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Stress Management

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Abstract

Stress is anything that alters natural balance. When stress is present, body and mind must attend to it in order to return to balance. Body reacts to stress by releasing hormones that help to cope with the situation. That in turn takes away energy from the other functions of brain like concentrating or taking action.

There are two different sources of stress: external triggers like getting poor grades or breaking up with relations etc, where as internal triggers are like placing high expectation on yourself.

Stress is a part of everyday life. But there are instances when stress can be of great help. A fire alarm is intended to cause the stress that alerts to avoid danger. The stress created by a deadline to finish a paper can motivate to finish the assignment on time.

But when experienced in excess, stress has the opposite effect. It can harm emotional and physical health and limit ability to function.

Since we are responsible to bring about much of our own stress, we can also do much to manage stress by learning and practicing specific stress – reduction strategie.

STRESS IN ORGANISATIONS

Introduction: In today's busy world it is often spoken about the stress that is linked to heavy-duty, war, retirement, family problems, death of a close person, etc.

We all used to the concept of stress and we have already forgotten that he means only a state of constant psycho emotional tension, but also quite serious changes in the body. People can suffer for years and ignored the obvious symptoms of a stressful situation and gradually "burn". Any impact on the human body, both internal and external, can be positive or negative. Certain amount of stress is not only avoidable, but also necessary for human survival. Various authors suggest different kinds of stress. It is profesional (stress at work) and emotional stress and physical and psychological stress, posttraumatic stress, etc.. There is no single general classification of stress.

Problem Definition: English word stress means pressure, effort, strain, exertion. Hans Sally, one of the most famous stress researcher, says that stress is any demand for the new adjustment which sets the body environment.

Important factors of Stress:

- stressful situation or stressor
- reaction to a stressful situation, which is commonly referred to as stress, it should distinguish stress from stressors.

Different kinds of stress:

- Eustres (that is pleasant and contributes to health)
- Distress (which is unpleasant and threatens the health)

Short and mild stress, which can be controlled, perceived as friendly. In addition they can make possible emotional and intellectual growth and development. Also it is felt that the difficult situations that lead to the collapse of the adaptive capacity of the body are harmful, because they lead to serious health problems.

Also, it is believed that stress affects people who work too hard. And that is only partially true, because practice shows that they are under stress often people who are unemployed or who may be only partially engaged, or are not fully utilized.

Stress–Basic Definition, Stressors and Factors Involved: Healthy mind and a healthy body go together, was known before the days of Juvenal. The Chinese and the ancient Greeks believed that certain dispositions of character and certain diseases were linked with variations in the nature and appearances of the fluids of the body. The human theory of diseases was spread by the writings of celus(1st Century AD) throughout the civilised world. It was held universally till the eighteenth century, and persists in many parts of the world even today. It was replaced in Europe during the nineteenth century by the concept of 'diathesis' a view that recognised the link between personal constitution and the tendency to disease, but rejected the role of the body 'humours'.

The same fundamental concept underlies the recognition today of PSYCHOSOMATIC disease. Psychosomatic medicine is the 'new look' of a previous generation specialisation dominated medicine. Disease became the object of intensive study, and the patient was tended to be forgotten Psychosomatic medicine was timely in re-emphasising the truth that mind and body make one person and that in any illness the interplay of mind and body is largely responsible for the form the disease takes, for its progress, and for its ultimate outcome.

Stress may be an internal state which can be caused by physical demands made on the body which can be caused by physical demands such as disease, exercise, extremes of temperature, professional hazards and so on, or by environmental and social situations which are evaluated as potentially harmful, uncontrollable, or exceeding our resources for coping, which adversely affect the physical and psychological well being of a person (Morgan & others,1993).

The term STRESS has been used so loosely, and so many confusing definitions of it have been formulated that it will be most instructive to start out by stating clearly what it is not.

Contrary to some current but vague or misleading statements:

- STRESS is not nervous tension. Stress reactions do occur in lower animals which have no nervous system.
- STRESS is not an emergency discharge of hormones from the adrenal medulla. An adrenaline discharge is frequently seen in acute stress affecting the whole body.
- STRESS is not anything that causes a secretion, by the adrenal cortex, of its hormones, the corticoids. ACTH, the adrenal-stimulating pituitary hormone, can discharge corticoids without producing any evidence of stress.

