



ROLE OF STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES IN BETTERMENT OF URBAN WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

In the modern world of 21st century "stress" is termed as "disease of century" as it is believed to cause more ailments than anything known to modern medicine. "Stress" in occupation is a condition or a feeling experienced when an employee perceives that "demands placed on him exceed the personal and social resources he is able to mobilize". He has a feeling of losing control over events, which are stressful. In this article we have tried to explain what actually stress is, what is its relationship with performance and various steps which an individual or an organization needs to keep in mind in order to keep the stress at bay. Although this article is derived from an study constituting different verticals, a much more deeper multi disciplinary research is requirement of the fast changing work place environment.

Keywords: Stress Management, Stressor, Distress

The term *stress* was first employed in a biological context by the endocrinologist Hans Selye in the 1930s. He later broadened and popularized the concept to include inadequate physiological response to any demand. In his usage *stress* refers to a condition and *stressor* to the stimulus causing it. It covers a wide range of phenomena, from mild irritation to drastic dysfunction that may cause severe health breakdown ,

as reported in Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, 1992.

Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues and where they have little control over work or how they can cope with its demands and pressures. Stress results from a mismatch between the demands and pressures on the person, on the one hand, and their knowledge and abilities, on



the other. It challenges their ability to cope with work. This includes not only situations where the pressures of work exceed the worker's ability to cope but also where the worker's knowledge and abilities are not sufficiently utilized and that is a problem for them.

Abraham Lincoln once sat down and wrote:

"I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth.....I must die or be better."

"STRESS" been called the "Disease of the twentieth century," and it's believed to cause more ailments than anything else known to modern medicine. And, whether we realize it or not, for most of us it has become a habit we just can't seem to kick, says Dr. Andrew Goliszek.

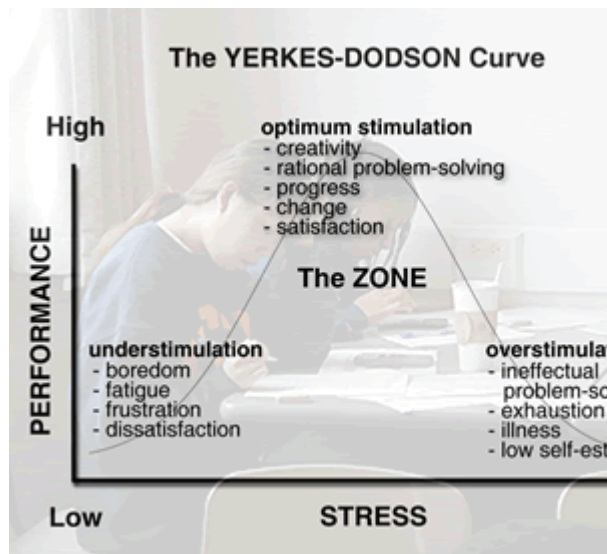
According to D.M. Pestonjee, the modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also

a world of stress. One finds stress everywhere, whether it be within the family, business or any other social or economic activity. Right from the time of birth till the last breath drawn, an individual is invariably exposed to various stressful situations. Thus, it is not surprising that interest in the issue has been rising with the advancement of the present century which has been called the 'Age of Anxiety and Stress'.

The relationship between stress and performance is one of the most researched phenomena in the field of psychology. A hundred years ago two psychologists, Yerkes and Dodson, set out to study how stress affects performance. They summarized their findings in the following graph:



YERKES-DODSON Curve



They also discovered that just the right amount of stress actually enhances performance. In other words, you need some stress to perform at your best. “Some stress” is relative to each individual—what may be a lot of stress for you might not be for someone else. What matters is that you learn how to recognize when your stress is getting too high and your performance is starting to suffer. At that moment you can apply tools to reduce your stress to its optimal level.

Now that we understand the relation between stress and performance let us go through the process and techniques involved in stress management:-

A. Create awareness about stress

- Stress can be experienced both positively and negatively. As a source of both energy and discomfort.
- Stress affects one’s health status.
- One’s perception of events plays a key role in determining their stressfulness.
- One needs to identify the sources of one’s stress.
- One need to be able to recognize signals from body and behavior which tells that one is failing to manage stress.
- One needs to change unhealthy reactions to stress.
- One can help others to cope with stress.

