

Samuel A. Malone

Workplace Stress

A Guide for Managers &
Employees Part 1

SAMUEL A. MALONE

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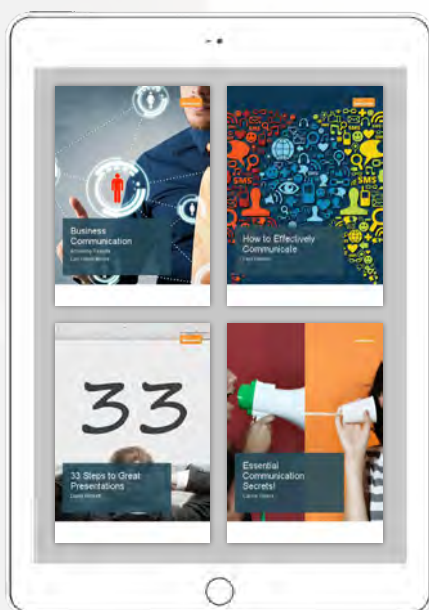
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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:

- The Role of the Brain in Learning
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- Series of Books on Creativity Skills for Managers
- 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

Workplace Stress – A Guide for Managers and Employees is the first one of a series of four books on stress management. Stress is often referred to as the epidemic of the 21st century. It is a frequent topic of conversation and the term ‘stress’ has gone into everyday language. Most people will experience stress at some time in their personal, professional or work lives. In many organisations, stress is seen as a weakness and considered a taboo subject. If acknowledged, however reluctantly, it is often seen as a badge of honour, a sign of commitment and loyalty, rather than a cause of serious illness. It seems macho men do not admit being vulnerable to stress.

The symptoms of stress can be behavioural, emotional, physical and psychological. It is well to bear in mind that these symptoms can also be due to factors unrelated to stress. The three Ps – compulsive behaviours that can contribute to stress – are procrastination, perfectionism and presenteeism. Personal consequences of stress include poor concentration, worry, anxiety, aggression and burnout. Organisational consequences include absenteeism, high recruitment and training costs and low productivity. Life’s 15 most stressful events are shown by Holmes and Rahe on one chart. Dr. Hans Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) is a three-stage physiological process the body goes through when under stress.

The most common types of stress are eustress, distress, burnout and post-traumatic stress disorder. Most jobs have unique stressors attached to them. Some jobs are inherently more stressful than others, while travel stress including road and air rage is a feature of modern life. Managers should be aware that different cultures bring different beliefs and attitudes to the workplace. Depending on their age, gender, and personality, people will experience and cope with stress differently. Some jobs are more inherently stressful than others such as jobs in the medical profession. Personality, perception and hardiness will determine how severe the stress reaction will be.

In clear, non-technical practical language, *Workplace Stress* gives you the information, models, techniques and skills necessary to tackle any workplace stress problem. You are shown how to recognise the behavioural, emotional, physical and psychological symptoms of stress and how to deal with them. You will learn how stress affects your health and what you can do to counteract it. 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 UNDERSTANDING STRESS

- What is stress?
- What are stressors?
- What is the General Adaptation Syndrome?
- What is the arousal curve?
- What are the causes of stress?

'If you tighten the strings too much, they will snap, and if you leave them too much slack they won't play, but if they are tuned to the right point, then and only then does the music start.'

– Siddhartha Gautama

1.1 WHAT IS STRESS?

The UK Government's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to executive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.' Although some stress can fuel alertness and provide the motivation needed to overcome challenging situations, chronic exposure to stressful situations can lead to a variety of human and economic consequences such as sleep deprivation, depression, interpersonal conflict, alcohol and drug abuse, absenteeism, labour turnover and poor job performance. According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) stress, anxiety and depression are the leading causes of long-term absence for non-manual workers in the workplace.

Medically, stress is the rate of wear and tear on the body. The body has a balancing mechanism, called the autonomic nervous system, which controls the heart, lungs, stomach, blood vessels and glands. It has two elements:

- The **sympathetic** element triggers off an arousal response and prepares the body for action.
- The **parasympathetic** element restores the body to a state of relaxation.

Feelings of tension, nervousness, impatience, tiredness, anxiety, frustration, sleeplessness and various illnesses can be subjective perceptions of stress. Stress may also be considered an imbalance – real or perceived – between an individual's resources or capabilities and

the demands placed upon them. Stress is often in the eye of the beholder. The three main causes of stress are:

- Personal.
- Organisational.
- Environmental.



Fig. 1.1 Three main causes of stress

People experience different stress levels at different stages of their personal and work lives. Cumulative life-changing events may trigger serious stress related illnesses. Life hassles are the everyday events that frustrate and annoy us. The tension discharge rate is our unique ability to offload stress at the end of the working day.

Many organisations are inherently stressful because of the way they are designed, organised, structured, managed and run. Inequitable human resource management (HRM) policies can also contribute to the level of stress. In fact, some organisations subject their employees to excessive workloads, supervision, deadlines, control, discipline, bullying, and discrimination.

Organisations experience different stress levels at different stages of the organisational life cycle. Political, legal, economic, social and technological changes can also be a major source of stress for organisations. You cannot abolish stress from your life. You can only try to manage it effectively.

1.2 STRESSORS

Stressors are situations that cause stress – situations which, when compared to past events and the resources at your disposal, are perceived as threatening or challenging. Stressors can be categorised as external and internal.

Stress Management



WHAT IS STRESS?

- Stress is your mind and body's response or reaction to a real or imagined threat, event or change.
- The threat, event or change are commonly called stressors. Stressors can be internal (thoughts, beliefs, attitudes or external (loss, tragedy, change).

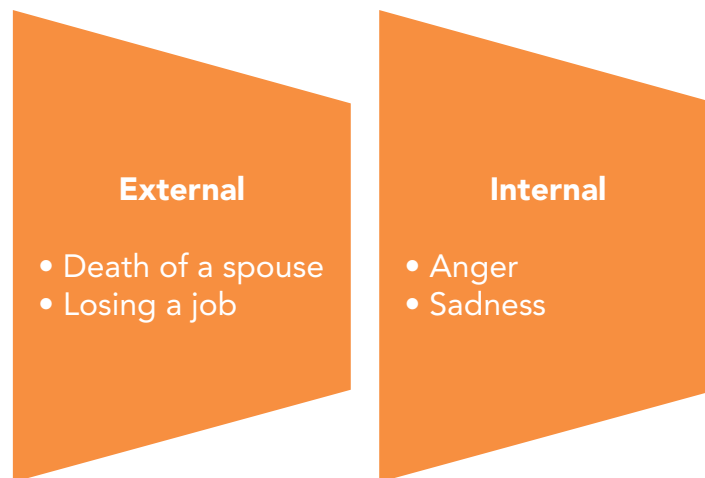


Fig. 1.2 Stressors

- **External** stressors come from our environment. These might include the death of a spouse or close relative, losing one's job or being bullied or criticised by another person.
- **Internal** stressors come from inside us. We create mentally the majority of our upsets including anger, anxiety, distress, sadness, fear, guilt, frustration, and shame. Unlike external stressors, internal stressors are to a large extent within our control.

The reaction to a stressor depends on the individual and the particular situation. Some people would find viewing a dead body stressful while others like police, doctors and nurses may not, as they are accustomed to seeing dead bodies in the everyday course of their work. However, in a different context, seeing the body of a close relative, colleague or friend would get a different stress reaction.

A common example of a work stressor is work overload. This can easily be eliminated by redesign of work, delegation and time management. *Managers have a responsibility to understand stress and its causes and to take appropriate action to make the workplace as people friendly and stress free as possible.*

1.3 THE GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME

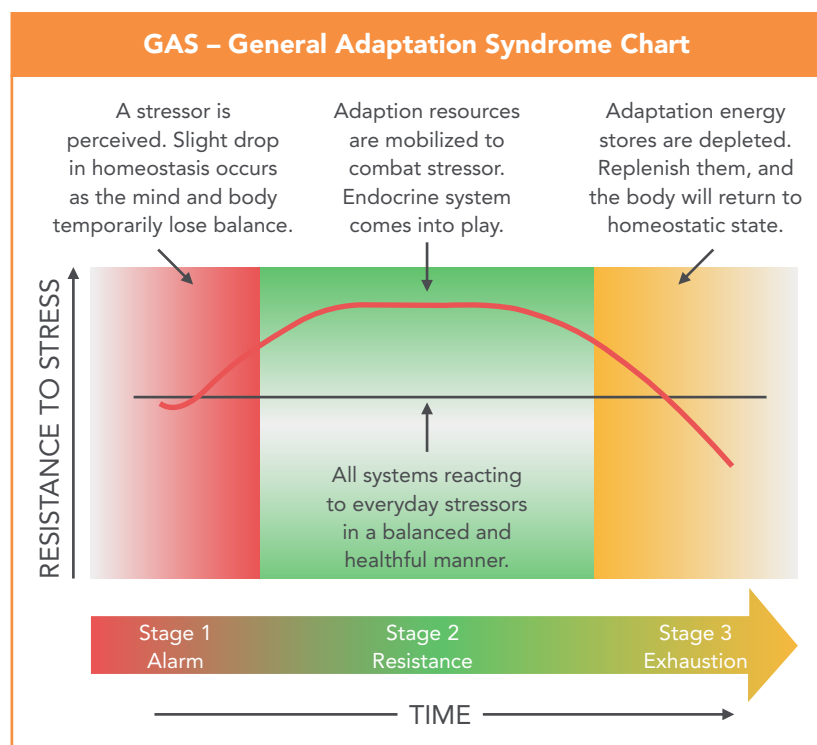


Fig. 1.3 General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) by Dr. Hans Selye (1984)

A major breakthrough in our understanding of stress was the discovery of the general adaptation syndrome (GAS) by Dr. Hans Selye. GAS is the three-stage physiological process the body goes through when under stress. Understanding this model and how the different

responses relate to each other may help you understand and cope with stress. The acronym **ARE** will help you recall its stages:

- **Alarm.** The 'fight or flight' response prepares the body for action. This natural reaction prepares you to flee or protect yourself from danger. This is very useful when the threat is the proverbial bull charging towards you in the field. Defence mechanisms in the body become active. The body produces chemicals such as adrenaline and cortisol that stimulate action in the brain, heart and muscles, helping the body to get ready to defend itself, speeding up breathing and heart rate. These chemicals improve memory for the specific situation so that the individual can stay out of trouble in the future. However, when the stress is repeated over many weeks, some neurons atrophy (die off) and memory is impaired, whereas other neurons grow and fear is enhanced. Blood pressure rises as blood is pumped into the muscle making them tense and ready to spring into action. Blood thickens in anticipation of repairing wounds and sugar levels increase. There is a slight drop in homeostasis as the body goes out of balance. Homeostasis refers to a cell's home state – the way it wants to be and should be if everything is working normally. If the stressor is dealt with at this stage, the body will return to the normal relaxed stage. An interesting point is that males and female differ somewhat in their 'fight or flight' response. It does not apply equally to both sexes; rather it more accurately characterises the response of male animals under threat. The female response to non-threatening stress has been characterised as 'tend-and-befriend,' not 'fight or flight.'
- **Resistance.** The stressor remains and the body continues to fight the stress, even though the fight or flight response has passed. High levels of the stress chemicals such as adrenaline, cortisol and norepinephrine are still being released into the body. Personal financial problems, a job you hate, or poor health can cause chronic stress, giving rise to anxiety attacks and mood swings. If the stressor is successfully dealt with; physical signs of stress will disappear such as your hormone levels, heart rate, and blood pressure which will reach a pre-stress rate. Otherwise, the body's ability to resist the stress becomes compromised and your body remains on high alert to cope with the stress. This means your body continues to secrete the stress hormone and your blood pressure remains high. If the resistance stage continues for too long, it can lead to the exhaustion stage. Symptoms of the resistance stage include irritability, frustration and poor concentration.
- **Exhaustion.** This stage is the greatest threat to individuals. Trying to cope with stress for long periods can drain your physical, emotional, and mental resources and your body has no longer the ability to fight stress. Where the body is unable to cope because it has been subjected to long-term stress, the immune system

may break down, leaving the person with no defence against common infections such as colds and flu. Blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar may remain high, adding the risk of a heart attack. A person who feels continually threatened will have elevated levels of the stress chemicals in their blood all the time. Prolonged overproduction of these chemicals may have detrimental effects on memory, peace of mind, learning and sleep. Symptoms of the exhaustion stage include fatigue, burnout, depression, anxiety and a decreased tolerance to handle stress.

1.4 THE AROUSAL CURVE

The arousal curve or **Yerkes Dodson Law** tracks the evolution of stress over time, from low stress through optimum stress to high stress and, ultimately, to breakdown and burnout. Being able to identify the stages of stress will help you know when stress is going from bad to worse, so that timely interventions can take place.

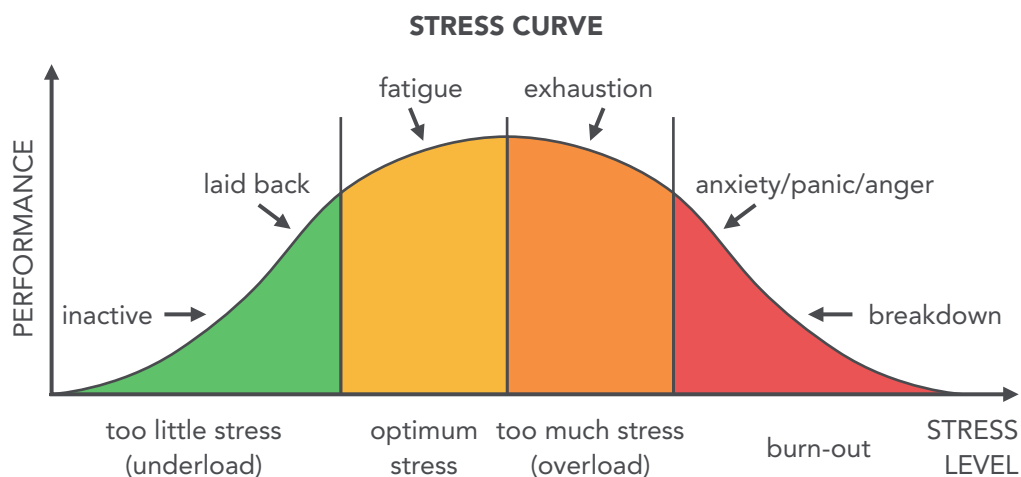


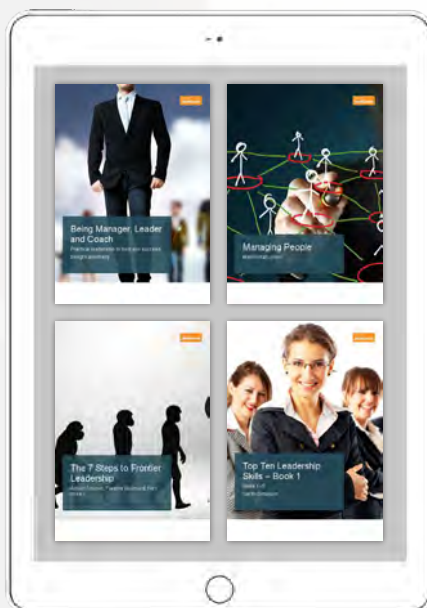
Fig. 1.4 The Yerkes-Dodson Law (Arousal Curve)

There are four stages in the Arousal Curve:

- **Too little stress or low stress.** In this stage, there is little challenge and no sense of personal achievement. Skills are not being used. This lack of stimulation leads to boredom and lethargy called rust-out. There is a lack of purpose, meaning, or excitement in life. Less challenging tasks with low work demands cause stress.
- **Optimum stress or medium stress.** In this stage, life is balanced and, despite the ups and downs of everyday living, it is perfectly manageable. A sense of job satisfaction and personal achievement enables you to get through your daily work without too many hassles. Stress in modest amounts helps you solve

difficult problems and come up with creative solutions. Life is a challenge, but manageable and thoroughly enjoyable. At the end of the day, you are tired but satisfied with the way you have spent your time.

