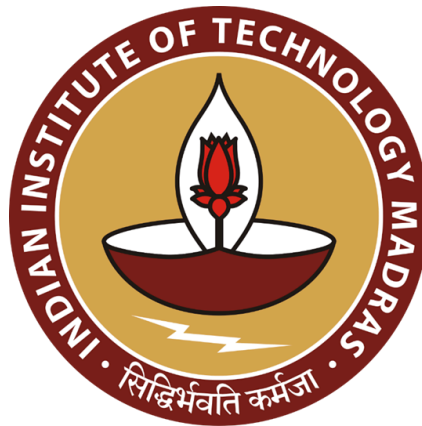


Strategies for Professional Growth – September 2025 Term

Personal and Professional Development

Topic: *Mindfulness and Stress Management in the Workplace*

Interim Report – Team 22



IITM BS Degree Program,
Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, Chennai
Tamil Nadu, India, 600036

Team Member & Participants Details

Name	Interviewed	Role
Piush Das	Surajit K. Dutta	Associate Director (Operations) – Vesuvius India Ltd.
Pulkit mangal	Karthik Thiagarajan	Teaching Instructor – BS Data Science
Sujal Raj Pradhan	Bob Sampras	ServiceNow Developer – UST Global
Jhilmil Dutta	Shweta Gupta	Botany Teacher – SMG College
Kshitij Maheshwari	Prashasti Sarraf	Teaching Assistant – BS Data Science

Interview with Surajit K. Dutta

Participant Details

- **Name:** Surajit K. Dutta
- **Role:** Associate Director(Operations) – Vesuvius India Ltd.
- **Industry:** Steel Manufacturing
- **Experience:** Mr. Dutta has over 25 years of experience in manufacturing operations, having served in leadership roles such as Manager, Director, and Chief Operating Officer at various organizations, including Zanini Auto Group, Johnson & Johnson India Ltd. , and Transasia Bio-Medicals Ltd.

Key Discussion Points and Insights

- **Handling Multiple Deadlines (Stress vs. Anxiety):** It's important to differentiate between anxiety and stress; people often misinterpret anxiety (a common feeling) as stress. When facing multiple deadlines, the most important strategy is prioritization.
- **Setting Healthy Boundaries (Work-Life Balance):** Setting boundaries is a common challenge and is relative to each person's situation. A key insight is the need to be conscious that people in your personal life (like family) also need your time.
- **Learning and Motivation (Cognitive Overload):** Learning often happens for two reasons: genuine interest or compulsion. When learning out of compulsion, there is natural resistance. To overcome this, you must find your personal "motivational driver".
- **Self-Awareness in Career Decisions:** Self-awareness is key to making better long-term career decisions. Mr. Dutta realized he enjoyed roles involving interaction, delegation, and meeting new people more than a confined, precise role.
- **Advice for Young Professionals:** The primary advice is to "do what you like". This has two parts: first, you must spend time finding out what you actually like. Second, you must appreciate that no job will be 100% enjoyable. If you like 60-70% of the content, "you are fortunate enough".

Relevant Quote and Anecdote

- **On Prioritizing:** "I think the important thing is to prioritize right. So what is important uh what is urgent what is important and urgent and what is important but not so urgent right. So you try to categorize this."
- **On Work-Life Balance:** "Sometimes in a professional world we just forget that part and if you are neglecting that part for some period of time, it doesn't help in the long run. Okay. So that's the reason uh it's very important that you are conscious about this."
- **On Monotony:** After successfully setting up an MNC in India, the work became routine. "I was getting a feeling that you know now everything is set up now it's getting into an autopilot kind of a situation and I have nothing much to deliver. and sought a new role."

Interview with Karthik Thiagarajan

Participant Details

- **Name:** Karthik Thiagarajan
- **Role:** Teaching Instructor – IIT Madras BS Degree Program
- **Industry:** Teaching
- **Experience :** Mr. Thiagarajan has over 5 years experience in Education & Data Science

Key Discussion Points and Insights

- **Deadline Management:** Prefers single-tasking for staggered deadlines; emphasizes proactive planning for same-day deadlines.
- **Boundaries:** Non-negotiable personal time (reading, music) is vital for work-life balance and prevents burnout.
- **Cognitive Overload:** Uses time-boxing (max five hours of peak intellectual work) for effective learning.
- **Career Alignment:** Shifted from an unfulfilling job, recognizing that even enjoyable work has disliked aspects.
- **Redefining Success:** Moved from external metrics (money, title) to internal fulfillment, leading to a teaching career after a year-long break.
- **Reframing Setbacks:** Viewed jobless periods (including during the pandemic) as crucial self-reflection opportunities.
- **Core Advice:** Find the "sweet spot" of what you're good at, like, and what's meaningful. "Work hard but do not slog" suggests a potential mismatch if slogging occurs.

