

Managing Stress – A View in the Positive Mode!

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Abstract

Stress is unavoidable and has become an inherent part of human life. But, Stress affects the family, if left unchecked. A stressed individual can play havoc with family life. He/she may indulge in self-destructive behavior, which will have an influence on family members. He/she may become absent minded, neglect duties and overlook health problems. Stress has an effect on society as well. It makes people feel isolated, irritated and unfriendly. This affects the interpersonal relations of the person. To keep the stress level under control, participate, deliberate, contemplate and mediate to know yourself, your organization, your society, your environment and your role. In other words, choose good man for emulation, bad man for correction, and no man for imitation and create a friendly world.

Key words: *Stress, Stress Management*

1. Introduction

To be stress free one should know the secret of time management and practice positive thinking.

Stress is unavoidable and has become an inherent part of human life. It arises as a result of the imbalance between demands placed on an individual and his/her capacity to meet those demands. For instance, if the demands are way below his/her capacity, then the individual may feel overwhelmed and thus feel the pressure. One way to handle such a situation is to find a balance between demands and capacities. An individual must, therefore, try to reduce demands from the environment and simultaneously increase his/her internal capacity.

Stress in individuals is defined as anything that disrupts the normal person's physical or mental well-being. It occurs when the body performs activities outside its capabilities or when the person faces extraordinary demands. A simple display of stress may be a bad mood, while an extreme display may be an act of violence. The body's non specific response to the external situation results in stress and stress can create a number of health problems both mental and physical. Some of these problems are sleepiness, eating disorders, heart problems and suicidal tendencies. Stress represents the wear and tear of the human body.

Stress can be positive or negative .Positive stress is called as Eustress and negative stress is called distress. There is a lot of difference as to ways in which Eustress or distress affects the body. Eustress triggers the body alarm, enhances attention, performance and creativity. It has temporary effects. For instance, a person applying for a visa to go to US may be under eustress and once she/he obtains it stress levels comes down to normal. Distress may have negative effect on the body. For instance, an individual who has lost his/her job may become depressed, which is a result of distress. Distress when left unchecked can have serious effects on the health of the person over a period of time.

2. Purpose of the study

In today's world, the degree of stress increased owing to urbanization, globalization that results into cut-throat competition. Stress is becoming significant with the result of dynamic social factors and changing needs of life styles. Stress is man's adaptive reaction to an outward situation which would lead to physical mental and behavioral changes. Brain cells create ideas, Stress may kill brain cells. The truth is that not all stresses are destructive in nature. Appropriate amount of stress can actually trigger your passion for work, tap your latent abilities and even ignite inspirations. Stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world. Common stress reactions include tension, irritability, inability to concentrate, and a variety of physical symptoms that include headache and a fast heartbeat. Stress has become inescapable part of modern life, work place is becoming a volatile stress factory for most employees and it is rightly called as the Age of

anxiety. Therefore, it has become need of the hour to use some practical tips for managing stress and achieve total life satisfaction. Stress also has a negative impact on organizational productivity. A clear study in the field can improve Labour productivity, reduce labour turnover in the organisation, reduce labour absentism, improve employer and employee relationship in the organisation and so on.

3. Objectives of the study

For constructive use of stress-mechanism that operates in humans, it is necessary to know the causes, symptoms and effects of stress and its management. Therefore, an effort is made in this study to explore types of stress, effects of stress and strategies for coping with stress.

3.1 Objective-1: To Explore the Various Types of Stress

Types of stress that are personal and work related are discussed below.

3.1.1 Personal stress

This is extra-organizational stress. Individuals play many roles in life like that of a father, brother, friend or mother, wife, sister etc. In this process, various factors cause stress.

- **Family stress:** Family stress may arise from conflict of ideas or relationships with spouse, children, siblings, parents. This stress may also be caused by the ill health of a family member, financial problems, a divorce or the death of a dear one.
- **Health related stress:** This may be a result of undetected or neglected health problems. For example, a person may neglect a minor ill health, which over a period may develop into a serious health problem that may require immediate attention. Often people ignore health and give importance to work. This results in loss of health and in stress.
- **Society related stress:** Society related stress occurs due to the influence of the society on an individual. Here, friends, colleagues and neighbors are the influencing factors. For example, attending a community meeting after a long work day may seem very stressful.

3.1.2 Work related stress

This is an organizational stress. Work related stress relates to the working environment and policies of the organization. Work related stress can be further classified into organizational stress and job stress.

Organizational stress: The stress resulting from the conflict of organizational goals with personal goals is called organizational or work place stress.

- **Long work hours:** Everyone has a natural body clock. Working against this clock can create stress. Attempts to alter the body clock result in stress. Studies on call center executives shows clearly the toll long work hours take in terms of stress related illness. A person regularly working long hours without taking a break will be stressed.
- **Lack of organization skills:** Poor organization skills lead to confusion over delegation of authority and responsibility. For instance an employee may be given many

responsibilities without sufficient authority. This would result in stress in performing the duties and responsibilities.