- **Too much stress or high stress.** In this stage, you are constantly feeling you have too much to do each day. Tasks are too challenging and work demands are too high. You continue to take on burdens without realising the damage that it is doing. Despite feeling emotionally and physically drained, you are unwilling to take time off for rest, recreation and relaxation. You are in a permanent state of anxiety and overdrive, and consequently not as effective in achieving results as you should be.
- **Breakdown.** When work demands are experienced as strain, burnout is more likely. In this stage, you may develop chronic compulsive disorders such as perfectionism or other more serious psychosomatic illnesses. You may start drinking alcohol or smoking excessively, relying on tranquillisers to help calm your nerves or sleeping pills to help you sleep. You may become withdrawn or aggressive towards others. Without counselling, help or support, you are likely to have a mental or physical breakdown. Death is the ultimate way in which the body tells you to slow down, but, of course, by then it is too late.



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1.5 PERSONAL CAUSES OF STRESS

The personal causes of stress can be grouped under four headings:

- Life stages.
- Life-changing events.
- Life hassles.
- The tension discharge rate.

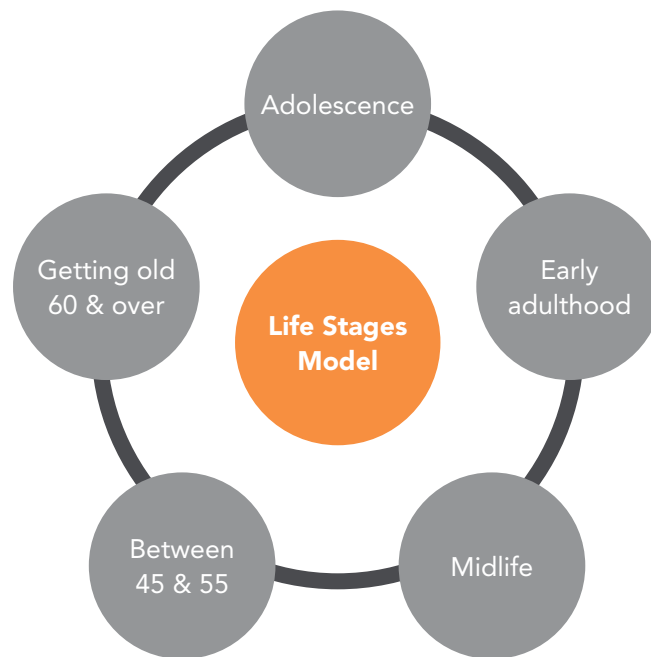


Fig. 1.5 Life Stages Model

Development change such as pregnancy and birth, children growing up, difficult teenagers, mid-life crisis and growing old can all be anticipated and planned for but, nevertheless, they are stressful for many people. The biological life cycle and its unique stages teaches us that nobody is exempt from the hassles and life events that bring stress in their wake. People typically go through the following life stages:

- **Adolescence.** A twilight zone between childhood and adulthood; adolescence is a time of great conflict between the need for emotional, intellectual, economic and personal freedom, and the need to remain a child and be guided and protected. It is a period of great uncertainty, turmoil and stress, when hormonal changes are taking place in the body, resulting in sexual, biological, psychological and physical changes. However, emotional development and maturity does not keep pace with the physical development and so this stage of life may be one of great uncertainty, confusion and stress, often expressed in the form of revolt against authority, trouble with the police, unconventional behaviour, rudeness, vulgar language, aggression, pilfering, and alcoholism and drug dependence.

- **Early adulthood.** This is the stage when people find a job, build a career, make a home, marry and raise children – all of which may be sources of unique stress. During this period, many people settle down, make progress in their jobs, and are rewarded by promotion, more responsibility, an interesting career, and money. On the other hand, some people may not be fortunate in their choice of job, partner or economic circumstances. This may cause frustration, worry, depression, disappointment, resentment and result in much greater stress.
- **Midlife.** Between the ages of 35 and 45, people may suddenly realise that half their lives are over and cannot be relived, while some of their aspirations have not been fulfilled. Many people find that their careers have stagnated or stopped completely. Lost opportunities and regrets can be very frustrating or even depressing. Some people may feel trapped in their existing jobs, as one gets older, opportunities dry up elsewhere. Many others may feel imprisoned in unhappy marriages. Life may have lost its novelty, excitement, vibrancy and challenge. On the other hand, midlife can be a time of contentment and great satisfaction because of the realisation of dreams and the acquisition of greater maturity, experience and wisdom. Those with the initiative and courage to change careers successfully in midlife to pursue lifelong ambitions and dreams are the exception rather than the rule, and are likely to have researched and planned the move many years in advance.
- **Between 45 and 55.** Midlife crisis can affect anyone and bouts of anxiety, unease and depression are the most common symptoms. Job opportunities are fewer, and those that arise take longer to master. Old knowledge, skills and methods become obsolete, and our level of interest and energy begin to wane. Realising that one has reached a plateau in one's career can be very disturbing. Feeling trapped, under-promoted, and unappreciated is frustrating at any age, but may magnify in later years as opportunities in the external economy also dry up, particularly for people over 45. The problem of ageism, fear of redundancy, obsolescence, or early retirement may add to stress at work. On the home front, marriage and family may have proved to be a disappointment. Some people may take drastic action such as starting a new relationship, changing their job, beginning to drink, gamble heavily or even resorting to recreational drugs or adopting a bizarre lifestyle. This is a dangerous time and many managers suffer heart attacks or other health problems. Those who survive often experience a stark reminder of human mortality through the deaths of close work colleagues, partners, friends or relatives during this time – this brings its own share of stress. For some women, the menopause can be a very distressing period. In addition, many people in this age cohort report problems with their adolescent children. They may be experimenting with drugs and alcohol, getting into trouble with the police, or have concerns about their career plans.

- **Getting old: 60 and over.** This is the stage when people begin to realise that time is running out – eyesight and hearing deteriorates, joints get stiff, back aches occur and one tires easily. Common ailments for this age group include arthritis, hypertension, and diabetes. Age is no longer revered in the workplace and many executives suffer erosion of respect and status before they finally retire – becoming mentors, demotion or side-lining are common experiences for many people. At home, people may fear chronic illness, disability and dependency on others for everyday tasks. The deaths of close friends and relatives and their own impending mortality again reminds one of the prospects and certainty of death. Retirement itself can be a stressful event for some – an unstructured day with little to do can provide pressures for those who are not prepared. But, for others who have lived a balanced life, with many interests and friends, retirement can prove to be a liberating and rewarding experience. In fact, research shows that elderly people report fewer stressful events than do the young.

Life-changing events

Life-changing events include such events as death of a spouse or partner, divorces or losing one's job. The effects of major events happening over a short period of time are cumulative and the resultant stress may trigger off serious illness. Holmes and Rae (1967) devised a weighting system reflecting the relative severity of each event. If a person experiences the equivalent of more than 150 points in one year, there is a 50% or more chance of that person becoming ill during the following year. The chance of illness increases to 80% for scores exceeding 300.

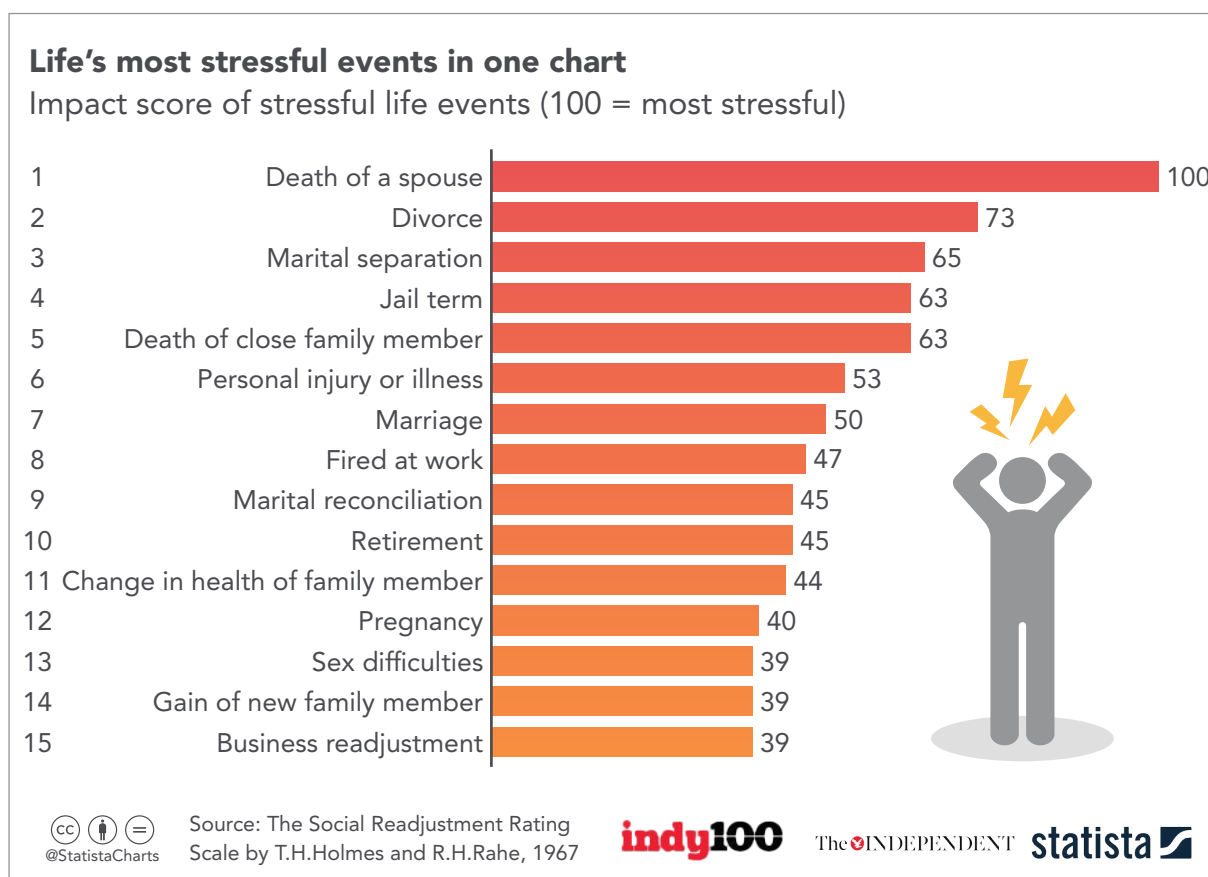


Fig. 1.6 The Holmes-Rahe Top 15 Life Events

Life hassles

These are irritating, frustrating and niggling events that happen on a daily basis – losing one's car keys, computer crashes, tight deadlines, people not keeping appointments, late running trains and buses, waiting in queue, car breakdowns, and being caught up in a traffic jam. Life hassles also include frustrations and pressures such as indifferent and discourteous service in shops and restaurants that can pile up on a person and eventually wear them down – small underlying issues that often are allowed to ferment and develop – the straw that breaks the proverbial camel's back.

In the workplace, hassles include keeping up to date with new technology, new rules and procedures and management techniques, attending meetings, telephone calls, interruptions, interpersonal conflicts, and lack of social support at work. People in lower socio-economic groups are exposed to more hassles, simply because they have less financial, emotional, educational and other resources to deal with the daily events of life. In particular, minority groups often suffer discrimination during their daily lives. Older people report fewer hassles

and rate them as less stressful than do younger adults. This may be due to the decrease in the number of social roles such as active parenting and work roles they perform. Hassles are counterbalanced to some extent by uplifts such as meeting an important deadline, going for a meal and so on but, nevertheless, on a cumulative basis hassles can be very stressful.

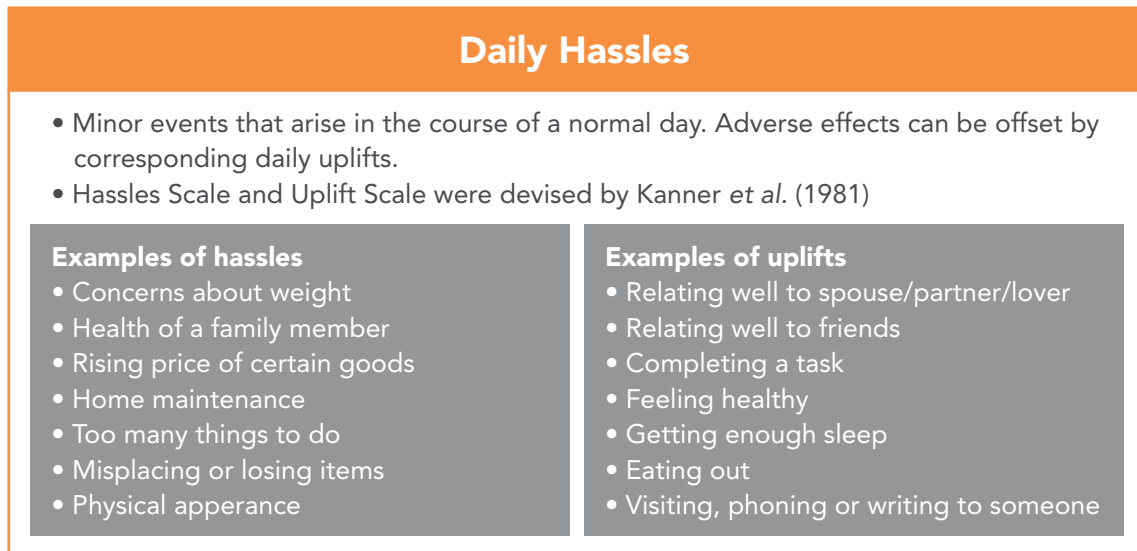


Fig. 1.7 Hassles and Uplifts; Kanner *et al.* (1981)

The tension discharge rate

The tension discharge rate measures the speed with which you can wind down from a stressful to a relaxed state. Everyone experiences some degree of stress at work and this may vary depending on the type of occupation involved. However, people differ in how they deal with feelings at the end of the workday. Some leave their work-related problems behind them when they go home, where they can immediately relax and get absorbed in recreational or family activities. In their minds there is a clear delineation and compartmentalisation between work and home life. Others bring their problems home with them and take their frustrations out on their family and friends. They find it very difficult to forget about the job and unwind. This extra psychological baggage can be a source of stress for themselves and their families.

1.6 ORGANISATIONAL CAUSES OF STRESS

Organisations, just like humans and products, go through life stages – establishment, growth, maturity and decline – each with its own unique challenges and stressors.