Relevant Quote and Anecdote

- **On boundaries:** "I devote my day in half an hour reading and half an hour of music. These are as important as deadlines... Having certain things that are not negotiable."
- **On difficult tasks:** "There are aspects of work which you will not enjoy but in the larger scheme of things... they are important."
- **On reframing setbacks:** "I would put it more as a period of self reflection."
- **On career fit:** "If you are able to find anything in the intersection of what you are good at, what you like, and what is meaningful then stress would largely become irrelevant."
- **On work ethic:** "If you are slogging... then maybe you are in the wrong job or approaching it incorrectly. You should work hard but do not slog."

Interview with Bob Samprass

Participant Details

- **Name:** Bob Samprass
- **Role:** ServiceNow Developer, UST Global
- **Industry:** Tech
- **Experience:** Mr. Samprass has 6 years of experience in the tech industry.

Key Discussion Points and Insights

- **Deadline Management:** Prioritizes tasks by "impact rather than urgency alone" and stresses proactive communication to prevent last-minute stress.
- **Boundaries:** Sets firm boundaries (e.g., stopping after-hours work messages), viewing them as essential for sustainability and improved productivity.
- **Learning Complex Skills:** Prevents burnout by shifting to active methods, like "teaching the concept to someone else," and focusing on "incremental improvement."
- **Emotional Awareness:** Views stress as a critical data point, recalling when it signaled a need for a career pivot.
- **Reframing Setbacks:** When a project failed, he "treated it as feedback—an opportunity to analyze what went wrong."
- **Core Advice:** Believes well-being and growth are complementary; advises managing energy as carefully as time.

Relevant Quote and Anecdote

- **On managing deadlines:** "clarity prevents last-minute stress."
- **On work-life balance:** "It taught me that boundaries aren't about rigidity—they're about sustainability."
- **On emotional awareness:** "Emotional awareness isn't weakness—it's data that helps you make wiser, more sustainable decisions."
- **On project failure:** Treated it as "feedback—an opportunity to analyze what went wrong."
- **On sustainable success:** "Focus on consistent progress, not constant acceleration... sustainable success comes from managing your energy as carefully as your time."

Interview with Ms. Shweta Gupta

Participant Details

- **Name:** Ms. Shweta Gupta
- **Role:** Senior Botany Teacher – Higher Secondary (Classes 11 & 12)
- **Industry:** Education
- **Experience:** Over 22 years of teaching experience

Key Discussion Points and Insights

- **Stress Awareness:** Ms. Gupta believes stress increases when one overthinks situations. Staying mindful and present helps maintain calmness and balance.
- **Time & Discipline:** Emphasized that time management and discipline prevent unnecessary pressure, allowing smooth teaching and classroom control.
- **Supportive Environment:** While some institutions pressure teachers, she feels fortunate to work in a supportive school that values teacher well-being and open communication.
- **Work–Life Balance:** Credited her supportive family and colleagues for helping her maintain emotional stability and mental wellness through regular discussions.
- **Mindfulness Practice:** Defined mindfulness as awareness of one's thoughts and surroundings, helping her stay positive and emotionally composed in challenges.
- **Mental Health:** Highlighted that controlling one's emotions, focusing on positives, and loving one's work are key to reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction.
- **Core Advice:** True mindfulness comes from emotional balance and acceptance — “When your mind is in your control, everything else falls in place.”

Relevant Quote and Anecdote

- **On stress:** “Stress becomes heavier when we think too much about a situation.”
- **On discipline:** “Time management keeps both teaching and the mind in order.”
- **On support:** “When your family and workplace support you, half your stress is already gone.”
- **On self-control:** “If you control your mind and emotions, everything else falls in place.”

Interview with Prashasti Sarraf

Participant Details

- **Name:** Ms. Prashasti Sarraf
- **Role:** Teaching Assistant – IITM BS Degree Program, ex - Research Analyst
- **Industry:** Education
- **Experience:** Over an year of teaching experience

Key Discussion Points and Insights

- **Time Management:** Prefers focusing on one task at a time to manage overlapping deadlines effectively, with proactive planning for same-day submissions.
- **Boundaries for Oneself:** Protects personal time for activities like reading and music to maintain balance and prevent early-career burnout.
- **Overload management:** Uses structured time blocks (around five hours of deep work) to stay productive and learn efficiently.
- **Career transition:** Transitioned from a purely research-oriented role after realizing that interest must align with long-term fulfillment, not just skills.
- **What's success for them:** Shifted perspective from chasing external validation to finding purpose in impactful, learning-driven roles like teaching.
- **Handling Setbacks:** Viewed transition phases and slower periods as valuable opportunities for reflection and personal growth.
- **Main Advice:** Believes in finding the intersection of strengths, interests, and purpose — “Work hard, but if it feels like a slog, reassess the fit.”

Relevant Quote and Anecdote

- **On boundaries:** “I make it a point to spend some time each day doing things I genuinely enjoy, like reading or listening to music. These moments are as essential as meeting deadlines, they help me stay grounded and consistent.”
- **On difficult tasks:** “Every role comes with parts that aren’t always enjoyable, but I’ve learned that these tasks often contribute to bigger goals and personal growth.”
- **On reframing setbacks:** “I see challenging phases as opportunities for self-reflection and recalibration rather than failures.”
- **On work ethic:** “Working hard is important, but constant struggle may signal a mismatch, either with the job or the way it’s being approached.”