to avoid work over-load by saying 'No' and delegating effectively. A willing workhorse will eventually collapse under the strain.

The first and third life positions are the most stressful because you take a negative view of your own capabilities. If you don't feel good about yourself, you are unlikely to win the respect of others and accept praise, even if it is genuinely earned.

2.4 ABILITY

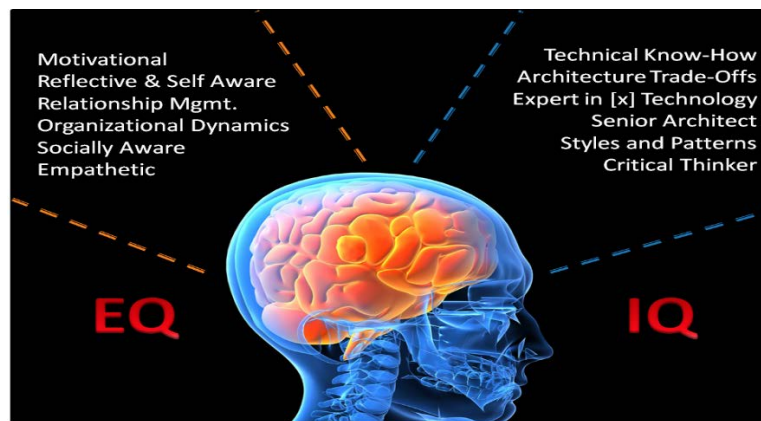


Fig. 5.5 EQ versus IQ

Intelligence quotient (IQ) does not guarantee success in life. There are many people with high IQs who are sociopaths, misfits or failures in life. Emotional intelligence (EQ) is considered to be just as important or even more important than IQ and especially so in managerial and the caring profession.

Consider the problems caused by emotionally-immature people in the work situation, ranging from temper tantrums to actual incidence of verbal abuse and physical violence. EQ is now thought to be the difference that makes the difference between those people who get ahead in the workplace and those who are left behind. EQ is the ability to recognise and manage one's feelings in a calm and responsible way while being sensitive to the feelings of others.

IQ only contributes about 20 per cent to our success in work. The rest comes from how to deal with our emotions and the emotions of others. People who get to the top are likely to have the ability to network and get on with others. Social skills such as facilitating, cooperating, coordinating, coaching and influencing are very important for managers. Good managers are able to read the body language of others accurately, make good first impressions, and build rapport quickly. They are sensitive to the needs and concerns of others.

2.5 LOCUS OF CONTROL

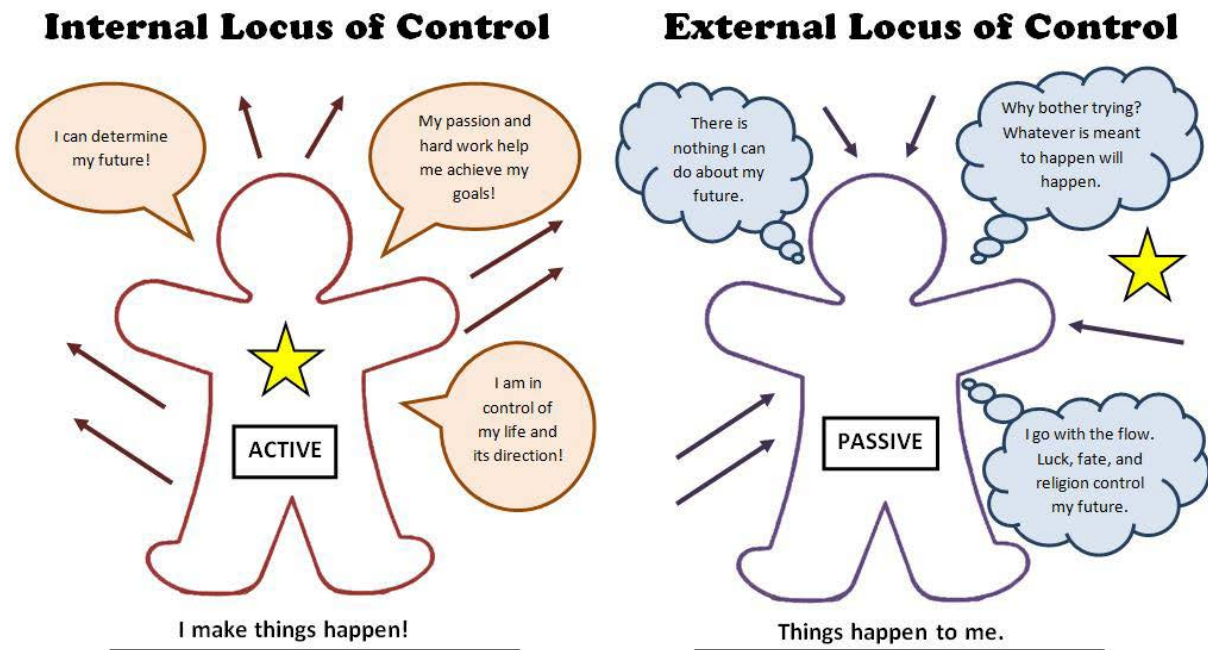


Fig. 5.6 Internal versus External Locus of Control

Locus of control is the expectancy that personal actions will be effective in controlling the environment. It is the perceived source of control over one's own behaviour. If you think you have control over your own destiny, then you probably have. If you think you haven't control over your own destiny, then you probably haven't. People vary on a continuum ranging from internal to external locus of control.

Internal locus of control

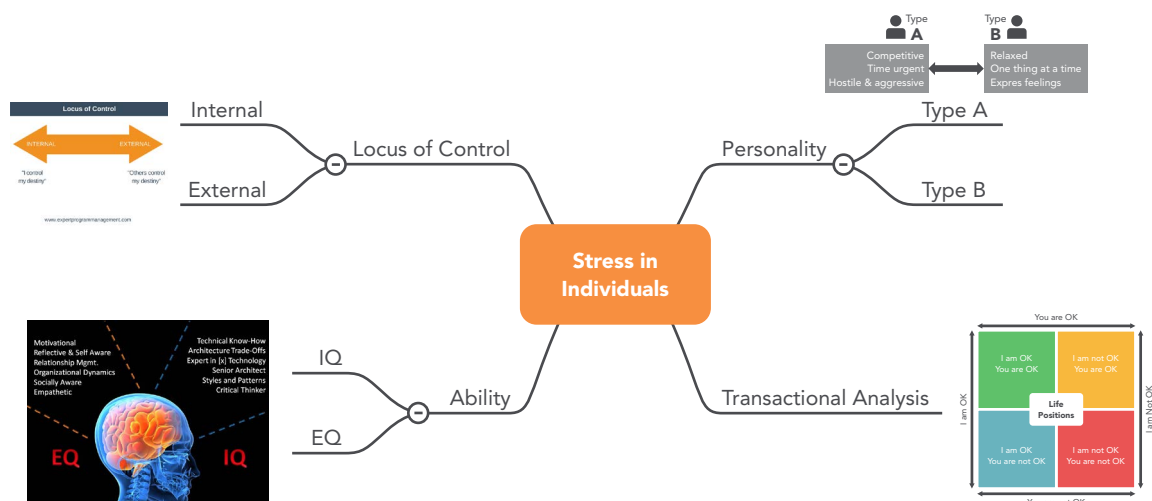
People with an internal locus of control believe that they are in control of their own destiny and can determine their own future. They take responsibility for their own actions, do not over-react to people or situations and refuse to see themselves as victims. In education, they are more motivated to achieve academic excellence. When 'internals' confront a stressful situation, they believe that they can have an influence on the results. Therefore, they take control of the situation. They believe that passion, hard work and application of skill is what makes things happen rather than luck or fate.

Internals tend to be assertive, get on with life, work hard to achieve their goals, and do not see themselves as victims. They are less anxious and better able to deal with frustration. They take setbacks in their stride, rather than seeing things as a major catastrophe or blaming fate. Thus, they perceive many situations as more controllable and less stressful than people with an external locus of control.

External locus of control

People with an external locus of control believe that their lives are controlled by outside forces. They believe that what happens to them is due to predestination, fate, religion, luck or the actions of others. When 'externals' confront a stressful situation, they believe that they have little effect on the results. They believe in the mantra: 'whatever is meant to be, will be.' Because of this attitude, they often lack the initiative and take a passive approach to life and its problems. Rather than taking actions to reduce the stress, they are likely to be defensive and do nothing. Because they feel helpless, powerless and anxious, they perceive situations as more stressful than people with an internal locus of control. They are more anxious and less able to deal effectively with frustration.

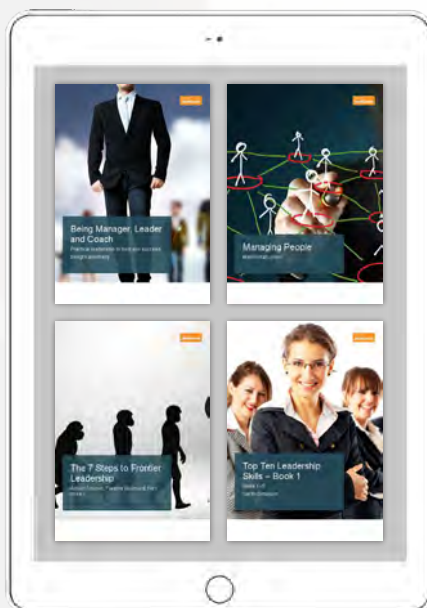
2.6 SUMMARY LEARNING MAP OF STRESS IN INDIVIDUALS FOR CHAPTER 2



2.7 TEN ACTIVITIES FOR HANDLING STRESS

1. The stressful roles that people experience in organisations include role ambiguity, role conflict, role over-load and role under-load. Explain these concepts in writing and how they can be stressful.
2. Name and explain three workplace stressors and how you would deal with them.
3. Dr. Daniel Siegel propounded that our stress levels were bounded by a window of tolerance. Explain this state and the zones of hyperarousal and hypoarousal.
4. Identify and draw the various stages in the vicious lifestyle cycle triggered off by the hedonic treadmill.

5. As a manager, remember that increased social support in terms of leadership, trust, respect, open communication and participation go a long way to reducing organisational stress. Pay special attention to these.
6. Identify and explain briefly six policies and programmes that are available to reduce potential stressors in the workplace.
7. Do a cost-benefit analysis of stress management.
8. Learn the principles of method study, job enrichment and ergonomics to improve the design of work in your department and make it less stressful for your staff while at the same time improving productivity.
9. The minute you start feeling stressed by entertaining a negative thought, immediately stop and say to yourself 'I will remain serene and calm in this challenging situation.' This thought stopping and substitution strategy may be effective for coping with stress.
10. Consider the typical characteristics of Type A and Type B people. Which category would you classify yourself as? Also, observe others in your immediate working environment and classify them in a similar fashion.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<http://www.ananova.com>

<http://www.isma.org.uk>

<http://www.jobstresshelp.com/news.htm>

<http://www.managingstress.com/articles/CBC.htm>

<http://www.vhihealth.com>

<http://www.workstress.net>

<http://www.healthline.com/health/general-adaptation-syndrome>

<https://positivepsychology.com/hedonic-treadmill/>

<https://psycentral.wordpress.com/2012/09/14/coping-change-psychological-hardiness-dr-g...>

<https://positivepsychology.com/flow-at-work/>