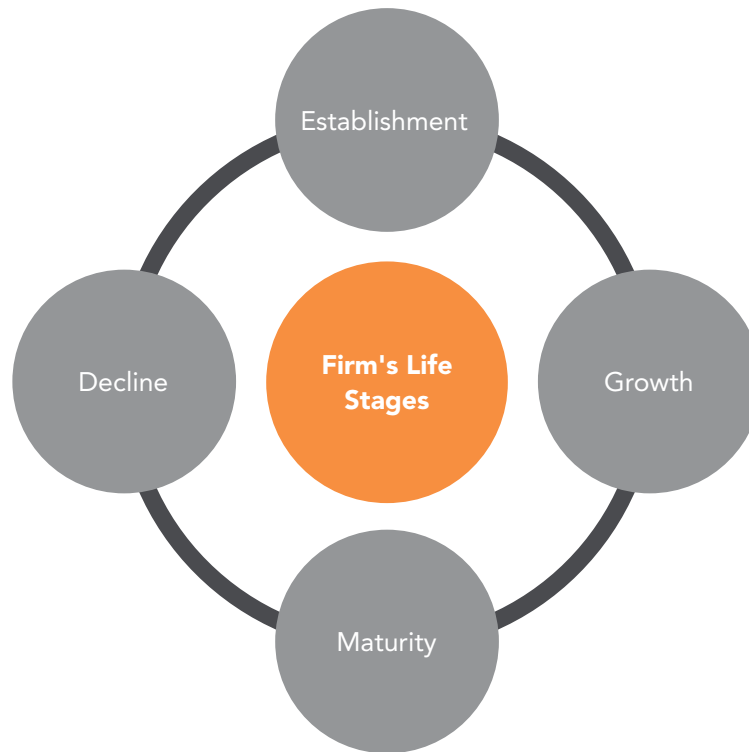


Fig. 1.8 Organisational Life Stages

The organisational life cycle is:

- **Establishment.** This is often a period of high stress, where people are under pressure to get the organisation up and running, design systems and procedures, build up a customer base, breakeven, provide cash flow and make profits as soon as possible. This is a period of great excitement, challenge, creativity, uncertainty and risk. There is a lot to do and an awful lot to learn in a short period of time.
- **Growth.** This is also a period of high stress, though not as high as the initial stage. Growth brings its own unique problems, opportunities and challenges. The increase in business activity means that there is greater volume of work to do. The company is expanding and new structures and job positions will need to be set up. Managerial challenges increase and work overload may become a problem. Competition begins to intensify and costs may need to be strictly controlled. During this time, one needs to balance work and leisure to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- **Maturity.** This is probably the period of least stress for an organisation. The business has been established and the pioneering and entrepreneurial work has been done. The opportunities have been exploited and the threats

overcome. Cash flow is sound and profits are being made. However, competition to maintain market share may be intense and bring its own challenges. There may be a danger of resting on one's laurels and ignoring new threats and opportunities.

- **Decline.** This is often the stage of most stress in the form of downsizing, reorganisation, cost reduction programmes, redundancies, merger, acquisition, or ultimately closure. The inevitable layoffs can be very stressful and traumatic for both workers and management due to reduced job security and stability for many employees. There has been a decrease in full-time jobs and an increase in part-time, casual and contract labour. Nonetheless, closure is not inevitable, as some companies adapt, take cost reduction measures and survive in a niche market at a lower level of business activity.

External environment

Many aspects of the external environment can be sources of stress. **PEST** is a useful and well-known acronym used in understanding these sources.

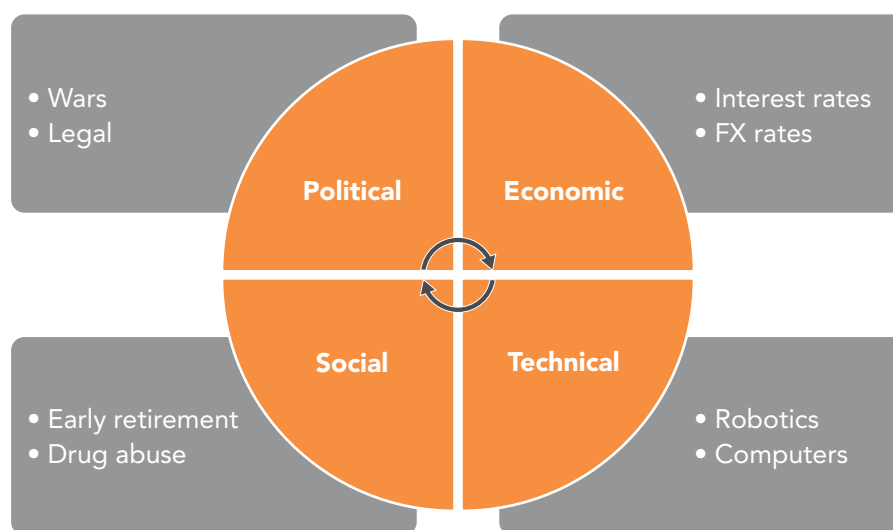


Fig. 1.9 PEST Model

- **Political.** Wars bring stress into peoples' lives. The events of 11 September 2001, the subsequent Iraq war and the worsening and volatile Middle East situation which has lasted to this day have added to the worries and distress of many people and organisations. Consequently, the numbers of people, particularly Americans, who are prepared to travel has fallen and airlines and tourist businesses have been adversely affected. In many EU countries, the introduction of anti-smoking legislation in public places and the workplace has implications for pubs, restaurants and hotels and the tobacco industry. Laws may ban tobacco advertising, increase taxes and require that cigarette packets carry a health warning.

- **Economic.** The business cycle means that the economy can be in stages of contracting, expanding or stability, each of which brings its own unique stressors. Adverse changes in employment, inflation rates, interest rates and foreign exchange rates, fluctuating energy prices or changes in taxation regimes can make or break a company.
- **Social.** Social changes, such as early retirement schemes now operated by many companies, can have stress implications for those involved. Other stress inducing social changes include adolescent pregnancy, child abuse and neglect, crime, domestic violence, drug abuse, inadequate hospital services, environmental pollution, lack of affordable housing, homelessness, poverty, ethnic conflict and racism.
- **Technological.** Industrialisation and rapid technological growth results in the depletion of the world's natural resources and widespread pollution causing global warming. The resultant flooding and increase in temperatures are causing widespread stress and distress throughout the world. Radiation from nuclear technology is a danger to human health, causing leukaemia and other cancers and genetic defects in new-born babies. Man-made chlorine and bromine-based chemicals react with sunlight in the atmosphere to destroy the ozone layer, thus increasing the risk of skin cancer due to ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Pollution of the seas with plastics is causing major damage to our marine life. All of these can be sources of great stress to humans and marine life alike. In addition, the nature of work has become more fluid with rapid developments in globalisation and technological advances. Many employees are expected to learn new skills, perform multiple tasks, meet hard to achieve deadlines, and take responsibility for their own work. This has increased the stress of working in the modern workplace.

The acronym AEON will help you recall the other major external environmental factors that may contribute to stress:

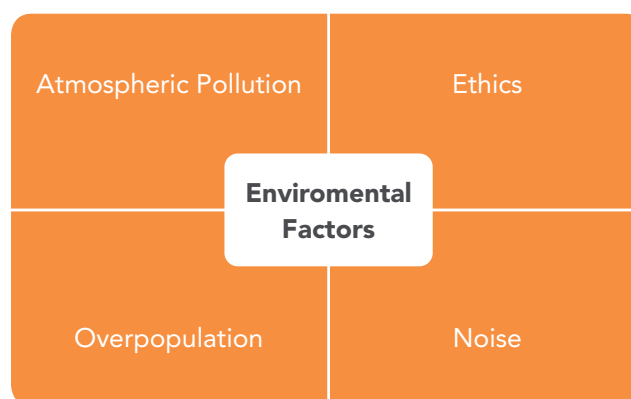
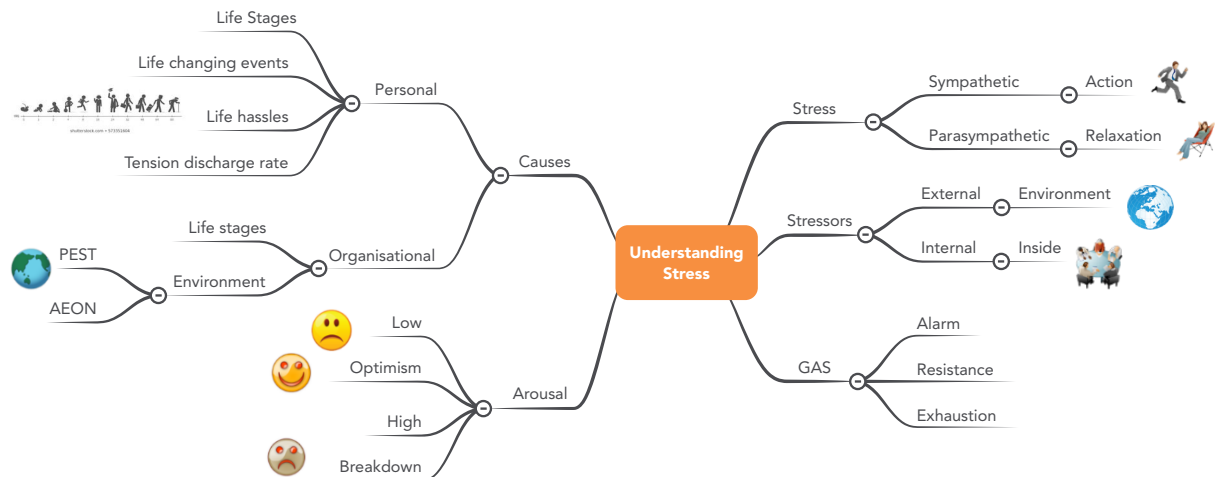


Fig. 1.10 Environmental Factors

- **Atmospheric pollution.** Pesticides are one of the most widespread sources of chemical pollution in the air, water, soil and food and are now linked as a cause of cancer. In the agricultural sector, mad cow disease can be passed through to humans through the food chain when eating steak on the bone. Chemical contaminants can be ingested when eating fish and shellfish, as well as vegetables and fruit. People are worried about the additives and preservatives put in food and about the way food is processed, handled, stored and distributed. Many food manufacturers add sugar and salt to processed food – exposing customers to the risk of diabetes, obesity, stroke and heart disease because of the overconsumption of sugar and salt in their diets.
- **Ethics.** Ethics appears to rank as a low priority in some organisations. Yet breach of ethics can have disastrous consequences for the image, reputation and long-term viability of a company. Moral or ethical dilemmas in the workplace are potentially stressful. Employees are sometimes caught in a situation when there is a clash between their own personal values and those of the company they work for. Challenging the situation by whistle-blowing can be equally stressful, as it may result in adverse consequences for their careers such as victimisation and ostracization or, in a worst-case scenario, in being fired.
- **Overpopulation.** Population growth, increased urbanisation, overcrowding in cities, traffic congestion and pollution cause stress. Housing shortages and expensive accommodation costs in cities forces people to rent or buy houses and apartments many miles outside the city and to commute from long distances, creating further sources of stress.
- **Noise pollution.** Industrial noise is not only stressful to those living in the immediate area but also to employees who may be exposed to noise in their workplace over long periods of time. Vehicle traffic in urban areas is a major source of noise to people living in towns and cities. Generally, high noise levels and congestion create stress, resulting in feelings of annoyance, frustration, intolerance, moodiness and in extreme instances road-rage.

1.7 SUMMARY LEARNING MAP OF UNDERSTANDING STRESS



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2 SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

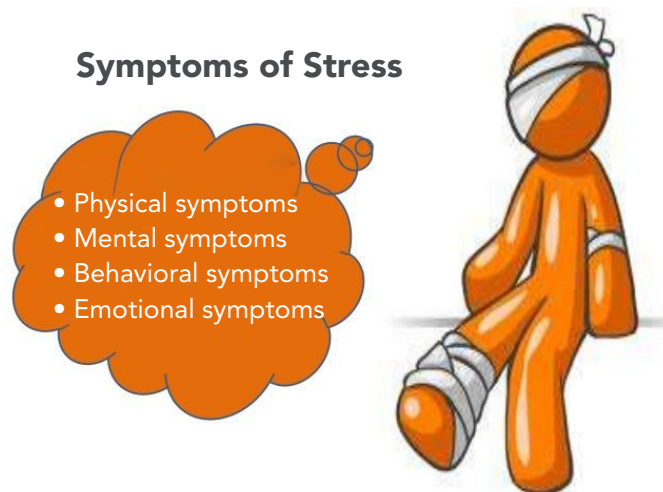
- What are the symptoms of stress?
- How can the symptoms of stress be classified?
- What are the three Ps?
- What are the consequences of stress?

'Ulcers aren't the result of what you eat. You get ulcers from what is eating you.'

– Anonymous

2.1 SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of stress include behavioural, emotional, physical and psychological.



Behavioural	Emotional	Physical	Psychological
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug abuse • Eating disorders • Insomnia • Tardiness • Absenteeism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to relax • Job dissatisfaction • Anxiety • Anger • Depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent colds • Headaches • Ulcers • Cancer • Heart disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boredom • Tension • Worry • Job insecurity • Alienation

Fig. 2.1 Symptoms of Stress

Behavioural symptoms

The behavioural symptoms of stress include:

- **Alcohol, drug abuse, and excessive smoking.** Employees may use these as a coping mechanism to escape from the monotony of a routine, meaningless, boring or stressful job. Some become addicted to alcohol, smoking and drugs – with dire health and social implications. *An employer may provide assistance to those who want to break these habits, since healthy employees are happier and more productive.*
- **Eating disorders.** Some people eat when they are stressed – ‘comfort eating.’ The problem is that this type of eating usually involves the wrong kinds of food such as convenience foods and snacks high in sugar, salt and fat instead of fruit, vegetables, fish, lean meat and nuts. Those over-eating as an escape mechanism may lead to obesity and other health issues. On the other hand, under-eating may be symptomatic of anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder characterised by severe weight loss, in which an altered self-image leads sufferers to believe they are overweight when, in fact, they are dangerously underweight. It mostly affects young women and more rarely young men and is often stress related. *If a company runs its own canteen, it can promote healthy eating options among employees.*
- **Sleep problems, such as insomnia.** The most common cause of disrupted sleep is overtiredness, drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, anxiety, worry and stress. People may ignore the fact that they are under stress during the day, but find that they suffer through disrupted sleep patterns at night. *Avoid drinking caffeine and eating late at night should improve your ability to sleep.*
- **Tardiness.** Continually being late for work is known as tardiness, which may give rise to disciplinary action. Some people seem to be habitually late for meetings and social appointments which is an affront to those with the consideration and manners to turn up on time. *However, remedial action – flexible working arrangements or the provision of social supports – may solve the problem.*
- **Absenteeism.** Absenteeism and poor productivity may be due to drug and alcohol abuse, often a mechanism for coping with stress. Absenteeism is a breach of contract between the employer and the employee. *Absenteeism is a significant cost to organisations and so remedial action is usually worthwhile.*
- **Withdrawal.** Unpredictable mood swings, temper tantrums, discourtesy, aggression or irritability are clear signs of people under stress, which may be caused by work or personal issues. *Policies setting out acceptable standards of corporate behaviour to be adhered to and counselling may be the answer here.*

- **Risk.** Risk taking behaviour includes reckless driving and gambling. Gambling has a self-reinforcing cycle in that, when one gambles and loses, one usually then gambles again in order to recoup the losses. Some people will continue to do so until they are destitute resulting in hardship and stress for themselves and devastation for their dependents.
- **Turnover.** A high turnover of staff may be indicative of stress in the workplace – perhaps caused by poor management styles, alienation or lack of job satisfaction. *Exit interviews may bring to light specific causes of stress that can be addressed and remedied by appropriate policies and changes in the workplace or through training and development initiatives.*
- **Accidents.** A person under stress is an accident waiting to happen. Poor unsafe working methods, inferior equipment, inadequate training, overwork, carelessness, and diminished concentration due to stressful working conditions can cause accidents. Minimum adherence to health and safety legislation should be a basic response. *A company's accidents rate should be benchmarked against similar organisations, abnormalities investigated and remedial action taken.*
- **Exhaustion.** Exhaustion, such as feeling continually moody, tired and irritable, may be due to lack of sleep, overwork or an advance warning of a nervous breakdown. *Doctors, consultants, nurses and others in the health care industry are among the most likely to suffer from fatigue and stress related illnesses.*
- **Suicide or attempted suicide.** People who are made redundant often contemplate suicide and some even go through with it. Their lives are so identified with their jobs, and status derived from their occupation, that they see no purpose in continuing living when they lose their job.