- **Job insecurity:** Job insecurity is a major stress factor. This kind of insecurity and lack of growth or promotions act as stressors. The higher the uncertainty higher is the stress. A sudden change in management and work policies can also result in stress. For instance a manager who has not been promoted for a long period may feel insecure about his/her future prospects in the organization and feel stressed.

Job stress: Stress that occurs due to lack of resources or scarce resources at the work place is called job stress. Some of the common job stressors are:

- **Difficult clients/Subordinates/Superiors/ Colleagues:** Every employee has to handle a difficult client at some point of time. A difficult or dissatisfied client is a stress creator. Uncooperative colleagues and subordinates too can build up high stress levels at the work place. Superiors often feel that putting pressure on subordinates bring out the best in them, but this is not always true. Some employees feel overwhelmed under stress and cannot work efficiently.
- **Personal inadequacy:** This can be a lack of knowledge or skills to handle a particular task or job. This can create stress.
- **Role conflicts:** This is a conflict between a person's likes, values and job requirements. For instance, a manager may have to take a decision regarding firing a subordinate keeping the organization's interest in mind even though he/she may like the subordinate's work. This creates a conflict between his/her likes and job responsibilities resulting in stress.
- **Setting high goals:** Setting high goals for oneself is a major stressor. For example, a sales manager may fix some high sales target for himself/herself in a month. Not achieving the target may result in stress and in extreme cases may even lead to depression.
- **Overwork and deadlines:** Extended periods of work or continuous work can lead to extreme stress situations. Employees especially those in the BPO industry are required to work in shifts that result in irregular rest hours that create stress. Strict deadlines and rigid plans create stress in employees.

Time stress: Stress is a result of doing things at a wrong time. It is a result of mismanaging time and striving hard to stick to deadlines. By developing the art of time management people can reduce stress. Effective time management and stress management are inter-dependant. Time management includes planning, delegating, organizing and performing tasks as per schedule. Working against deadlines can start to create stress in a person's life over a period of time. Stress management deals indirectly with time management, as time management is a measure to keep stress under control.

Techno-stress: Technological innovations like mobiles, laptops and game stations are adding to the stress levels of individuals. E-stress or Techno stress is a physical and physiological reaction to the changing technological environment. Some clinical psychologists have defined techno stress as negative impact on attitudes, thoughts, behaviors or body psychology caused directly or indirectly by technology.

3.2 Objective-2: To Explore the Effects of Stress

The human body’s reaction to stress is natural. It results from a need to resist a stressful situation. For example, when a person is nervous there is an increase in his/her pulse rate. This is a “fight or flight” response. However things can go out of control if too much stress is present. Too much of stress can tell upon a person’s health. If neglected, it can lead to serious health disorders at a later stage. Stress has both physical and psychological effects on an individual.

Effects of stress on an individual
Physical effects:
Increased heart rate and blood pressure
Sudden increase or decrease in weight (change in appetite)
Frequent headaches, fatigue and respiratory problems
Nervous weakness (biting nails too much sweating)
Insomnia
Reduced immunity to common colds and flu
Ulcers and weak digestive systems
Psychological effects:
Difficulty in concentrating
Unable to spend leisure time productively
Always anxious
Bad decision making
Mood swings
Increased usage of food, cigarettes, alcohol and drugs
Developing fears and phobias
Feeling out of control and confused

3.3 Objective -3: To Explore the Strategies for Coping with Stress

After understand the sources of stress & effect of stress on individuals, let us discuss some strategies to fight stress.

Prioritize work:

Multitasking is the buzz word these days. An Individual requires special skills to perform multiple tasks simultaneously. One way to minimize stress with multi tasking is to plan, prioritize & perform. Planning involves preparing list of activities that needs to be performed. This involves considering the time factor. Prioritizing involves ranking the activities based on their importance & performing these activities in that order. The next step is to schedule time for tasks depending on priorities. For instance a person may have to attend a community

meeting & an official party. He may schedule time for both activities by attending official party & then the community meeting.

Delegate work:

Some individuals prefer doing all the work themselves. This adds to their stress. They should learn to delegate the work to others. For instance a manager can delegate the work of preparing a report on a project to a subordinate.

Laughter:

It is a good de-stressor. An Individual can relax & de-stress by watching humorous movie, reading comics etc. It fights away the stress in the following ways:

- It reduces tension and relax facial muscles
- It improves blood circulation
- It minimizes the blood pressure
- It strengthens the body immunity by raising levels of disease fighting cells
- It develops an optimistic attitude.

Exercise:

It is another stress buster. It keeps an individual physically & mentally alert. When a person is nervous, tense or angry, exercise is the best outlet for giving vent to his or her emotions. Regular exercise lower blood pressure, lowest pulse rate, boosts blood circulation in the body, increases arteries working, lowers cholesterol & reduces tension.

Relaxation:

The best strategy to reduce stress is to relax. Relaxation is not being idle. Its doing what one wants to do, rather than what one should do. It is very important for a person to schedule some time for relaxation. This time should disconnect the person from all their tension & worries. Relaxation techniques vary from person to person. One may unwind by listening to music; another may prefer a long solitary walk. They should ensure that the breaks are relaxing not tiring.

Diet:

A good balanced diet plays a vital role in reducing stress. A person tends to neglect diet when under stress. This may lead to over eating or under eating. This improper eating results in weak immune systems and creates health problems. A well balanced meal that is eaten on time is very important to minimize stress.

Sleep:

Sleep is a weapon. During sleep a person prepares himself/herself to face another day. Stress makes a person sleepless or very sleepy. A stress person may feel sleepy throughout the day and awake during nights. On an average everyone needs –at least 7-8 hours of sleep per day. After a good night’s sleep a person may feel fresh. An individual must adopt a

bedtime routine that induces sleep like reading books that is soothing and listening to music that is relaxing.

4. Avoiding stress

People should be proactive rather than reactive to avoid stress. We have studied the strategies for avoiding stress lets now understand how to avoid stress.

4.1 Meditation

It is most effective techniques in reducing and avoiding stress. Regular meditation helps in stress reduction. It

- Enables one to control the thought process
- Enables one to take effective decisions
- Helps in physical and mental relaxation
- Improves concentration

The human mind is a web of thoughts. At any given point of time, a person is thinking about a thousand different things. For instance, in a conversation the listener instead of listening to the speaker mentally prepares himself/herself for how he or she should react. A manager sitting in a meeting may be thinking about the evening plans. Thinking is a continuous process. Our mind switches from one thought to another constantly. The constant process of thinking leads to stress in people. Meditation is a technique to achieve a thoughtless or mindless stage. In this stage a person has no thoughts. This kind of stage thus acts as a stress reliever and a great rejuvenator.

Meditation makes people calm and relaxed. It helps them in dealing with emotions carefully. Practiced properly it can lead to having a good nervous system and releases hidden mental energies.

4.2 Yoga

Yoga is another important stress reliever. Yoga has been tried and tested since ancient times. According to Patanjali Maharshi yoga is the cessation of mind. It is state of no-mind. Yoda is not for body building. It simply focuses on gentle posture that improves circulation of blood to vital parts of the body. The increase in blood circulation rejuvenated the organs and releases stress. Yogic postures are a simple combination of spinal stretches and breathing techniques. This practice reduces nervous tension and mental stress. An ideal de-stressing programme should be a combination of yogic posture and relaxation.

It is very refreshing and energizing. It consists of lying down and consciously relaxing every organ of the body mentally for 15-20 minutes. In this relaxation process, the trainer provides assistance for relaxing virtually each part of the body by using guided imagery. This technique leads to a very calm state for the person. Yoga is of many types like tai chi, deep breathing, meditation, pranayama, sudarshan kriya etc.,

4.3 Holistic therapies

It allows the body to heal naturally. These therapies have no side effects and are reliable. Some popular holistic therapies are massage therapy, aromatherapy, reflexology and nutrition therapy.

Massage therapy is the oldest technique used for reducing stress. In this therapy parts of the body that are easily affected by stress are focused upon. These parts include the forehead, neck, upper arms and shoulders. Massage encourages blood circulation, easy breathing and quick relaxation of the muscles.

Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils in the treatment process. The oils are derived from plants and flowers. They are popular for improving emotional and physical health.

Reflexology is the use of meridians or zones. Our body is a network of nerves. The nerves have important pressure points in the hands and feet. These pressure points can be used to treat imbalances. Any blockage in this system interrupts the free flow of energy and creates pain disease and infection or stress. This therapy involves applying gentle force on pressure points on the hands and feet.

Nutrition therapy involves avoiding stress by eating good food. Food is vital for the body. It is converted into energy to help the body grow and maintain itself. Food also helps the body to fight stress and replace damaged cells naturally. An ideal diet consists of 30% fruits and vegetables, 30% starchy foods, 15% proteins, 15% milk and dairy products and 10% fat and sugary foods. Water should also be included in a healthy diet.

5. Conclusion

Stress is unavoidable and has become an inherent part of human life. But, Stress affects the family, if left unchecked. A stressed individual can play havoc with family life. He/she may indulge in self-destructive behavior, which will have an influence on family members. He/she may become absent minded, neglect duties and overlook health problems. Stress has an effect on society as well. It makes people feel isolated, irritated and unfriendly. This affects the interpersonal relations of the person. To keep the stress level under control, participate, deliberate, contemplate and mediate to know yourself, your organization, your society, your environment and your role. In other words, choose good man for emulation, bad man for correction, and no man for imitation and create a friendly world.

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