This can be done through week end seminars/lectures, display of posters, weekly interactive forums for employees.

B. Avoid unnecessary stress

Not all stress can be avoided, and it’s not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed. However, there are number of stressors that an



employee can eliminate from his life.

- Learn how to say “no” – Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, refuse to accept added responsibilities when you’re close to reaching them. Taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.
- Avoid people who stress you out – If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can’t turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.
- Take control of your environment – If the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic’s got you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.
- Avoid hot-button topics – If you get upset over religion or politics, cross them off your

conversation list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it’s the topic of discussion.

- Pare down your to-do list – Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you’ve got too much on your plate, distinguish between the “should” and the “musts.” Drop tasks that aren’t truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

C. Alter the situation

If you can’t avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Figure out what you can do to change things so the problem doesn’t present itself in the future. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

- Express your feelings instead of bottling them up. If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don’t voice your feelings, resentment will build and the



situation will likely remain the same.

- Be willing to compromise. When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.
- Be more assertive. Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them. For example – if you are on the verge of completing your targets and a chatty colleague just enters, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk.
- Manage your time better. Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused. But if you plan ahead and make sure you don't overextend yourself, you can alter the amount of stress you're under.

D. Adapt to the stressor

If you can't change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

- Reframe problems. Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.
- Look at the big picture. Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- Adjust your standards. Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay



with “good enough” instead of “perfect”.

- Focus on the positive. When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.
- Adjusting your attitude. How you think can have a profound effect on your emotional and physical well-being. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation. If you see good things about yourself, you are more likely to feel good; the reverse is also true. Eliminate words such as "always," "never," "should," and "must." These are telltale marks of self-defeating thoughts.

E. Accept the things you can't change

- Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond our control— particularly the behavior of other people.

Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.

- Look for the upside. As the saying goes, “What doesn't kill us makes us stronger.” When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth
- Share your feelings. Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.
- Learn to forgive. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments
- Set aside relaxation time.
- Connect with others.
- Do something you enjoy every day.
- Keep your sense of humor
- Learn the relaxation response.



- It's been well-documented that humor and laughter can reduce stress_and provide many other benefits. And few areas of life are more stressful than the workplace. So, not surprisingly, it's been found that office humor can be a good stress-reliever, reducing job stress, boosting morale, bringing people closer, and perhaps even warding off burnout. According to recent research from Professor Christopher LeGrow from Marshall University, workplace humor can help people distress. By Elizabeth Scott, M.S.

F. Adopt a healthy lifestyle

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health. It's the personal commitment that makes the difference.

- Exercise regularly
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Reduce caffeine and sugar.
- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.
- Get enough sleep. .

G. Employee Welfare

An organization relies on its employees for success. Improving welfare of employees' helps them to perform better. Large companies are moving in the direction of providing stress management training and employee assistance programmes (EAP) to improve the ability of workers to cope with difficult situations. Stress management programmes teach workers about the nature and sources of stress, the effects of stress on health, and the personal skills to reduce stress – for example, time management or relaxation exercises. EAPs provide individual counseling for employees with both work and personal problems. Stress management training may rapidly reduce stress symptoms such as anxiety and sleep disturbances; it also has the advantage of being inexpensive and easy to implement. Such programmes can significantly reduce sick leave, and engender a more productive staff.



Stress Management Techniques

Stress management techniques	Description
Undertake a stress audit	Organization decides to take a peep into mental cum physical health status of its employees. Questionnaire and interviews are used to collect data on various stressors, coping techniques and outcomes.
Use scientific inputs	Spread awareness and information about effective dealing with stress, both inside and outside the organization.
Check with the company doctor	The medical officer can conduct stress management programmers.
Spread the message	The importance of regular work habits, leisure, diet, exercise and practicing personal relaxation should be emphasized.

- The beneficial effects on stress symptoms are often short-lived.
- They often ignore important root cause of stress because they focus on the worker and very little on the work environment.

So, take action within first 60 seconds of stress - "fight or flight !!"

However, stress management programmes have two major disadvantages: