Sustainable productivity workshop

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Meta

Phones. Off or on? Note: at least two breaks for emergencies.

Note taking. Website, Github. I'm not an expert: here to learn and discuss. "This is what I've got."

Write on whiteboard: *our* notes. Learnings, things we want to apply. First: why we are here.

Goal: create sustainble productivity by reflecting on relationship stress, productivity, mental health.

Presentation Mattis. Scrum master, playing in band, hospital visit because of too much stress.

Overview subject

Looking at experts, it's all "common knowledge." Key is to identify specific obstacles.

Data in Sweden: common reason for sick leave. +14% of all emergencies "acute stress reaction"

Why are we exhaustion ourselves? Most common in females 30-40. Nurses, teachers, social wrkrs.

Traditionally we think of mental and physical as separate. All mental activity has brain correlation.

Why is this happening? Question the data. Diagnosis, society, openness, technology, culture.

Is stress good or bad?

Not binary. Compare to exercise / calories / whatever. Different kinds of stress?

Caring as pre-requisite of stress. Highly sensitive people: DNA + upbringing.

Stress correlated, but not causing cancer. Why? Unhealthy methods?

Net stress. Percieved situation. Control, support, recovery. Stressed about being stressed.

Where are you? How do we know? Cynicism, exhaustion, physical symtoms, memory, patience ...

[five-minute break]

"Because I'm a fucking caveman"

Homo sapiens sapiens not changed for 50 000 years. Not built for this environment: bugs.

What made us more successfull than other species: ability to plan & cooperate.

Not able to survive alone = social part of stress often most important. But not talked about.

Thinking about problem in future = enough to react now. Always worrying about future = :(

Fight or flight or freeze. What do we need to run from? Opposite is rest & digest.

The tribe needed different kinds of people. What if no-one was neurotic? Was it a bug or a feature?

Neuroscience of stress

Amygdala(s) part of limbic system. ~225 m years old (shrews have them!) Iterated and QA:d.

Quick fast-and-up system. Overrides thinking part of brain – the prefrontal cortex. Self-talk.

Subconscious identification of danger, not rational. What do you need to be afraid of in 2017?

We're built differently. Some have larger / more active amygdalas and thus stressed out more.

Different environments shape us. Bad family situation with "danger" causes amygdala to grow.

Good news that brain is plastic. 8 weeks of meditation shrinks amygdala. (but fighting 1m years!)

Mindset intervention: Challenge response

Does saying "Don't worry" to someone solve the problem? No. We've already tried not to worry!

But. Different reactions to challenge (psyched!) and danger (scared!). We can change mindset.

Examine the worst case. Realize it's not that bad. Now it's a challenge. We can lower/raise bar.

Reality check: burnouts are often related to workaholism. Rarely only work.

Out mental image of the world shapes how we react.

Yerkes-Dodson

Avoiding stress = avoiding all types of challenges.

Different leadership skills depending on scale. Example: talking about mission & values.

Many companies still have industrial view of work. Best to be at the desk for X hours. Why?

With simple task, it doesn't matter how stressed out we are: we'll do OK anyway. Cleaning.

With complex tasks, we need the perfect amount of stress. Surgeon. (cover faces example)

[five-minute break]

Categories of stress management

Before we try to solve stress: 1) <u>symptom</u> or cause? 2) figure out where the actual problem is.

Externalize attention, escapism. Physiological changes, don't try to out-think yourself.

Reflect on your own (journal, meditation, walks) or with others (friends, therapist, coach)

"Perpetual problem." ← the problem is probably with me.

Changing your mindset. The jury is still out on this science.

Other methods: medication, lowering the bar, brazilian jiu-jitsu, get perspective on life

Who needs to change?

Accepting stress. This is the challenge I choose. It's because I want too, because I care.

This is the flip side of a positive quality, like loyalty, caring, ambition, creativity …

Happiness illusion. Stressed about being stressed, sad about being sad, etc. Natural feelings. OK.

Work environment

* Belong to a group, defined as: to feel secure with others and to be affirmed by others.

* Sense of contribution & creativity: to perform & be challenged.

* Self-realisation: fostering and developing individual ability.

+ Hygiene factors: salary, physical work environment, personnel policy, competency

+ Motivation factors: good leadership, mission and values, clear goals, inspiration

Mindfulness & meditation

Supposed to be non-religious. But if you dig in, the Buddha pops out. Not compatible all religions.

However, rename method to presence. Reseach indicates it reduces anxiety but no placebo controls.

Why would it work? 1. Disconnect 2. Not think about future. 3. Breathing activates PNS.

Meditation can be defined a million ways. Just sitting, breathing, and focusing on the breath.

Some people hate meditation and that's OK. As we've seen, there are other methods available.

[five-minute meditation]

Challenges: restlessness (accept), sleepyness (tea, straight back), "finding" time (in-action)

Most of the brain is unconscious. Reflection = understanding patterns.

Greatest hits

Individual: lower / raise ambition based on life situation. Assuming ambition on autopilot: adding the new, but never removing the old.

Team: psychologically safe environment: honest, affirming.

Organization: allow individual to decide best work situation – (exampel w/ sick family)

Questions, reflections, thoughts

Pick up on what was written down in beginning. Follow up on anything we haven't covered.

Write down changes we want to make as individuals, teams and orgs.

Prioritize changes we want to make. Simplify: what if I can only do one thing?

Always free to email me with questions and feedback. I will send out slides etc.

Thank you + don't forget to pick up phones :)

Notes from this session:

Bonus

On burnout and work environment

- Prevent sick leave: noticing and acknowledging the symptoms, examining the underlying causes, developing preventive strategies to counteract your particular pattern of burnout.

- Increasing emphasis within many companies on short-term, tangible and measurable goals. When these goals can no longer be meaningfully linked to overall and more long-term goals, then motivating power disappears and they are transformed instead into stressors.

- Some researchers say that as few as 7% of professionals have been seriously impacted by burnout. But others have documented rates as high as 50% among medical residents and 85% among financial professionals. A 2013 ComPsych survey of more than 5,100 North American workers found that 62% felt high levels of stress, loss of control, and extreme fatigue.

- Burnout: "A state of physical, emotional and mental fatigue caused by long-term involvement in emotionally stressful situations."

On how the brain works

- "… one of their findings was that the brain reacts in almost the same way whether we are experiencing somatic pain (our body hurts) or social pain (being rejected by a person or a group we love)."

- Real or imagined threat activates amygdala. Bottom up thinking. Give yourself 1-10 seconds to reason about it.

- Novelty bias and distractions as cause for stress. Make it easy by installing Freedom.

Other

- Looking for calm in new house / vacation / hikes / clothes.

- Gratitude practice effective. Why? Perspective.

- Too much stress is unsustainable: but too little is, too. We want to be challenged, engaged.

- Opportunities for recovery. "Sprinting all the time."

- The hardest thing is spending energy on the right things.

- Company culture and expectations. Startups want to be cool & chill & friendly at the same time as they want to be ambitious to the point of the extreme. Better to be honest.