



G.L.SAMPOORNA
Counseling Psychologist

STRESS

A leading expert on stress, cardiologist Robert Eliot, gives the following prescription for dealing with stress. "Rule No 1 is, don't sweat the small stuff. Rule No. 2 is it's all small stuff. And if you can't fight and you can't flee, flow".

Psychologically, stress has been described as an interference that disturbs healthy mental and physical well being. It occurs when the body is required to perform beyond its normal range of capabilities.

A mild level of emotional arousal or stress tends to produce alertness and interest in the task at hand. Sometimes emotions are not quickly discharged but continue to remain unexpressed or unresolved, perhaps the situation that makes one angry (eg. prolonged conflict with one's employer) or that makes one fearful (eg, worry over chronic illness of loved one) continues for a long period of time. The state of heightened arousal that results can take its toll of the individuals ability to function efficiently. Sometimes continual emotional tension can impair physical health. **Psychophysiological disorders** (psychosomatic illness) eg. ulcers, asthma, migraine, headaches, high blood pressure and skin eruptions are related to emotional stress.

It should be noted that long-term emotional stress can impair a person's physical health as well as his mental efficiency.

THE CAUSES OF STRESS:

The antecedents of stress on the factors that cause stress are called "Stressors".



AYESHA MUSHTAQ
Psychologist

Extra organisational stressors:

- Societal/Acchnological change
- Globalization
- The family – crisis, squabble, illness
- Relocation
- Economic or financial condition
- Race & clan
- Residential or community condition

ORGANISATIONAL STRESSORS ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

- Downsizing
- Competitive Pressures
- Merit Pay Plans
- Rotating work shifts
- Bureaucratic rules
- Advanced Technology

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DESIGN

- Centralisation and formalisation
- Line-staff conflicts – Specialisation
- Role ambiguity and conflict
- No opportunity for advancement
- Restrictive, untrusting culture.

What is stress?

- The causes of stress

Extra organisational stressors

Organisational stressors

Group stressors

Individual stressors

- Type A/B

- Personal control

- Learned helplessness

- Psychological hardness

Effects of stress

- Physical problems

- Psychological problems

- Behavioral problems

Coping Strategies

- Relaxation

- Exercise

- Taking time to manage time

- Behavioural self control

- Cognitive Therapy

- Networking

ORGANISATIONAL PROCESSES

- Tight controls
- Only downward communication
- Little performance feedback
- Centralised decision making
- Lack of participation in decisions
- Punitive appraisal systems.

WORKING CONDITION

- Crowded work area
- Noise, heat and cold
- Polluted air
- Strong Odour
- Unsafe dangerous conditions
- Poor lighting
- Physical and Mental Strain.
- Toxic Chemical radiation.

GROUP STRESSORS

i. LACK OF GROUP COHESIVENESS :

If a person is shut out of participating with other members, the resulting lack of cohesiveness can be very stress producing.

ii. LACK OF SOCIAL SUPPORT is so stressful that it accounts for some health care costs.

INDIVIDUAL STRESSORS – the role of disposition

Individual dispositions such as type A personality Patterns, Personal Control, learned helplessness and Psychological handiness may all effect the level of stress on one's experiences.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does two things at once • Cant cope with leisure time • Is observed with numbers • Measures success by quantity • Is aggressive • Is competitive • Constantly feels under time pressure • Is not concerned about time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has no pressing deadlines • Is mild mannered • Is never in a hurry
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Type A personalities experience considerable stress mostly due to their anger and hostility.

PERSONAL CONTROL

Another important disposition is an individual's perception of control. People's feelings about their ability to control the situation are important in determining their level of stress. If people feel that they have little control over their life, job and environment, they will experience stress.

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

People learn to be helpless, which helps explain why some people just seem to have given and seem to accept stresses in their life, even when a change for the better is possible. People are most apt to experience helplessness when they perceive the causes of the lack of control.

- i. To be related to something about their own personal characteristics (as opposed to outside, environmental forces)
- ii. As stable and enduring (rather than just temporary)
- iii. To be global and universal (cutting across many situations, rather than in just one sphere of life)

PSYCHOLOGICAL HARDNESS

Every one has observed individual differences of people faced with stresses. Some people seem to go to places at the slightest provocation where as others seem unflappable in the face of extremely stressful situation. Those able to cope successfully with extreme stressors seem to have a 'handimen' disposition. Those who do not possess handimen disposition may suffer the harmful outcomes of stress and conflict.

EFFECTS OF STRESS

Physical Problems due to stress. Specific physical health oncerns that have been linked to stress include the following:

- i. Immune system problems, when there is a lessened ability to fight off illness and infections;
- ii. Cardiovascular system problems, such as high blood pressure and heart disease;
- iii. Musculoskeletal system problems, such as diorrhoea and constipation. Research has shown that there is also a link between stress and cancer.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS DUE TO STRESS

High levels of stress may be accompanied by anger, anxiety,

Type A Profile	Type B Profile
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is always moving • Walks rapidly • Eats rapidly • Talks rapidly • Is impatient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is patient • Doesn't brag • Plays for fun. Not to win • Releases without guilt

depression, nervousness, irritability, tension and boredom. One study found that stress had the strongest impact on aggressive actions, such as sabotage, interpersonal aggression, hostility and complaints. These types of psychological problems from stress, in turn, are especially relevant to poor job performance, lowered self-esteem, resentment of supervision, inability to concentrate and make decisions and job dissatisfaction. Eg. managers who are under constant stress may become very moody and their subordinates soon learn not to disturb them, even with important information, because they will just 'bite your head off'. These managers eventually procrastinate, lose their self esteem. Coworkers and subordinates may become very disgusted with such a manager and explain the behaviour away as being the result of a 'rotten personality', when, in fact, the problems are the result of stress and conflict.

BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS DUE TO STRESS AND CONFLICT

Direct behaviours that may accompany high levels of stress include under-eating or over-eating, sleeplessness, increased smoking and drinking and drug abuse. When it is realised that 6% of the population are alcoholics, that another 10% are problem drinkers and that 6 billion doses of amphetamines and barbiturates are consumed annually, the potential problem of employee behaviour by alcohol and drug abuse become dramatically clear.

There is research evidence over years indicating a relationship between stress and especially

absenteeism and turnover.

The psychological and physical symptoms of stress, the behavioural problems can be controlled, more effectively managed, and even prevented by the individuals and the organisation.

COPING STRATEGIES

Some specific techniques that individuals can use to eliminate or more effectively manage inevitable, prolonged stress are the following:-

Relaxation : People can use specific techniques such as Jacobson's Deep Muscle progressive relaxation biofeedback meditation or simply take it once in a while. Research evidence shows that people who do expressive writing about stressful events in their lives experience health benefits. Meditation and relaxation techniques can have desirable physical and mental impact on people. A stockholder who regularly uses meditation stated "It's widely known that this industry has a lot of stress. So where a lot of people drink alcohol, we mediate. It's not that we don't feel stress. It just don't hit us as much."

EXERCISE : People of all ages are walking, jogging, swimming, riding, bicycles, or playing soft ball, tennis, a racquet ball in order to get some exercise to combat stress. Even of only as a result of side effects, such as relaxation, enhanced self esteem, simply getting one's mind off work for a while, and thus perform better in their daily tasks exercise does seem to help people better cope with stress.

TAKING TIME TO MANAGE TIME: Make out a 'to-do' list that identifies everything that

must be done during the day. This helps keep track of work progress. Delegate work, identify time killers. Learn to manage and use your time effectively.

BEHAVIOURAL SELF-CONTROL : By deliberately managing the antecedents and the consequences of their own behaviour, people can achieve self-control. Besides managing their own behaviour to reduce stress, people can also become more aware of their limits, and of "red flags" that signal trouble ahead. They can avoid people or situations that they know will put them under stress. This strategy involves individuals controlling the situation instead of letting the situation control them.

COGNITIVE THERAPY: Besides behavioural self-control techniques, psychologists have entered the stress field with cognitive therapy techniques. Techniques such as Ellis's rational emotive model and cognitive behaviour modification have been used as a individual strategy for reducing stress.

NETWORKING : One clear finding that has come out of Social Psychology research over the years is that people need and will benefit from social support. This entails forming close annotations with trusted empathetic co-workers, family members, colleagues and friends who are good listeners and confidence builders. These friends are there when needed and provide support to get the persons through stressful situation. Networking Strategy helps people cope better with job stress and be more effective and successful.

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