Emotional symptoms

The emotional symptoms of stress include:

- **Inability to relax.** People who are jittery, fidgety, troublesome, confrontational and restless and constantly living on their nerves are obviously suffering from stress. Game rooms, massage, meditation and relaxation exercises are provided by some companies to help employees relax.
- **Job satisfaction.** Job dissatisfaction may be due to a lack of consultation, participation, empowerment or involvement in decisions. Most people like to have an input into how they do their job – they are usually less concerned about strategic issues, unless these have implications for the security of their employment.

- **Anxiety.** Anxiety is a feeling of being unable to cope with anticipated problems, although a certain amount of anxiety is normal – for example, most people experience anxiety at the prospect of giving a presentation, going to the dentist, preparing for a performance appraisal or for a particularly important job interview. However, the over-anxious person is inclined to view every little problem as a potential catastrophe. Common types of anxiety are fear of flying, agoraphobia (fear of open spaces), xenophobia (fear of foreigners), social phobias (fear of social situations that cause embarrassment), and specific phobias, including fear of dogs, cats, snakes, spiders, elevators, or heights. *Systematic desensitisation or gradual acclimatisation, in the care of a professional psychologist, may be used in the treatment of anxiety. In addition, mindfulness training helps you to focus on being in the moment and letting go of worries and distractions.*
- **Depression.** Depression is prolonged feelings of hopelessness and helplessness triggered by pessimism, loss of self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, despair, despondency, inadequacy, inability to cope and tiredness. Most people are unhappy from time to time if things do not go their way, but after a short while, they manage to bounce back again. However, depression is long-term and needs professional help.
- **Anger.** People become angry when they are stressed. Common causes of anger at work include having an idea or proposal summarily rejected, being generally ignored or not listened to, treated with discourtesy and disrespect, or receiving an unwarranted reprimand from the boss. Principled disagreements may also be a source of anger especially between people who do not get along.
- **Frustration.** Frustration occurs when individuals wish to pursue a certain course of action but are prevented from doing so. Work-related frustration is behind much misbehaviour such as uncooperativeness, aggression, hostility, and sabotage. Low tolerance for frustration is a major cause of stress and arises from beliefs that life is not fair and should not be hard. In contrast, high tolerance for frustration means one accepts the reality of frustration as a natural aspect of living and thus keep it in perspective. One has to learn to take the rough with the smooth in life.
- **Resentment.** Seeing people being promoted ahead of oneself, or being selected for high exposure project work, are common sources of resentment and jealousy especially if one considers these people less qualified, experienced, or deserving. Playing resentments over and over in one's head is not good for your mental state. Over the long-term resentment can be an unhealthy response to injustice and may lead to unhappiness, continual irritability, excessive anxiety and depression. *If you feel a wrong has been done against you forgive the person and move on.*

- **Learned helplessness.** This is a type of self-inflicted brainwashing, where a person's initiative is completely sapped because of circumstances over which they feel they have no control. They fail to exert control because of previous failures reinforcing the belief that they will fail again. They simply give up and accept their fate and feel completely helpless to change the situation. This mindset can lead people to overlook opportunities for relief or change. Such people may experience symptoms of depression and lack motivation to look after their health. *You should substitute learned optimism for learned helplessness.*

Physical symptoms

The physical symptoms of stress include:

- **Frequent colds.** It is well-known that people under stress get colds more frequently than those less stressed. Stress weakens the immune system, leaving a person's defences weak, exposed and vulnerable.
- **Headaches.** Headaches are sometimes caused by tension in the face, neck and forehead and are one of the most common symptoms of stress. They are often caused by poor ventilation and workplace noise and pressures. Massage may relieve tension in the neck and face.
- **Heart disease.** Research shows that work stress can double the risk of dying from heart disease. Investigators found that people who reported persistent stress due to high work demands, low job security, or low career opportunities had the same risk for fatal heart attacks as people who smoked and did not exercise. High job stress was also associated with being overweight and having high cholesterol. Stress is known to deposit cholesterol in the arteries. It is especially life-threatening for a person to have high cholesterol and high blood pressure at the same time. Manual workers are more likely to suffer heart attacks because of the high pressure experienced through overtime, night shifts and hard physical work for low rewards.
- **Alopecia.** This is where the hair falls out in large lumps and the cause may be due in some cases to various forms of stress – for example, the stress of surgery, shocks to the system, prolong illness, intense worry or childbirth.
- **Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).** It is not known what causes IBS but sustained chronic stress has been known to trigger the condition. Certainly, stress seems to aggravate the condition. Most people experience worse or more frequent symptoms of stress during periods of increased anxiety. However, while stress may aggravate symptoms it doesn't cause them. *Some people can control their symptoms by managing diet, lifestyle and counselling.*

Physical responses such as ulcers and headaches may presage more serious health problems in the future. But bear in mind that these problems can be caused by factors other than stress.

Psychological symptoms

Some doctors maintain that 80 per cent of ailments are psychosomatic, in which a physical illness such as ulcers, asthma or cancer is caused, or contributed to, by a psychological process such as stress. The mind affects the body and the body affects the mind. However, these illnesses are also caused by factors other than stress. The psychological symptoms of stress include:

- **Boredom.** Boredom may be due to routine, meaningless or repetitive work – for example, on assembly lines or in call centres – with mental fatigue and loss of concentration as a consequence. Having too little work to do, or doing work below one's ability, education or qualifications, may also result in boredom.
- **Alienation.** People who work in large bureaucratic organisations often experience feelings of meaninglessness, powerlessness, self-estrangement and isolation. In general, alienated employees have feelings of low self-esteem and self-worth, caused by a lack of value, appreciation and respect shown by the organisation and its managers.
- **Tension.** Being promoted into an awkward situation over someone else's head is a common source of tension for the person involved. Some managers feel perpetually tensed and may find it difficult 'to switch off' after work. Although it is natural to feel a bit tensed before an important interview, meeting or before making an important presentation – here the tension sharpens alertness and improves performance – but constant tension is a precursor to stress.
- **Worry.** People worry about anything and everything – health, jobs, children, financial situation, what other people may think, and promotion prospects. (One humourist maintains that worry kills more people than work because more people worry than work!) Although most worries never materialise, and so many people worry about things that will never happen, worry is an all-consuming passion that ultimately leads to stress.
- **Job insecurity.** Previous recessions in the EU and USA have resulted in widespread redundancies and feelings of insecurity, leading to stress for many. This experience makes people worry about the possibility of a future recession and its consequences. Economic cycles are inevitable and there is nothing we can do but be prudent and save while times are good so that we will have sufficient to tide us over when times are bad.
- **Cognitive dissonance.** Where two simultaneously-held attitudes or beliefs are inconsistent, or where there is a conflict between belief and behaviour, cognitive dissonance (explaining something away) results, causing tension. Conflicting beliefs lead to disharmony, which we all try to avoid. People who smoke know it is bad for their health but nevertheless will invent some excuse to justify the practice and ignore the compelling medical case for not smoking.

2.2 THE THREE PS

The three Ps are behaviours that can contribute to stress, namely:

- Procrastination.
- Perfectionism.
- Presenteeism.

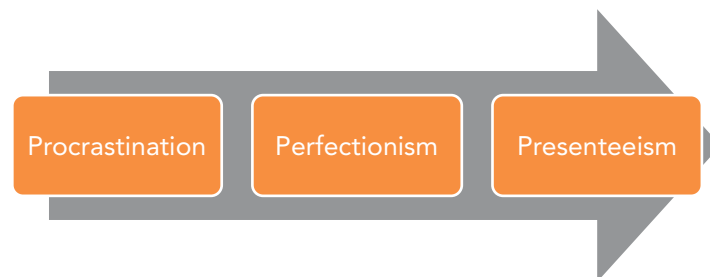


Fig. 2.2 The Three Ps

Procrastination

Procrastination has been defined as putting off until tomorrow what you should do today, which means that something you have failed to do is eventually going to become very urgent. It is one of the behaviours used by people who are under pressure. This displacement behaviour temporarily decreases the stress level. However, as the deadline approaches feelings of anxiety, worry, panic and stress are experienced at even higher levels. People are more prone to procrastinate if they don't believe in their own efficacy. In other words, they don't trust their own abilities and competence to get the job done. The more accomplishments you achieve inside and outside work the greater your ability to get things done when you put your mind to it.

When making decisions and confronted with various options none of which is clear-cut, managers may postpone the decision as long as possible. This indecision is a major source of stress. Nature abhors a vacuum – to remain calm, one must resolve outstanding issues and problems, make unpopular decisions where necessary, complete unfinished work, and deal with unresolved conflicts. *Training in planning, decision-making, problem solving, and time management skills should be given to those who suffer from procrastination.*

Perfectionism

Perfectionism is a type of obsessive-compulsive disorder. Perfectionism is a common source of avoidable stress. Don't set yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable achievable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be satisfied with 'good enough.' All-or-nothing thinking forms the basis of perfectionism. Although this attitude is good in the short-term for the company, because it has a loyal – if over-zealous – employee, it is bad for the health of the employee and their family life.

Many managers are perfectionists, which means that they think every job should be done to the highest possible standards and they have an intense commitment and interest in their work. Perfectionists also find it very hard to delegate, as they believe that nobody else can do the work as good or effectively as them. Failure to delegate responsibly adds to the stress. In the long-term, the havoc and stress caused by the perfectionist on themselves and others is bad for morale and productivity. *Perfectionists should be made aware that everybody makes mistakes and that making mistakes presents learning opportunities.*

Presenteeism

This is the opposite of absenteeism and refers to staff who just will not go home. They are physically, but not mentally, present. They may fear their jobs are under threat due to downsizing, delayering or redundancy and so come to work earlier and stay at work later, even when there is nothing to do, because they fear for their jobs. Employees may also turn up for work, even though they are too sick to be productive. Being visible is the name of the game to protect one's job and maintain one's place in the hierarchy, as well as setting yourself up for promotion in the future.

Many organisations take the erroneous view that employees must demonstrate their commitment by working long hours. The 'long hours' culture starts at the top where directors and senior managers work long hours themselves and sometimes expect others to do likewise. It is endemic in IT, corporate finance, management consultancy and accountancy, where jobs are often well-paid but the burnout rate is also high. The result of presenteeism is high levels of stress, anxiety, depression and poor performance. Home and family life also suffer. *Some companies have policies encouraging employees to lead balanced life-styles.*

2.3 THE CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

The consequences of stress can be both/either personal or organisational.

Personal

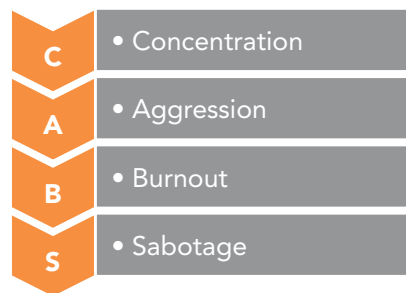


Fig. 2.3 Personal consequences of stress

The acronym **CABS** will recall the personal consequences of stress:

- **Concentration.** Poor concentration, memory, indecisiveness and apathy are consequences of stress and result in poor decisions or disastrous mistakes. The key rule of concentration enhancement is to focus on A and whenever your mind wanders off to topic B, C, D, E, F, bring it back to A again.
- **Aggression.** Road rage, air rage, office rage and supermarket rage, thought to be a consequence of living in overcrowded urban situations and driving in congested traffic conditions, has even resulted in extreme violence and murder. A combination of fear of flying and alcohol may trigger off air rage, leading to aggressive behaviour and diversion of flight. Anger can be useful if it is used to right a wrong, rather than using it to harm others. For example, to get a deserved wage increase, fight discrimination, or to defend human rights.
- **Burnout.** Burnout is the ultimate consequence of stress, when people are completely drained and unable to cope with the pressures of work and life. The topic of burnout is dealt with more thoroughly in chapter 3.
- **Sabotage.** This is where employees intentionally damage an organisation's property, reputation, product or service in retaliation for some perceived grievance.

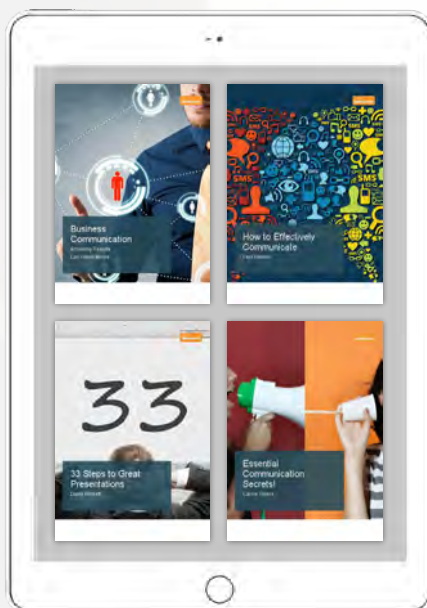
Organisational

The organisational consequences of stress include:

- High recruitment and training costs.
- Workmen's compensation.
- Health and safety issues.
- Legal costs for stress litigation cases taken against the company.
- Industrial relations problems.
- A high incidence of mistakes.
- Poor customer relations resulting in lost business.
- Low productivity and job satisfaction.

Helping yourself to counteract the consequences of stress

- Set realistic goals and break large tasks into more manageable ones.
- Try to socialise with other people and have a confidant. Go for a coffee with a friend. Avoid people who cause stress in your life.