Stress in Work Situations: The work situations can be an important stressor. It has already been identified as one of the chronic life strains. Even normal work situations, like assignment as members of the Army in military affected areas, add a totally different dimension to work situation stressors. This is so because the work situations are so demanding and so different from the normal that an entirely new set of stressors come into play. It is a worklike situation, yet so different from a war, reactions are measured and controlled, despite grave provocations. Here, actions are generally not against an enemy, as in war, therefore the training he has received is of little help to him in this particular environment, as such the damages caused are traumatic.

Hans Selye, a pioneer of research on STRESS, described a three stage reaction to organismic stress, which is a non specific response of the organism to any stressful agent called Stressor, of sufficient intensity. The three stages are as follows.

- (1) Alarm Reactions.
- (2) Stage of Resistance.
- (3) Stage of Exhaustion.

Small amounts of stress may appear and disappear like bubbles but when a person perceives an imbalance between the challenge that face him and the resources he has to meet it, stress can be like a dead weight or a wall. It is however important to note that balance or imbalance is not between actual demand and actual capacity but between our evaluation of the challenge and our perception of our capacity to meet it.

Types of Stressors: Stressful situations are of many types – Catastrophe (natural or man made) such as earthquake, wars, fires etc; major life changes, such as unemployment or the death of a spouse or chronic life strains.

People who have suffered major negative life changes, in particular, are more likely to develop diabetes, leukaemia, cardiovascular disease, depression etc. Negative life events relate directly to illness, but positive events relate directly to illness, but positive events relate weakly. The same event may have different levels of stress depending upon cultural, sex or other differences.

Factors Involved in Stress: Situational, personal and biological factors are involved in causing stress. The general effects of situational variations include –

- Duration – Such as short job interview vs long martial quarrel.
- Severity
- Predictability
- Controllability
- Suddenness of onset.

One of the greatest challenges in equipping a person with effective ways to handle Stress. Factors like skills and resources available help in adjustment to stress.

Regarding Biological factors, in general, the sympathetic nervous system is more active during state of arousal and stress, while the parasympathetic system is more active during quiet, resting state. During emotional arousal they increase the heartbeat, constrict arteries of the digestive organs and the skin, all at the same time.

As per Hans Selys's GAS (General Adaptation Syndrome), stress is the body's response to the demands made on it and refers to these demands, as 'STRESSORS'.

Stress Cycles: Stress has a number of immediate effects and if stressors continue their presence, long term behavioral, physiological, emotional and cognitive thinking effects occur. If these effects obstruct adaptation to the environment or create discomfort & distress, they themselves become stressors and tend to perpetuate a cycle of distress on the other hand many people have developed ways of coping with stressors so that they are able to adapt positively.

Stress Related Disease and Personality Type: Recent research has established a connection between personality type and stress related coronary artery disease which was hitherto related to lifestyle factors such as smoking obesity and inactivity. These behaviour patterns can help in predicting heart disease rather than relying solely on medical diagnostic methods.

Type 'A' persons are hard driving and competitive. They live under constant pressure, largely of their own making. They seek recognition and advancement and take on multiple activities with deadlines to meet. They show a strong urge towards achievement, keeping suppression of the cost (fatigue) and impatience (due to delay) to themselves. When put under stressful conditions they cannot control, they are likely to become hostile, anxious and disorganised.

Type 'B' persons are quite the opposite. They are easy going, non-competitive, placid and unflappable. They bear stress easily. Type B's may be dull but they are sure to live longer.

There is a rational explanation for the link between personality type and heart disease. It probably lies in the chemical substance released by autonomic nervous system in response to stressors. There is some evidence that victims of heart attacks have different reactions to a stressors.

Either their blood-chemistry response on the timing of their response is different. There is evidence that these responses are delayed and protracted rather than immediate.

Causes of Stress: The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship.

What causes stress depends, at least in part, on your perception of it. Something that's stressful to you may not faze someone else; they may even enjoy it.

