

## Managing Stress <sup>1\*</sup>

Understanding Stress -

Eliminating Stress -

Managing Stress -

Looking for Stress free future -

### UNDERSTANDING STRESS

Beehr and Newman have defined stress as a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and are characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning.

Stress could be taken as a positive reaction as well as negative reaction. As a positive reaction, stress is called Eustress whereas negative reaction is termed as Distress.

Basically people use stress in a negative sense and we tend to think that stress is always bad but the fact is that Eustress (positive stress) works as a motivator. It can also help to work harder and to put ourselves to the proper action. It encourages us to innovate and to adapt to the changes.

Distress (negative stress) can result in distrust, rejection, anger, and depression. Further it could give birth to some physiological problems like regular headaches, upset stomach, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure etc.

Stress is the wear and tear our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment; it has physical and emotional effectors on us and can create positive or negative feelings. Stress is an invisible disease that disturbs individual's mental health in a way that also ultimately affects the physical well-being.

In a national survey conducted by the Northwestern Life Insurance Company (1992) seven in ten American workers indicated that job stress is causing frequent health problems and has made them less productive. Among these same employees, 46 percent reported that their job was very stressful, 34 percent thought about quitting their jobs because of workplace stress, and 14 percent did leave their job because of stress. Further evidence provided by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company

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estimates that an average of one million workers are absent on any given day largely due to stress disorders (Rosch & Pelletier, 1984), and a study by the American Academy of Family Physicians (1979) found job stress to be the greatest cause of poor health habits.

## **ELIMINATING STRESS**

It is clear that positive stress adds anticipation and excitement to life and we all thrive under a certain amount of stress. Deadlines, competitions, confrontations, and even our frustrations and sorrows add depth and enrichment to our lives. Our goal is not to eliminate stress but to learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us. Insufficient stress acts as a depressant and may leave us feeling bored or dejected; on the other hand, excessive stress may leave us feeling 'tied up in knots. What is required here is that we try to understand the optimal level of stress which does not harm us rather which is a positive stress so it gives us some motivation to work harder. Therefore, one has to establish the optimal level of stress oneself. Each individual is different in nature and blood. Hence one has to reinvent him or herself and then try to find out this level to further understand him or herself better. The optimal level would be influenced by the nature of work, timings, environment etc. YOU MUST YOURSELF KNOW WHEN YOU THINK YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM STRESS - HAVING NEGATIVE STRESS.

## **MANAGING STRESS**

Stress is not the same for all people and one approach will not work for all employees. As an example, providing employee training in individual coping techniques as a preventive measure without also correcting negative stressful working environments is short sighted and may be viewed by some as blaming the victim for the problems of the corporation. Additionally, many personal stressors are not work related and will not be improved through environmental or organizational changes.

**1. Become aware of your stressors and your emotional and physical reactions.**

- Notice your distress. Don't ignore it. Don't gloss over your problems.
- Determine what events distress you. What are you telling yourself about meaning of these events?
- Determine how your body responds to the stress. Do you become nervous or physically upset? If so, in what specific ways?

**2. Recognize what you can change.**

- Can you change your stressors by avoiding or eliminating them completely?
- Can you reduce their intensity (manage them over a period of time instead of on a daily or weekly basis)?
- Can you shorten your exposure to stress (take a break, leave the physical premises)?
- Can you devote the time and energy necessary to making a change (goal setting, time management techniques, and delayed gratification strategies may be helpful here)?

**3. Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress.**

- The stress reaction is triggered by your perception of danger...physical danger and/or emotional danger. Are you viewing your stressors in exaggerated terms and/or taking a difficult situation and making it a disaster?
- Are you expecting to please everyone?
- Are you overreacting and viewing things as absolutely critical and urgent? Do you feel you must always prevail in every situation?
- Work at adopting more moderate views; try to see the stress as something you can cope with rather than something that overpowers you.
- Try to temper your excess emotions. Put the situation in perspective. Do not labour on the negative aspects and the " what if's."

#### 4. Learn to moderate your physical reactions to stress.

- Slow, deep breathing will bring your heart rate and respiration back to normal.
- Relaxation techniques can reduce muscle tension. Electronic biofeedback can help you gain voluntary control over such things as muscle tension, heart beats, and blood pressure.
- Medications, when prescribed by a physician, can help in the short term in moderating your physical reactions. However, they alone are not the answer. Learning to moderate these reactions on your own is a preferable long-term solution.

#### 5. Build your physical reserves.

- Exercise for cardiovascular fitness three to four times a week (moderate, prolonged rhythmic exercise is best, such as walking, swimming, cycling, or jogging).
- Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals.
- Maintain your ideal weight.
- Avoid nicotine, excessive caffeine, and other stimulants.
- Mix leisure with work. Take breaks and get away when you can.
- Get enough sleep. Be as consistent with your sleep schedule as possible.

#### 6. Maintain your emotional reserves.

- Develop some mutually supportive friendships/relationships.
- Pursue realistic goals which are meaningful to you, rather than goals others have for you that you do not share.
- Expect some frustrations, failures, and sorrows.
- Always be kind and gentle with yourself -- be a friend to yourself.

## LOOKING FOR STRESS FREE FUTURE

You want to be happy or sad; it is in your own hands. You want to lead a life stress free so you need to rediscover yourself and find out by yourself where are you going wrong. People can help you but it is you who have to plan your future and follow your plan. Dealing with stress is more a problem of *attitude* than of anything else. One should try to develop positive attitude towards work, towards life and towards the society in general. Putting first things first and using the time properly can keep you stress free. Sharing your experiences and developing an attitude of *learning from mistakes* can keep you happy and away from lot of stressors. Proper medication in the time of need can keep you physically fit and you can improve your work efficiency. If you are cool, calm and ready to be corrected there are very less chances that you would face stress. Managing work according to the available time with the available work force can keep you cool and calm.

Individually, by changing your own attitude you can motivate others positively which can assure others and yourself of stress-free future.

Wishing you a stress-free future!

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