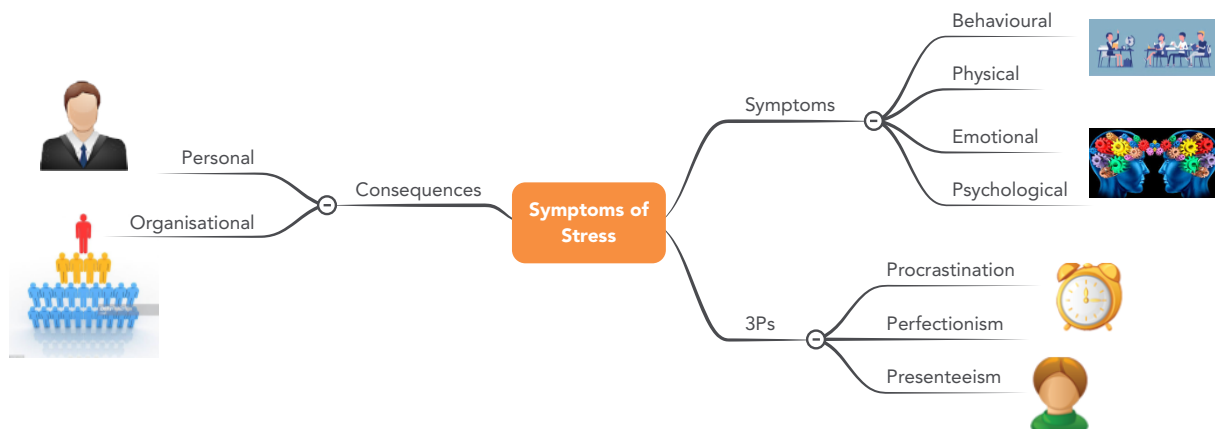
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- Participate in recreational activities that you know from experience will make you feel more relaxed. All work and no play are a recipe for burnout. Find the right balance between work, recreation and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits such as reading, daily responsibilities and downtime.
- Get out into the fresh air and go for a brisk walk or work out at a health club. Stroll around the block during your lunch break or get off the bus a few stops earlier to improve your level of fitness. Studies show that walking increases energy levels by 20 per cent and reduces fatigue by 65 per cent. Walking also helps creativity. Exercise releases endorphins making you feel good and also distracts you from your daily worries. The fresh air promotes the growth of new brain cells and is good for your brain and will improve your concentration.
- Have the expectation that your mood will improve gradually. We tend to become what we expect.
- Postpone important decisions until you are feeling relatively stress-free.
- Practice positive thinking by immediately replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. Forgive people who make genuine mistakes as we are all prone to error. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and getting on with your life.
- Don't be reluctant to let your family and friends help you.
- Taking on more work than you can handle is a sure recipe for stress; so learn how to say 'No' in appropriate situations.
- Finally, listen to recordings on self-help stress busting topics such as deep breathing, progressive relaxation, meditation, visualisation and so on. These will activate the body's relaxation response, a state of restfulness that is the opposite of the fight or flight stress response. When breathing, when you inhale tell yourself that you are breathing in calmness and peace. When exhaling tell yourself that you are breathing out stress and tension.

2.4 SUMMARY LEARNING MAP OF THE SYMPTOMS OF STRESS



3 TYPES OF STRESS

- What are the main types of stress?
- What is the difference between distress and eustress?
- What is burnout?
- What is post-traumatic stress disorder?
- How does stress differ between countries?
- How does stress differ between jobs and people?

'If you feel that you are indispensable, put your finger in a glass of water, withdraw it, and note the hole you have left.

– Anonymous

3.1 TYPES

There are many types of stress, which are considered below.

Good and bad stress

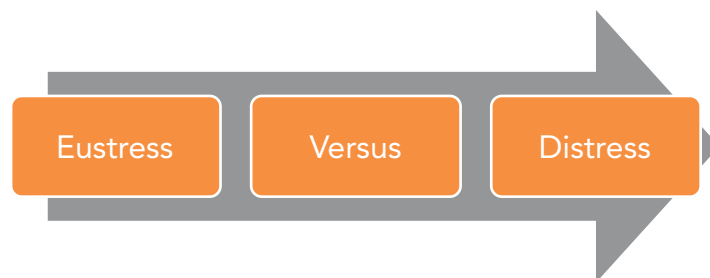


Fig. 3.1 Eustress V Distress

Eustress is good stress and makes life enjoyable, pleasurable and interesting. You feel confident and happy, in control and able to handle the challenges and demands of life. A sense of responsibility and challenge enhances self-esteem, mental sharpness, physical strength, productivity and morale. A certain amount of stress is good for people, as it motivates a person to achieve targets, grow professionally and personally, learn new skills, apply more effort and overcome obstacles.

The total elimination of stress is impossible and, in any event, would greatly diminish the excitement and quality of one's life. People working on high quality assignments and to strict deadlines can often achieve remarkable results. Without the stress and challenge of deadlines, they would be unable to finish projects on time.

Distress is bad stress, and is often viewed as a disease needing treatment. Distress may be due to the extra pressure caused by the excessive and unrelenting demands on one's time or personal resources. Some of the demands that can lead to distress include:

- Having too much to do.
- Promotion beyond one's level of competence.
- Being required to do a task for which one is inadequately trained.
- Losing one's job.
- Having insufficient income to make ends meet.
- Being made homeless.

In the workplace, interpersonal conflicts and personality clashes may be a major source of stress. Having too little to do, which is frequently the case when people retire, may also cause distress.

External and internal stress

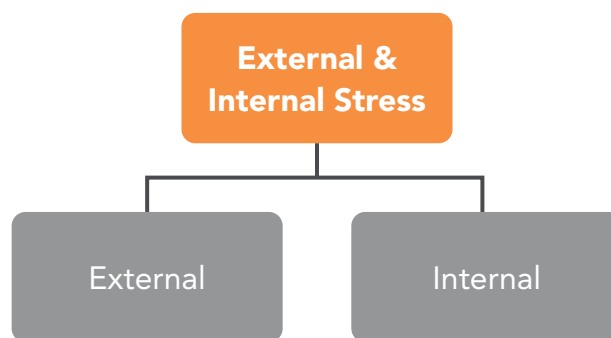


Fig. 3.2 External & Internal Stress

Stress can also be categorised as external or internal. External stressors come from outside us. External stressors include ourselves or relatives getting sick or dying, being made redundant, or being on the receiving end of somebody's anger, discourtesy, or negative sarcastic comments. It can also include our physical environment and poor working conditions. This might be unsuitable ergonomics, too much noise, temperature and lighting issues, inadequate heating or ventilation, and privacy.

On the other hand, internal stress such as anxiety and resentment come from within and is self-generated. This might include attitudes, beliefs, values, health and fitness levels and emotional well-being. Since people create the majority of their own upsets and, thus cause much of their own stress, it means that stress is, to a large extent, within their own control. Managing stress can include making changes in the external factors that affect you and controlling the internal factors which may come your way. Well-known ways of handling internal stress include attending anger management courses, healthy nutrition, exercising, deep breathing, and practising daily relaxation techniques.

Burnout and rust out

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, caused by prolonged involvement in work that is too intellectually and emotionally demanding. Burnout is best described as the gradual erosion of the person. The converse is rust-out, caused by too little stress. According to the Yerkes Dodson Law, too little pressure is just as bad as too much pressure. The results of burnout may be feelings of fatigue, dissatisfaction, frustration, panic, helplessness, hopelessness, depersonalisation, loss of confidence, low self-esteem, reduced personal accomplishment and a negative cynical attitude towards customers.

Depersonalisation occurs when employees start treating customers, clients or other employees as objects rather than human beings having unique personalities and needs. Reduced personal accomplishment is a feeling that one's achievements are of little consequence and that one's career is meaningless. For example, a person may complain of being emotionally drained, show a lack of humour, and skip rest breaks.

Burnout is most closely associated with the so-called helping professions who, on a day-to-day basis, interact extensively with others. These include nursing, dentists and the medical profession, teaching, social work, human resource management, public relations, salespeople, police officers, customer service departments, and the hospitality industry. In general, the medical profession has been shown to exhibit a relatively higher level of depression than other professions. Burnout may result in substantial costs for an organisation due to high staff turnover, contagion, absenteeism, and reduced productivity. Although mostly work-related the effects of burnout often have a negative impact on people's personal relationships and well-being.

The stages of burnout in a clockwise direction are:

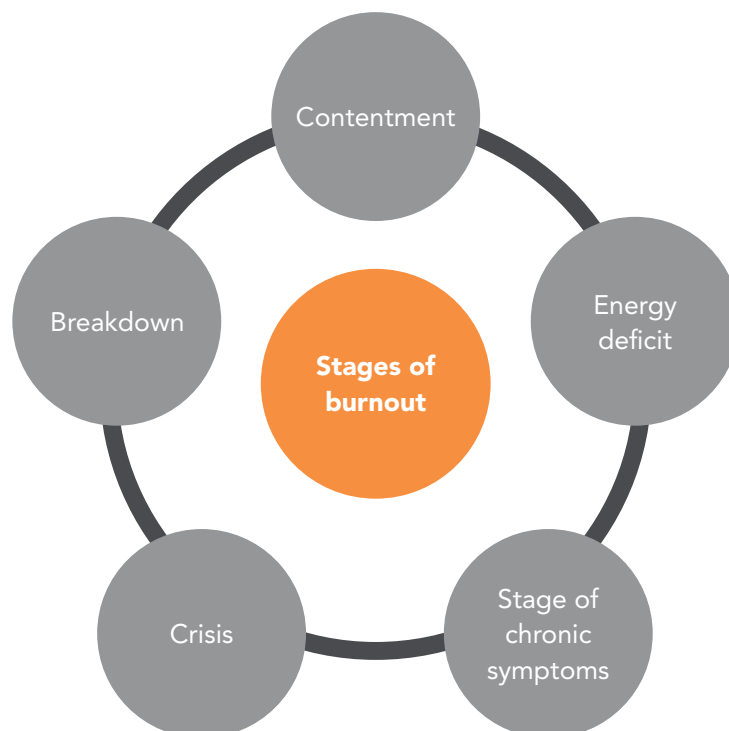


Fig. 3.3 Stages of burnout

- **Contentment.** This is the early stage where people are happy with the job that they are doing. However, they keep compulsively putting in more and more time and effort into the job without taking sufficient rest and recreation. As a result, they quickly arrive at the second stage.
- **Energy deficit.** The person begins to feel tired all the time and cannot sleep soundly and restfully at night. Lack of restful sleep further erodes the energy bank and sets up a vicious cycle. They become cynical and complain that they have not as much energy as before.
- **Stage of chronic symptoms.** Feeling tired and exhausted characterises this stage. A once calm collected person is now continually on edge and ready to explode in an aggressive manner.

- **Crisis.** The person becomes obsessed with the job. They become so preoccupied with the job that they can think of, and talk about, nothing else. They work long hours, bring work home at weekends, and are reluctant to go on holidays.
- **Breakdown.** The person may feel overwhelmed by all and may drown themselves in alcohol and drugs. Others may have a mental or physical breakdown, such as severe depression, listlessness or a heart attack.

Manages should recognise the stages of burnout in themselves, and in their staff, so that preventative action can be taken.

Post-traumatic stress disorder

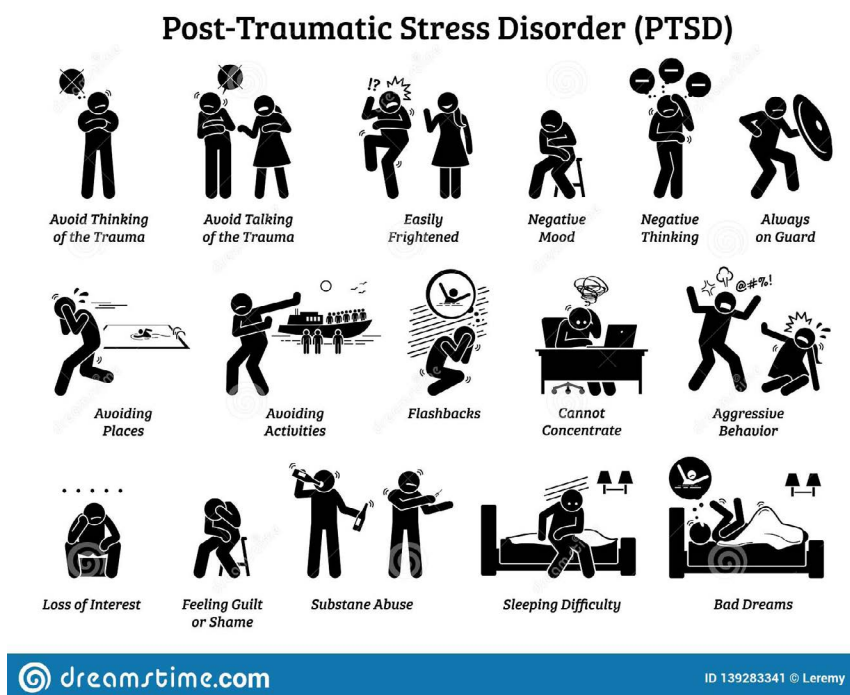


Fig. 3.4 PTSD symptoms

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been defined as specific psychological symptoms that occur after a person experiences a severe and traumatic event. Symptoms, which persist for at least one month, include a state of increased arousal, avoidance or emotional numbness, and constant flashbacks of the traumatic event. Originally applied to American veterans of the Vietnam War, the term is sometimes regarded as a modern synonym for shell-shock or battle-fatigue which was a feature of the second world war. In the early part of the 20th century, the condition of soldiers in war situations who found themselves unable to cope because of incessant bombing, killing, depersonalisation, lack of respect for human life, and autocratic leadership style, was little understood and many were treated insensitively as cowards. Some were even executed.

In everyday life, those who have suffered serious accidents, witnessed traumatic events, experienced child physical or sexual abuse may suffer PTSD. In some jobs, such as the police and ambulance service, where people can be constantly exposed to natural disasters, terrorist attacks, air and road accidents, murders and assaults, PTSD may be a natural part of the job. Research indicates that 25 per cent of those who experience PTSD suffer long-term psychological effects. In addition, it has been found that physical changes occur in the brain as a result of PTSD. The hippocampus, a structure that lies deep in the brain and is linked with memory, is smaller in PTSD victims. *Counselling services should be provided as a matter of course for those suffering from PTSD.*

Anticipatory stress

Thinking about a stressful situation is enough to trigger stress for some people. The human imagination is inclined to run riot, if not reined in, controlled and calmed down. Just think about the last time you were asked to make a presentation. What thoughts and pictures went through your mind? Public ridicule is a common image, with people laughing and jeering at you, getting bored or walking out. Other people worry about the possibility of being asked difficult questions that they may be unable to answer. Furthermore, some people are afraid that they will forget what they have to say and dry up completely suffering embarrassment and shame. These potentially difficult situations should be perceived as challenges to be overcome and opportunities for self-development rather than threats.

Just as one can anticipate stress, one can also use appropriate strategies such as planning, preparation, and goal-setting to deal with likely scenarios. These strategies can be rehearsed in one's mind and positive responses and outcomes imagined. Picture the audience being receptive and welcoming, anticipate the warm friendly reception to the presentation, hear the loud enthusiastic applause and glow with a feeling of triumph, pride, admiration and satisfaction – and thus remove anticipatory stress.

Travel stress

People who travel abroad a lot on business may experience jet lag caused by the disruption of the 24-hour circadian cycle of night and day. This is a recognised stressor, affecting the application of skills, temperament and the exercise of managerial judgement. Travellers crossing time zones rapidly experience problems similar to those of shift workers such as disturbed sleep and increased fatigue. In addition, marriages and families may suffer if managers spend a lot of their time away from home on business. Airlines recognise jet lag as a source of stress for staff.

People who commute to work from suburbia often experience delays due to traffic congestion, adverse weather conditions, breakdowns and road works. In addition, to the time and expense of commuting, commuters face the daily hassle of traffic jams, accidents, rude and aggressive drivers and competition for scarce parking spaces. Commuting time can add 30 per cent or more to a person's working week. *This type of stress can often be avoided by planning journeys or working flexible hours to avoid peak times.*

A displacement strategy, especially useful for those studying part-time, when stuck in traffic or commuting by train, is to listen to educational or self-development discs instead of fuming with frustration. In the case of car travel, managers with good time management skills are less prone to accidents, because they are more likely to plan and allow extra time for their journeys. They are thus less likely to get stressed or indulge in dangerous driving to get to their destinations on time.

Seasonal affective disorder

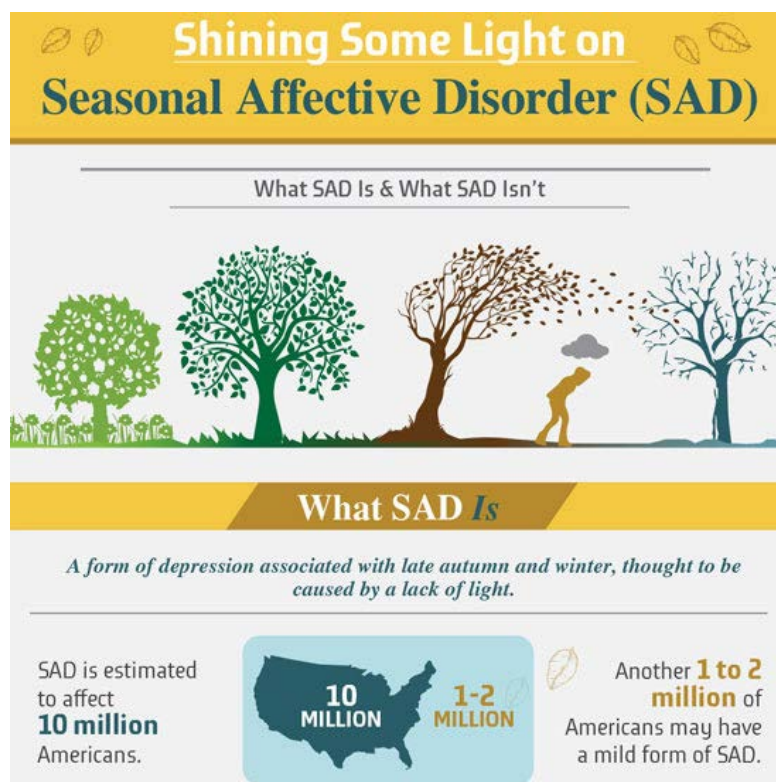


Fig. 3.5 Seasonal Affective Disorder

SAD is a form of depression, in which moods change with the seasons. SAD is more prevalent the further you are away from the equator. Sufferers tend to feel depressed in winter and feel better in spring. Symptoms of SAD include a lack of motivation, changes in sleep patterns, increased irritability and sadness. More people commit suicide in December, when the days are shortest and the nights are longest and darkest, than in any other month of the year.

Bright sunny days cheer people up, while dark cloudy days have the opposite effect. Lack of sufficient sunlight and vitamin D creates an imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain. Phototherapy or light therapy involving the exposure to strong artificial light tubes that mimic daylight is also said to be effective. This stimulates the brain to produce serotonin – an anti-depressant neurotransmitter – and melatonin, a hormone that regulates our sleep pattern.

SAD affects more women than men and is less common among children, adolescents and the elderly. It is most common in those aged between 20 and 30 years. Exposure to bright light for two to four hours a day can relieve depression in some people. *So, do yourself a favour and get out in the daylight for a few hours each day. The exercise and fresh air will also stimulate your brain, act as an antidote to stress, improve your concentration and help you to sleep better at night.*

3.2 CULTURAL



Fig. 3.5 Cultural stress

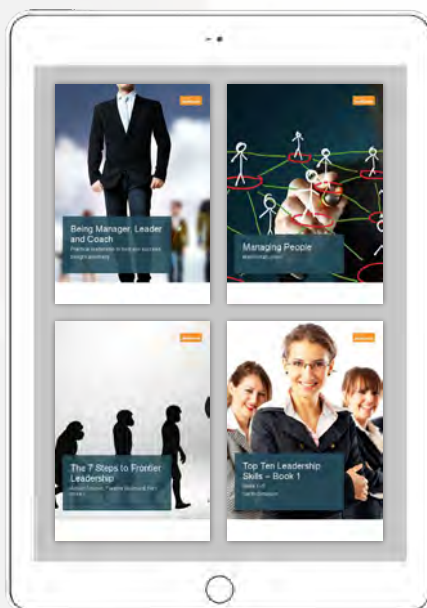
Western organisations should be aware of cultural differences in work values, beliefs, attitudes, dress code and religion, together with potential communication problems caused by people not being proficient in English. Managers may need training to raise their awareness of the issues involved. Employees from minority ethnic groups may be prone to additional sources of stress caused by racism, religious tensions, stereotyping, discrimination and language difficulties.

People in different countries have different attitudes towards work. Although the British work the longest hours in the EU, generally Westerners in the northern hemisphere have adopted the Protestant work ethic, which takes the view that work is inherently good and salvation in the next life can be earned by hard diligent work in this life. Germans are renowned for working hard and their efficiency whilst the southern countries in Europe have a more benign approach to work with their siesta time during the day. Similarly, the Japanese have a reputation for working long hours. The stress induced by overwork reaches such intense levels that it results in sudden death, a syndrome known as *karoshi*.

Other differences are that Western cultures focus more on the individual and competition, while Eastern cultures focus more on the group and collaboration. Western ideas of equality and democracy do not translate easily into other cultures. For example, in some Muslim cultures autocratic leadership is the norm and it is not acceptable for men to report to women and women often have not the same freedoms as men. The Chinese tradition of secrecy about business affairs, coupled with politeness and avoidance of open argument, is very different from the American style of transparency, brashness and confrontation. One culture may interpret body language differently from another, causing all kinds of misunderstandings.

3.3 DIFFERENT JOBS

Some jobs are inherently more stressful than others. It is well known that air traffic controllers, police officers and nurses have particularly stressful jobs. At the other extreme, bookkeepers experience little stress in their jobs, although accountants and financial controllers experience high stress levels as tax and year-end deadlines approach. Generally, jobs dealing with people are more stressful than jobs dealing with things such as stock, buildings or equipment. People are temperamental and unpredictable. Similarly, jobs with a high level of responsibility are more stressful than jobs with little or no levels of responsibility.



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In the final analysis, a person's perception of their role will determine whether they experience stress or not. Different individuals will react differently to the same work situation, one finding it enjoyable, challenging and rewarding, another finding it quite demanding and stressful. Basically, in economies there are two types of jobs – private sector and public sector.

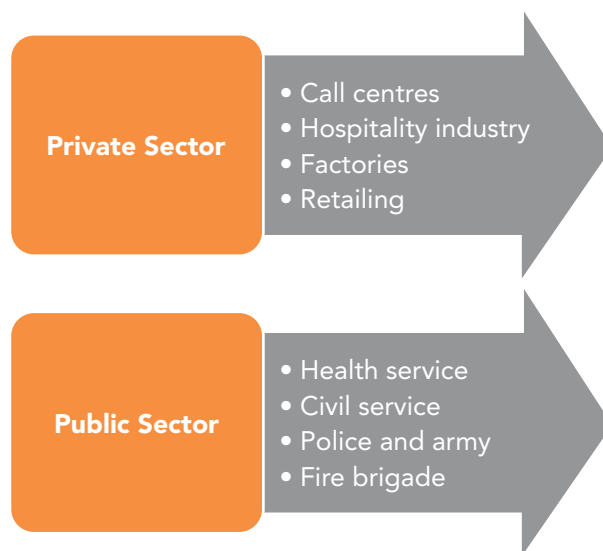


Fig. 3.6 Private & Public Sector jobs

Private sector

Some of the best-known jobs in the private sector include:

- **Call centres.** These seem to be the modern equivalent of sweatshops, where the principles of scientific management such as standardisation, simplification and specialisation have been applied to jobs to demand greater efficiency with maximum management control and minimum employee discretion. Criteria such as average call-handling time, and number of calls taken in a specified period, are used to measure performance. Close strict supervision, time pressures, constant performance monitoring, and the associated lack of personal control and trust, make these potentially stressful jobs. Some UK call centres, in a quest for greater cost efficiency, have relocated to low-cost economies, like India. The resulting job insecurity within the industry has further added to the stress of call centre employees. Call centres tend to have a high rate of staff turnover, with boredom and lack of job satisfaction the usual reason for leaving.
- **Hospitality industry.** People in the hospitality industry often work long hours and are sometimes poorly paid. Many in the industry depend on gratuities or tips to top up their earnings. There is a high rate of problem-solving interaction

with customers, although lack of training in customer contact skills often adds to the stress and difficulties of the job. Their work has seasonal variations and peaks and troughs on a daily basis. Kitchen staff have no contact with customers and so a vital cue for direct feedback on the quality of meals served and job satisfaction is missing. Managerial styles tend to be autocratic which doesn't help industrial relations problems.

- **Factories.** Work on an assembly line is routine, boring and monotonous. There is poor person–environment fit and low participation and use of abilities. Noise and vibration are often a constant irritant. Employees are likely to experience rust-out than burnout. Feelings of alienation, meaningless, self-estrangement and isolation are common. Employees on an assembly line find it difficult to communicate and interact on a friendly basis with each other and therefore feel socially isolated.
- **Retailing.** Face to face contact with difficult customers can be demanding and stressful. The customers themselves may be suffering from stress and endeavouring to offload their feelings. For example, in the airline industry, one may be dealing with an irate customer whose luggage has been mislaid causing great inconvenience. In a shop one may be dealing with a customer returning defective goods or complaining about poor service. *Such situations can be resolved successfully by fair policies, empathy, diplomacy, training and good customer contact skills.*

Public sector

Some of the best-known jobs in the public sector include:

- **Health Service.** Professions such as emergency medical technicians, general practitioners, consultants, junior hospital doctors, and nurses are inherently stressful. Nursing terminally ill patients, those in considerable pain such as cancer patients, and those in intensive care units can be very stressful. Research shows that nurses are particularly prone to stress-related illnesses. They are subject to burnout – high workloads, budgetary constraints, bureaucratic controls, and staff shortages are identified as major sources of mental stress. Similarly, junior doctors were reported to suffer from psychological distress such as anxiety, emotional exhaustion, clinical depression and even suicide, due to long hours and heavy workloads. It is well-known that medical doctors have the highest suicide, drug addiction, and divorce rate of any profession. Reports show that social workers, by the nature of their work, face harrowing jobs in local government. They have seen many years of budgetary cut after cut; all have

caseloads that are sky-high; many are dealing with extremely difficult situations such as poverty and drug addiction without adequate training, supervision and support. Limited resources, with a heavy and difficult caseload, make this a most stressful job.

- **Civil Service.** Stress is prevalent in the Civil Service. Six main reasons are often cited: autocratic management, bureaucracy, understaffing, change, tight budgets, and a lack of training. Civil Service departments are trying to move away from a bureaucratic management style and adopt a more commercial and cost-conscious approach to business. In the process, staff find themselves under constant pressure, as modern management techniques are introduced and implemented.
- **Police and army.** Certain stressors are expected to be associated with police, army and prison-work. For example, dangerous and life-threatening assignments can be a source of considerable fear and distress. Police officers are exposed to many stresses in the line of duty including violent incidents like shooting, sexual assault, hostage crises and the murder of children. Other stressors may include tension, mental fatigue, abuse, hostility and violence from some segments of the public, interspersed with periods of extreme monotony and inactivity. They tend to come into contact with the worst of humanity which may make them cynical. In addition, the bureaucracy and politics in which the police, army and prison staff work may cause stress. Lack of management support, autocratic leadership styles, poor promotion prospects, inadequate training and equipment, excessive paperwork, and frustration with the criminal justice system including court leniency, are some of the reasons police and prison officers experience stress. There is a high incidence of domestic violence, alcoholism, substance abuse, and other stress induced problems among police and prison officers.
- **Fire brigade.** This is a dangerous and inherently stressful job. Fire maims and kills and the fire brigade is in the front-line, putting their lives and personal safety at risk. Like the police force, they are often subject to abuse, hostility and violence from some segments of the public who seem to have lost respect for the services they perform. On the other hand, when they do a good job saving lives their work is applauded and admired.
- **Air traffic controllers.** Air traffic controllers (ATCs) experience considerable stress, especially during busy periods. They have a very demanding job with the responsibility for the lives of others, and need to concentrate continuously on their task, since a mistake or lapse of concentration may have catastrophic consequences in terms of loss of human life. The job covers a complex set of tasks with high levels of knowledge and expertise. ATCs must apply precise and effective rules and procedures quickly and appropriately applied to differing circumstances. Stress levels can be compounded by shift work, time constraints, adapting operational procedures to specific situations, peaks of traffic and abnormal/emergency situations. Peptic ulcers, hypertension and heart disease are particularly common among ATCs.

- **Teachers.** Teaching is now considered one of the most stressful of occupations. Teachers are reaping some of the side-effects of the breakdown in discipline in society in general. Corporate punishment has been outlawed, so that teachers must rely solely on guile, diplomacy and persuasions to deal with ill-disciplined, unmannerly and unruly pupils. In addition, workload, lack of student interest, overcrowded classrooms, poor resourcing of buildings and equipment, lack of career progression, feelings of isolation, diminished perception of comparative status within society, and public criticism of teachers and their work has all added to the stress involved in teaching. Parents are now better educated and demand high standards from the teachers of their children. Many teachers are voting with their feet and moving out of the profession. Of those who remain, there is a high rate of absenteeism, dissatisfaction, and early retirement due to ill health.

The three E's (engagement, excellence and ethics) according to Howard Gardner which make work more rewarding than stressful are:

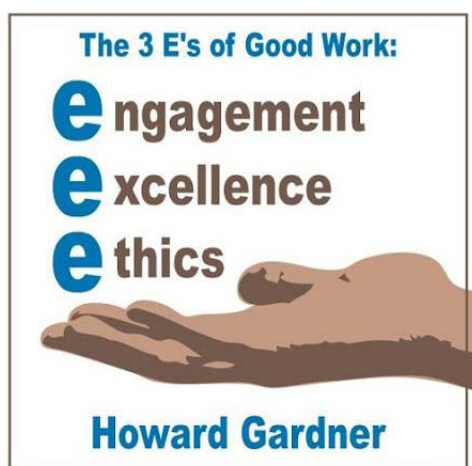


Fig. 3.7 The 3E's of Good Work by Howard Gardner

These can be elaborated as follows:

1. **Engagement.** The work is enjoyable, interesting, absorbing, meaningful, and personally engaging. You believe in teamwork and working collaboratively with others. Appropriate challenges combined with adequate resources create high engagement. Learning opportunities create flow experiences. Creating high quality relationships in the workplace is a great way of building up individual and group resilience to stress.
2. **Excellence.** The work is of a high standard. You are totally committed to be good at what you do and to develop your competence, excellence and expertise to the best of your ability. You strive to be an example and role model to others.

3. **Ethics.** The work has an inherent value to mankind and the betterment of society. You believe in truth and honesty and you live out this ideal through example. You want to do good in the world and to act as a strong role model or guidance mentor for others. You refuse to cut corners and compromise on ethical principles when navigating through ethical issues.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman says the key to keeping your employees happy and stress free is the 'flow.' He maintains in his book 'The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights,' (2013) that there are three brain states:

1. **Disengagement.** This is where employees are weakly motivated, distracted, disinterested, and inattentive to their work. This attitude is prevalent in the manufacturing sector where jobs tend to be repetitive and boring and hence workers are not motivated, inspired or engaged in their work. They just do enough to keep their jobs. On the other hand, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness are at the heart of employee engagement. Autonomy can be met by empowering employees. Competence can be reinforced through feedback, praise, challenging work and opportunities to train and develop. Delayed feedback can create ambiguity and stress because we do not know how well we are doing. Relatedness is achieved by making employees feel part of a community with a common interest.
2. **Frazzle.** This state of mind prevents employees from giving their best because they are upset about something. They may have interpersonal relationship problems with their managers, co-workers or just have too much work to do in too little time. Consequently, they are too stressed and preoccupied to do anything other than their immediate work.
3. **Flow.** This is where we channel positive emotions in an energised pursuit of the task at hand. We are in the moment, lose track of time, are focused, undistracted and we feel inspired, happy, and love what we are doing. We are engaged in meaningful work that we can identify with and achieve our personal best. It is a time of maximum learning and cognitive efficiency. On the other hand, being stressed and mentally distracted wastes energy and cognitive efficiency. Managers can create flow situations by giving employees clear goals, stretch assignments and challenging work in line with their aspirations. This is a great way to motivate employees and help them improve. Every company wants their employees to be enthusiastic, committed and involved in their work.