For example, your morning commute may make you anxious and tense because you worry that traffic will make you late. Others, however, may find the trip relaxing because they allow more than enough time and enjoy listening to music while they drive.

Common External Causes of Stress: Not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be self-generated:

- Major life changes
- Work
- Relationship difficulties
- Financial problems
- Being too busy
- Children and family

Common Internal Causes of Stress:

Not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be self-generated:

- Inability to accept uncertainty
- Pessimism
- Negative self-talk
- Unrealistic expectations
- Perfectionism
- Lack of assertiveness

Signs And Symptoms of Stress: Excess stress can manifest itself in a variety of emotional, behavioral, and even physical symptoms, and the symptoms of stress vary enormously among different individuals. Common somatic (physical) symptoms often reported by those experiencing excess stress include:

- Sleep disturbances,
- Muscle tension,
- Muscle aches,
- Headache
- Gastrointestinal disturbances
- Fatigue.

Emotional and behavioral symptoms that can accompany excess stress include:

- Nervousness,
- Anxiety,
- Changes in eating habits including overeating,
- Loss of enthusiasm or energy,
- Mood changes (like irritability and depression)

Of course, none of these signs or symptoms means for certain that there is an elevated stress level since all of these symptoms can be caused by other medical and/or psychological conditions. It is also known that people under stress have a greater tendency to engage in unhealthy behaviors, such as excessive use or abuse of:

- Alcohol and drugs
- Cigarette smoking
- Making poor exercise and nutritional choices, than their less-stressed counterparts

These unhealthy behaviors can further increase the severity of symptoms related to stress, often leading to a "vicious cycle" of symptoms and unhealthy behavior.

The Consequences of Stress: Stress effects on health are very serious in a negative sense. There opinion that the role of stress in the forms of physical ailments including percentage of 50-70%. It is difficult to accurately assess the impact that stress has on performance. Traditional notion assumes that the relationship between stress and performance can be represented curve. A decline in performance comes at a higher level of stress. However, much of the evidence that testifies to the fact that performance can be reduced with low levels of stress and stress leads to mainly negative effects. There are individuals who experience more stressful situations as a challenge rather than as a threat. They are in such crisis situations have the most to offer. For such people, stress acts as an incentive to improve their performance.

Remedies to overcome Stress: Happy employees create happy clients and are foundation for making success. Stress can be managed by creating a less stressful work environment for employees. Its important to be transparent about the goals to be achieved. This assures peace of mind because it is known what to focus on and why. To begin with four to five goals should be established. Employees should be involved in developing these goals and should be made felt an important part of the process. Not only this but each employee should develop their own three to five individual goals. They should ladder up to the company goals and be measurable.

This helps them understand how and whatever they do on a daily basis aligns with the company 's objectives. A very flexible work environment should be offered to increase productivity. But for many small business owners, it can be difficult to stay competitive with salary. But pay isn't everything. Many people look for a purposeful mission at workplace. Others want a flexible work environment that helps reduce some of the other pressures in their lives. So, other creative ways can keep employees contented. To attract millennials it is sometimes important to offer "WORK-LIFE" integration. This means that work is task and effort oriented. Work timings and hours can be made little flexible that will allow the employees to continue to enjoy the things they want to do. Profits should be shared, employees should be rewarded time to time or some kind of quarterly bonus or incentives should be provided. For instance office or staff could be taken to a spa or lunch or picnic as a celebration. New research shows that multitasking drains the energy reserves of the brain. It uses up the oxygenated glucose in the brain, which is the same fuel that brain needs to

focus , so multitasking should be discouraged. Also employees should take a 15 minute break every few hours. These short breaks help brain recharge to focus better on the next activity.

Employees should be encouraged to move their bodies for example they should be encouraged to take time from their day to exercise at the gym, take a walking lunch or meeting or try a yoga class. This will encourage them to work smartly, have greater focus and clarity of thought , with a renewed sense of energy and creativity.

Conclusion: The consequences of stress can cause specific disorders in both body and mind. Recent event of farmers suicide is also a result of stress. Stress effects health, family, relationships and work. It leads to breakups , family fights, road rage, suicides and violence. So, stress management is the need of the hour. It is necessary for long happy lives with less trouble that will come about.

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