The following diagram illustrates the 'Flow' concept. HPA stands for hypothalamic pituitary adrenal which is our central stress response system. The top of the curve is where the optimal zone or flow occurs. The left low point of the curve is where you are bored and disengaged while the right low point of the curve is where you are stressed and frazzled.

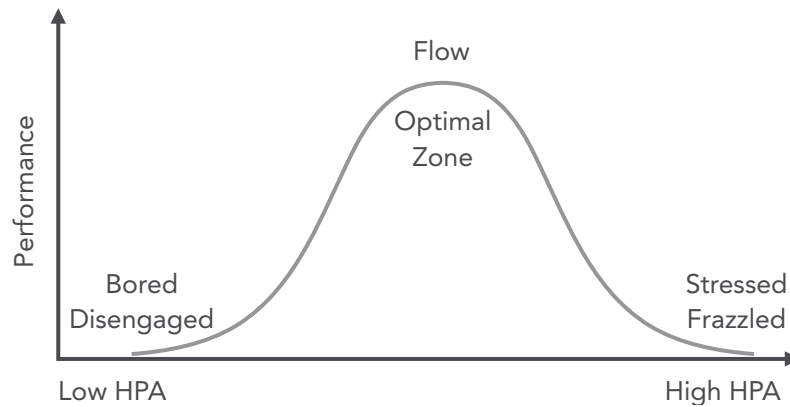


Fig. 3.8 Flow by Daniel Goleman

Matching challenges to abilities

Csikszentmihalyi, who has done much research on flow, maintains that we need to match our strengths with the capabilities we need to do the job. In flow our consciousness becomes one with the activity. When our abilities match the challenges we face, we perform at our best. When they exceed the challenges we face, we become bored. When the challenge exceeds our skills, we become stressed because our body releases huge amounts of cortisol. The phenomenon is nicely illustrated in the following model by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

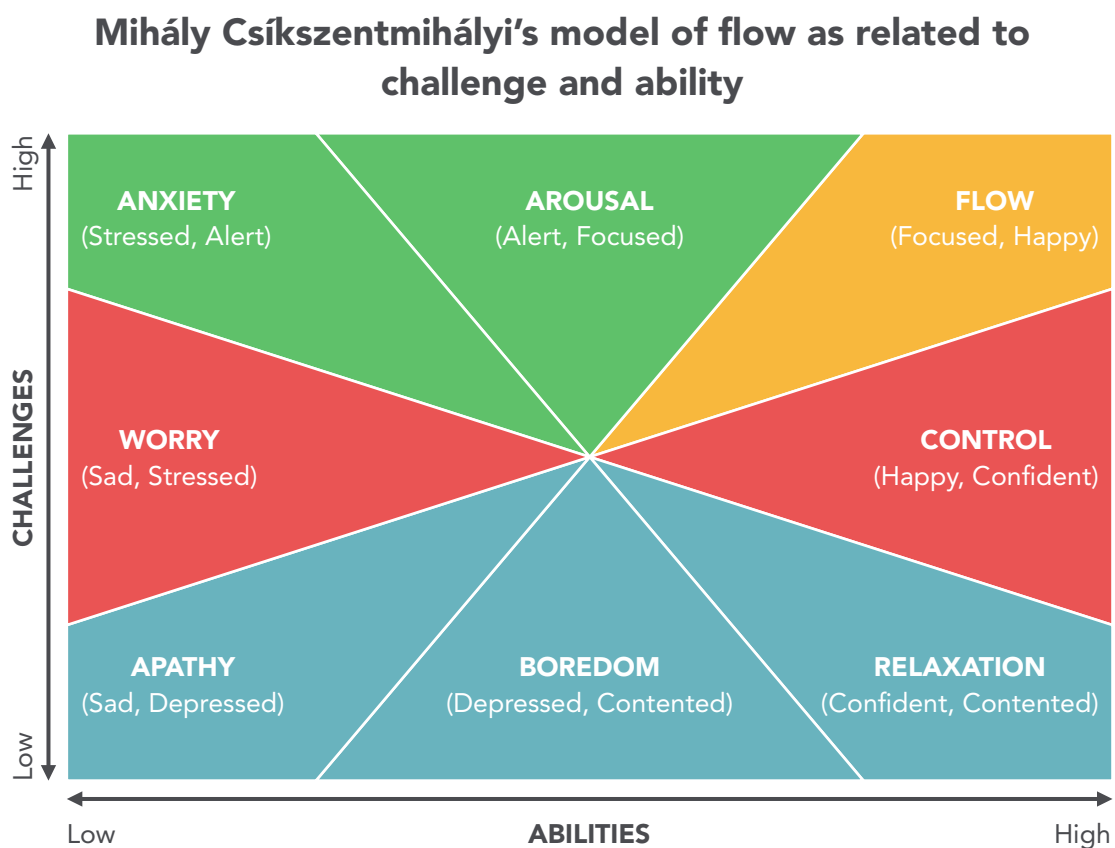


Fig. 3.9 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's model of flow

According to research done by Csikszentmihalyi, most people are either bored or stressed at work. The two most significant barriers to experiencing flow are multitasking and stress. Both of these adversely affect our concentration and levels of productivity. Csikszentmihalyi maintains that 'the happiest people spend much time in a state of flow – the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it.'

Management

As a general rule, the higher the management level, the more control the manager has, the more job satisfaction and the less stress they experience. At the top management level, technical skills are less important. More crucial are strategic, policy making, empathy and people skills. Nonetheless, balancing the demands of shareholders, board members, senior managers, investment analysts, employees, customers, government, trade unions, the media, community organisations and environmental groups, may be extremely stressful and requires considerable social, communication and empathy skills. At the very top, the isolated and lonely life experienced by the chief executive can be a further source of stress. At this level, one has no peers and is unlikely to have a trusted confidant with whom to share personal worries, problems or concerns.

The lower the management level, the less control and job satisfaction managers have and the more stress they experience. Technical skills are more important at this level, but social skills are still important. Middle managers often feel they have little power and may feel vulnerable to office politics, side-lining, replacement, early retirement or redundancy. Supervisors experience particular stress, because the management demands from above are often irreconcilable with the expectations of workers coming from below.

Managerial jobs are becoming more demanding and complex. Delayering means more work being done by fewer people, and spans of control and levels of responsibility have increased. Rules, regulations and legislation have become more subject to change and onerous. The volume, variety and complexity of information that managers have to handle has increased enormously. Research shows that the average manager deals with 190 messages daily and is interrupted once every 10 minutes. New technology such as email, texting and the mobile phone has added to the burden and has created a busier, more urgent and more stressful work environment.

3.4 PEOPLE

People feel stress in different ways and for different reasons as illustrated in Fig. 3.10.

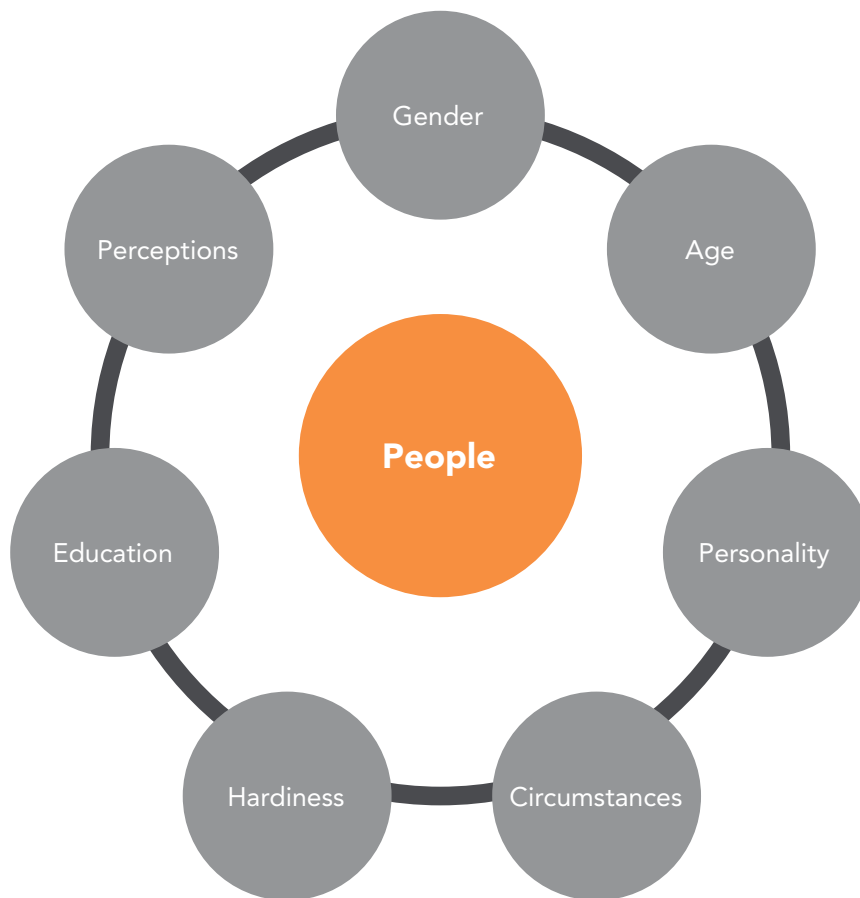


Fig. 3.10 The way people experience stress

Gender

The American Psychological Association report that men and women have different physical and mental reactions to stress. Men feel things physically. Women feel things emotionally but are more likely to report physical as well as emotional symptoms associated with stress. Females use social support strategies with families and friends more frequently and intensely than males as coping mechanisms for handling stress. Women are more likely to be transparent and talk about their feelings and personal problems and seek assistance than men. Women confide more intimately and create deep friendships with women, where men are reluctant to do so with other men. Women are more likely to cite money problems as sources of stress while men are more likely to cite work. Married women report higher levels of stress than single women. More women than men rate getting enough sleep as extremely important for combating stress. Studies show that women are especially susceptible to an overload of stress hormones as they age. The impact of age on cortisol levels is nearly three times stronger for women than for men.

In general, both men and women tend to choose sedentary activities like reading, listening to music and watching television over healthier behaviours like seeking professional help or exercising. However, men are more likely than women to say they play sport and listen to music as a way of managing stress. Women are more likely than men to say they comfort eat as a way of managing stress. Both sexes cite lack of willpower as a barrier to fighting stress although women are more likely than men to make this claim. It is not surprising that six times as many women say that help with household duties would give them space to improve their willpower to combat stress. Despite equality, it is still true that the burden of housekeeping still mostly falls on the shoulders of women.

Younger versus older people

Generally, older people have developed the wisdom and maturity to handle stress. Experience is said to be a great teacher, but can also be a great stress-reducer. With the passage of time, many people develop greater self-understanding and coping mechanisms and strategies to deal with the unique stressors of life generally and their organisation in particular. They have faced similar situations before and coped successfully. Furthermore, to the extent that older adults are more likely to have experienced the death of a loved one, everyday problems may pale in comparison. For example, if you've lost your daughter of 20 to cancer most other problems seem inconsequential. In general, older people report fewer hassles and rate them as less stressful than younger adults. The decrease in the number of roles such as parenting and work roles may result in fewer hassles in late life. On the other hand, younger people are less confident of dealing with life stressors, since they have no prior experience of handling them.

However, there are unique stressors relevant to younger and older people such as adolescence and the mid-life crisis. Young people struggle with identity issues, their careers, financial security or juggle with work, friendships and family demands. Middle-aged people are more likely to report problems at work and with their children. They may have issues with their children using drugs and alcohol, breaking the law, or have concerns about their capacity to deal with adult issues. In contrast, older people may have failing health, dwindling finance and the challenge of maintaining their independence. They are more likely to have unstructured time on their hands and a change in their relationships with their children in addition to loss of physical abilities such as vision, hearing, balance, strength and mobility.

Unfortunately, the body's natural defences against stress gradually breaks down and one's resilience to deal with stress may be compromised as one ages, but this can be counteracted with diet, exercise and mental attitude. A minority use ineffective and counterproductive escapism strategies such as drugs, alcohol and even wishful thinking to deal with their

problems. A study by Yale University found that older people who feel good about themselves live about seven and a half years longer than pessimistic types. Researchers say the people with more positive attitudes may also deal with stress better and have a strong will to live.

An individual's perception and interpretation of a threat is often determined by age. A young person may see a proposed merger in the company where he works as an opportunity, while an older person may see it as a threat and therefore much more stressful. In general, younger people are less prone to illness than older people and to the stresses and insecurities that invariably accompany illness. Normally, when we are stressed, our brains get flooded with stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones are fine when you are faced by danger but if you experience them continually, they are problematic for your health. *The relaxation response can be used by both age groups to manage stress. Techniques to elicit this response include yoga, meditation, guided imagery, and deep breathing exercises.*

The following diagram illustrates succinctly the stress versus the relaxation response.

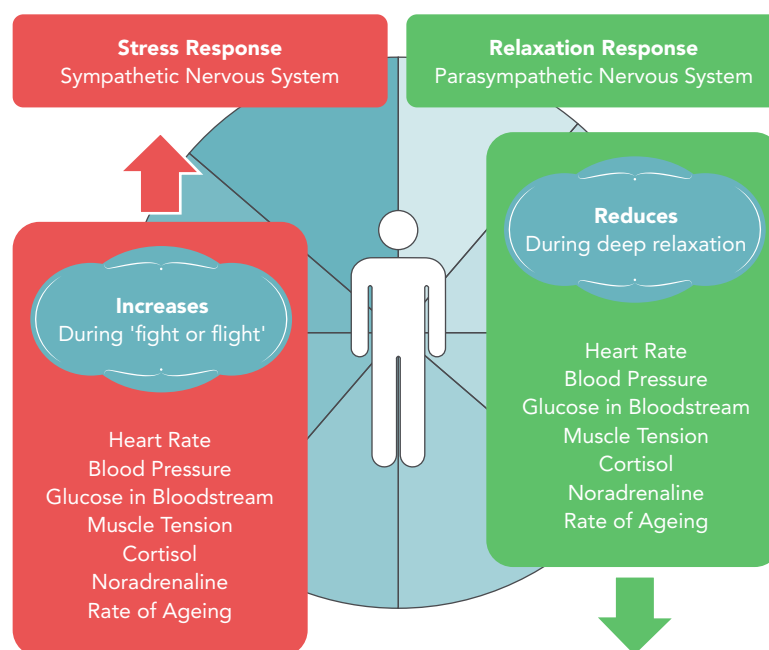


Fig. 3.11 Stress v Relaxation Response

Personality

Different people have different personalities and coping styles. Assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and experiences affect the way that a person perceives stress. Some people see things positively, while others see everything in a negative light. Some people are natural risk-takers, while others are cautious and risk-averse. High-risk individuals tend to seek out occupations to test

themselves in stressful challenging environments and avoid jobs where they would not get the opportunities to do so. Risk-averse people would find any risk taking very stressful. On the other hand, risk-takers thrive on stress and love the flow of adrenaline that accompanies the uncertainty.

Some people might be unsuited for a particular type of work. For example, they might find it difficult to manage certain work-based stressors, making decision-making and problem-solving in such circumstances very foreboding and difficult. Some people have abrasive abrupt personalities with no interpersonal relationship skills and thus cause stress by ignoring the feelings and sensibilities of others. *This suggests that aptitude and psychometric tests should be used to match the right people to the right job.*

Research suggests that certain personality types are more accident-prone than others. A team from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) suggests three key personality traits:

- **Dependability.** The tendency to be conscientious and socially responsible.
- **Agreeableness.** The tendency not to be aggressive or self-centred.
- **Openness.** The tendency to learn from experience and to be open to suggestion from others.

Personalities with low levels of the first two traits are more likely to be involved in accidents. High levels of openness are also linked to increased risk, since they tend to be somewhat dreamy and to let their imagination get the better of them. Professor Ivan Robertson of UMIST said people with low levels of agreeableness tended to be highly competitive and less likely to comply with instructions. The research has implications for the screening of people applying for potentially risky jobs, such as train drivers and air traffic controllers.

Domestic circumstances

People do bring their problems to work which interferes with their concentration levels and productivity. Personal problems such as baby-sitting arrangements, difficult teenage children, commuting distances or an unhappy marriage do interfere with work especially when working under stressful conditions and strict deadlines. It is difficult to concentrate on the task at hand, if you have unresolved personal and domestic issues. *Hence the need for counselling services, social support services, and family friendly policies such as flexible working and creche facilities.*

John Gottman identified the 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' after many years of research into why marriages fail. The ideas in the model are also applicable to dysfunctional interpersonal relationship problems in the workplace. He called the four destructive behaviours and communication styles: criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling. They predict the end of a marriage because of their damaging, threatening and very stressful impact.

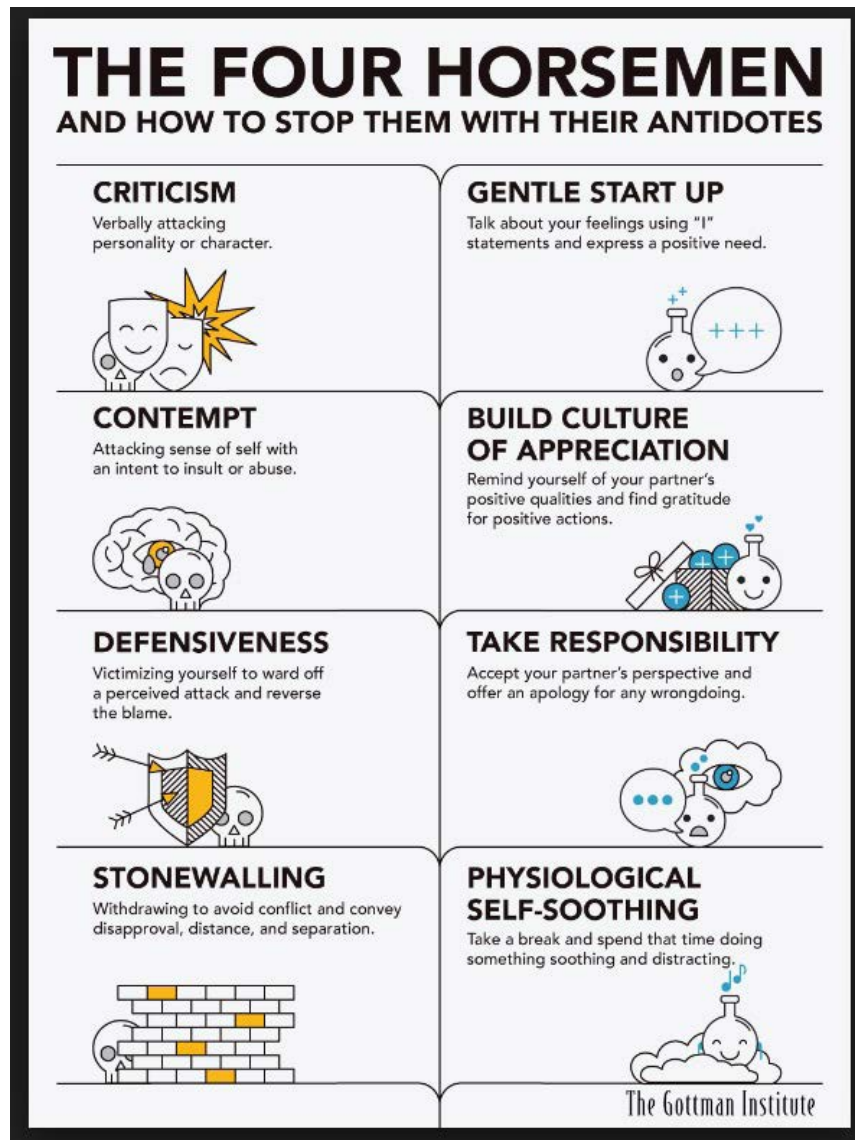


Fig. 3.11 The Four Horsemen by John Gottman. The Gottman Institute

The four behaviours are:

1. **Criticism.** This behaviour is hostile, argumentative and emotionally disengaged. It thrives on blame and negativity with its blatant personal and undermining attacks on character and personality. Nobody likes to be criticised. The target of the attack feels verbally abused, rejected and hurt.
2. **Contempt.** This approach is highly disrespectful, patronizing and hostile. It includes mockery, sarcasm, sneering, condemnation, name-calling and eye-rolling. People with unresolved differences adopt this demeanor. The target of the relentless attack is made to feel unwanted, despised and worthless. People at the receiving end of this are more likely to suffer from infectious diseases such as colds and flu. The attacker uses generalized unspecific language such as 'you always, and you never.'
3. **Defensiveness.** This approach shows a complete lack of empathy for the other person. The person launching the attack has a 'win-lose' mentality which escalates the conflict. They are very dismissive of the other person's point of view. They feel that they are always right irrespective of the logic of the counter argument.
4. **Stonewalling.** This is a complete breakdown in communications. There is just stony silence, coldness in demeanor, and shutting out with no attempt to engage with the other person. There is no eye contact, verbal or physical response such as the use of body language.

The following are approaches that will help to counteract the destructive relationship problems:

- Learn conflict management skills such as empathetic communication and listening.
- Complain without blame so that you avoid criticism and damaging your partners self-esteem. Remind yourself of their good qualities.
- Know your partners dreams, aspirations, interests, and goals and share them. In particular know the stressors to avoid that will upset your partner. Generally, it is sensible to avoid negative comments and strive to have an appreciation of the positive to negative ratio of five to one. Emphasise your partners positive attributes rather than highlighting the negative.
- Foster patience, fondness, warmth, respect, admiration, kindness, helpfulness, and forgiveness with your partner. Forgiveness contributes to physical and mental health, is empowering and can significantly reduce your stress level.
- Respond in kind to praise and affection from your partner rather than ignoring them.
- Familiarity often breeds contempt. At all times be courteous to your partner, compromise and let go when you have issues. Appreciate the good things they bring to the relationship. This will de-escalate tensions and smooth the way for a happy relationship.

Hardiness

People with the quality of hardiness are less susceptible to stress. There are observable differences between people when confronted with stress: some go to pieces at the slightest reason, while (the 'hardy' ones) are unflappable in the face of extremely provocative, irritating and stressful situations. Hardy individuals are self-confident, with a clear sense of personal values and goals, and are not deterred by obstacles and setbacks. They have a high tolerance for frustration and discomfort and are able to cope calmly and effectively with the ups and downs of life without getting unduly distressed. They do not blow things out of proportion and are able to put things in perspective. They have high levels of commitment and involvement in what they are doing, an internal locus of control or a belief that they can influence important events in their lives, and view change not as a threat but an opportunity to grow and learn.

Psychologists Salvatore Maddi and Suzanne Kobasa identified the three attitudes known as the three Cs (challenge, commitment and control) that tend to promote a sense of hardiness. The three Cs have been shown in research to enhance performance and health even in the face of stressful life changes.

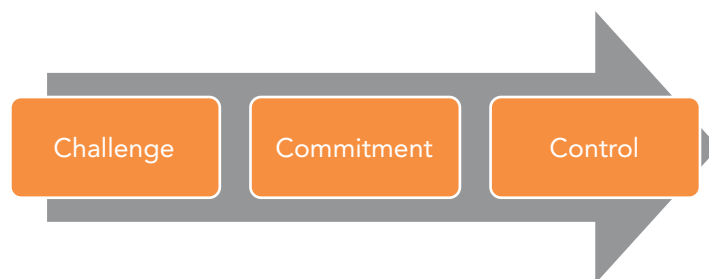


Fig. 3.12 Psychological Hardiness: The Three Cs

1. **Challenge.** Hardy people enjoy a sense of challenge and accept that life can be stressful. They enjoy change and novelty and feel they are capable of coping with anything that life throws at them. They view difficult circumstances as temporary which enable them to thrive in stressful times. Mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn, losses are seen as steps towards winning, and weaknesses can be rectified and exploited for personal growth and development. The opposite of challenge is security. With this attitude you feel better when things stay familiar and predictable allowing you to remain within your comfort zone.
2. **Commitment.** Hardy people are involved and focused. They have a sense of purpose in everything they do whether work, family, community or a specific aspiration. They have values like honesty, respect and dignity guiding their journey through life no matter what the circumstances are. They have a curiosity about the world and like to socialize with other people. Alienation is the opposite of commitment. This means you don't like to socialize with people but prefer to distance and stay away from them.

3. **Control.** Hardy people are in control of their life and know whatever happens they can turn it to their advantage. They have an internal locus of control and believe they are in control of their destiny rather than subject to the whims of others. They are proactive and know they can influence the events taking place around them and change their lives for the better through their own efforts. The opposite of control is powerlessness. This means you feel that you are controlled by external events and do not have the means or capabilities to influence them.

Darwin's theory of evolution suggests that the hardy people survive to pass on their genes and the best get to the top. However, these are people who do not succumb to stress related illnesses and are unlikely to understand or empathise with those who do considering it a behavioural weakness rather than a genetic disposition.

Education

Generally, the more educated and experienced a person, the greater knowledge and insight they have on business and the more they feel in control of their lives and the less stress they experience. Greater knowledge gives an understanding of life, how the world works, in particular how business operates, and confidence to deal with the issues it throws up. On the other hand, highly qualified people with low status are likely to experience a high degree of frustration and unfulfilled expectations, since they need work of a high standard to match their educational attainments

Perceptions

People differ as regard education, experience, aptitude, attitude, conditioning, genes, health and personality. One person's stressful situation is another's challenge. Some people are more resilient than others, and take the normal daily stresses of life in their stride. When exposed to the same situation, some people experience a high degree of stress, while others experience little or none. Take a group of people who retire at 65: some will feel severely depressed; others will feel moderately sad and frustrated, and still others will feel contented and happy. Obviously, the same stressor (retirement) is experienced quite differently by the three groups.

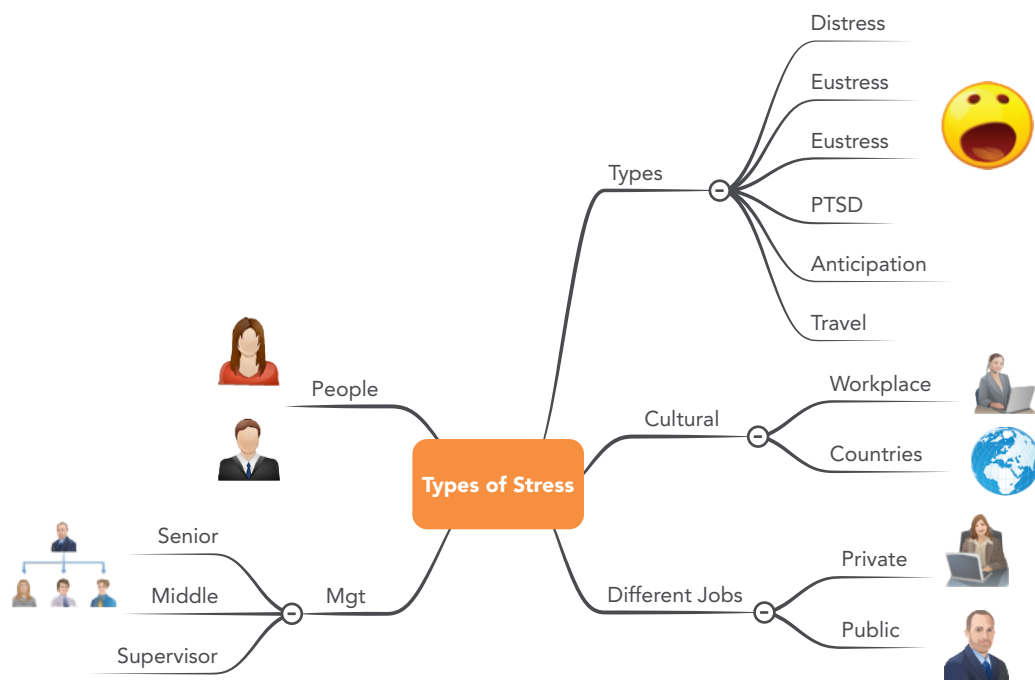
Events are neutral. It is the way a person perceives the event that makes the difference. Events do not make a person angry. It is the person's perception of the events that make them angry. As the first century philosopher Epictetus said: 'People are disturbed not by things, but by the views they take on them.' Becoming angry is their own decision. They could as easily stay calm. So, the internal stress a person experiences in their life is completely within their control.

The degree of stress will be influenced by one's perception of one's own ability, and the range of psychological, personal, social and physical resources at one's command to meet the particular demands of the situation:

- A person's ability to cope will be influenced by psychological factors such as interests, values, attitudes, needs, self-belief and self-esteem.
- Personal resources include health, experience, aptitude, expertise, and education.
- Physical resources include finance, equipment and people such as friends, relatives, networks, work colleagues and other professionals

A deficit in any of these resources may result in the individual being overwhelmed by circumstances.

3.5 SUMMARY LEARNING MAP OF THE TYPES OF STRESS



3.6 TEN ACTIVITIES FOR HANDLING STRESS

1. Reflect on how you've felt in the past week. Have you felt anxious, tense, nervous or stressed? Determine where you are on the Arousal Curve and take remedial action if you need to do so.

2. Reflect where you are on the typical life stages model. Determine if your stress level is typical for the life stage you are currently going through.
3. Recall as many of the behavioural emotional, physical and psychological symptoms of stress that you can. Determine if you are experiencing any of these symptoms and what you propose to do to rectify the situation.
4. If you live in the northern hemisphere you could very well experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). To counteract this, get out in the daylight for a few hours each day. The exercise, fresh air and light will stimulate your brain, improve your vitamin D levels and improve your concentration.
5. The next time you take over a new job make sure you are briefed adequately by the previous incumbent. Similarly, do the same when you are handing over or leaving a job.
6. What is PTSD and what should you do if you think you're suffering from it.
7. According to the Holmes-Rahe Top 15 Life Events, what are Life's top three most stressful events.
8. Give two examples of hassles and two examples of uplifts you have experienced in the last few weeks.
9. Name the three Ps that contribute to stress. Have you experienced any of these or know of anybody who has?
10. Name three techniques that will help you deal with procrastination.

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Useful Internet Sites

<http://onlinestressnews.bizland.com/new.htm>

<http://www.ananova.com>

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

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

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

<http://www.stress.org/job.htm>

<http://www.stress-help.co.uk>

<http://www.vhihealthe.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/>