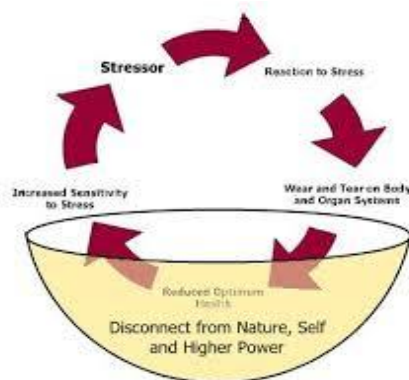


STRESS MANAGEMENT –COPING STRATEGIES**Kamini Sharma, Ph. D.***Assist. Professor , School of Education , D.Y. Patil University, Sector -7, Nerul, Navi Mumbai.***Introduction**

Stress is an emotion or bodily reaction to physical, psychological or emotional demands. Stress produces numerous physical and mental symptoms which vary according to each individual's situational factors. These can include physical health decline as well as depression. The process of stress management is as one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society.



Stress process

Stress is what we feel when we have to handle more than we are used to. When we are stressed, our body responds as we are in danger. It makes hormones that speed up our heart, make breathe faster and give a burst of energy.

Stress levels

Sometimes it is clear where stress is coming from. You can count on stress during a major life change such as the death of a loved one, getting married or having a baby. But other times it may not be so clear why you feel stressed. It's important to figure out what causes stress for you. Everyone feels and responds to stress differently.

Stress levels

Physical Stress level

Muscles become tense, joints become stiff, breath is shorter, hearts beats faster, energies are low.

Emotional Stress level

Feel inferior, tenseness around us and within, feeling state is fragile.

Mental Stress

Confusion, uncertainty, an inability to make clear decisions, just need sometime out to regroup.

Symptoms of Stress

Stress is associated with physiological symptoms, i.e. characteristic of sympathetic nervous system activity. These symptoms relate to the fight/flight response and are summarized below, together with the psychological symptoms of stress, both the subjective(how a person feels) and the behavioral' s(how a person acts),although there is some overlap in these areas. The symptoms vary among individuals because of the differing sensitivities of organs to the experience of stress.

Types of Stress

It is mainly of two types: Eustress & Distress

Eustress is a positive form of stress that motivates individuals to attain higher levels of performance and achievement. It is a source of motivation that provides the stimulus for personal growth and professional development. It can provide the extra courage, energy and drive needed to excel in a demanding carrier or in the fulfillment of a personal goal.

Distress is damaging stress that has unpleasant, harmful side effects. Distress is a feeling out of control. Distress is your body telling you in less than subtle ways that it has had enough of this nonsense.

Causes of Stress

Stress may be due to Psychological stressors or internal factors and Environments stressors or external factors.

Psychological stressors or internal factors-

An individual's susceptibility to a stressed situation depends on the following factors.

Personality type: The individual's proneness to stress is determined by his personality.

Perception: An individual's perception is colored by the values, attitudes, needs and expectations he holds. As the perceptions of people differ, so also does their proneness to stress.

Past experience: also contributes in the process. As one gets used to a typical stressful situation

One can develop immunity to it.

Feelings: are what makes one unique and hence plays an important role in susceptibility to stress.

Environmental Stressors or External factors-

External factors fall into two broad categories: acute and chronic.

Acute stress

Acute stress is the most common form of stress among humans worldwide. Acute stress deals with the pressures of the near future or dealing with the very recent past. This type of stress is often misinterpreted for being a negative connotation. While this is the case in some circumstances, it is also a good thing to have some acute stress in life. Running or any other form of exercise is considered an acute stressor. Some exciting or exhilarating experiences such as riding a roller coaster is an acute stress but is usually very fun. Acute stress is a short term stress and in result, does not have enough time to do the damage that long term stress causes.

Chronic stress

Chronic stress is unlike acute stress. It has a wearing effect on people that can become a very serious health risk if it continues over a long period of time. Chronic stress can lead to memory loss, damage special recognition and produce a decreased drive of eating. The severity varies from person to person and also sex difference can be an underlying factor. Women are able to take longer durations of stress than men without showing the same maladaptive changes. Men can deal with shorter stress duration better than women can but once males hit a certain threshold, the chances of them developing mental issues increases drastically.

Job Stressors for Teachers and Administrators

1. Climate of the institution: As a source of stress, the institutional climate encompasses all of the organization stressors, whether the climate is conducive and free, are the general policies of the management of the institutions known to all the employees, whether all are

aware of institution's mission or direction. This can either contribute to the individual's enthusiasm or hinder the ability to cope.

2. Supervisory practice: This involves the way in which the head/ supervisor talks to listens to or makes demands on the staff. The statements and non-verbal contributes to stress or distress.

3. Job Policies: This is found in many institutions and organization. It is a stress to impress those in authority. Too much of policies can result in uncertainty, waste, inefficiency, jealousy, misguided efforts-all of which potentially lead to stress.

4. A poor communication system: Often orders are given indirectly and staff are ill-informed.

5. Human Resource Development: This refers to the fact of whether the institution retain their employees help them to develop or not.

6. Incentive and Rewards: This involves the financial and psychological incentives give recognizing the worth of the individual.

7. Overload of work: This is when a single employee is given the assignment of and unreasonable tasks to accomplish within a given period of time.

Other Sources of Job Stress

Relationship at work: This source of stress has to do with those in authority, one's subordinates and colleagues. High stress could lead to low relationship, which include low trust, supportiveness and low interests in listening to any trying to deal with problems that confront these organizational members.

Career development: Two major clusters of potential stressors can be identified in this area:
Lack of job security-fear of redundancy, obsolescence or early retirement
Status incongruity-under or over promotion or frustration at having reached one's career ceiling,

Organizational structure-Another potential source of organizational stress is simply being in the organization and the threat to an individual's freedom, autonomy and identify that this process. Criticism such as little or no participation in the decision making process, lack of effective consultation and communication, restrictions on behavior and action to be taken together with internal policies are sources of stress.

Managing Stress in a workplace

There are many strategies of coping with stress in a workplace. Some of these strategies are for individuals while others are geared towards organizations.



Individual Coping Strategies-

- a) **Exercise**-Regular exercise leads to fewer chances of heart attacks, less tension and stress, more confidence and greater optimism.
- b) **Yoga and tension**-Yoga is a structured set of exercises and body movements with deep breathing and concentration of mind so as to reduce stress. Meditation involves concentration of mind away from stress producing areas, sitting in a comfortable position, closing eyes and clearing the mind from all disturbing thoughts.
- c) **Relaxation**-Coping with stress requires adaptation. Proper relaxation is an effective way to adapt. Examples of relaxation include taking regular vacations and going to a hill station or any other quiet place or taking short, regular-breaks during one's normal work day.
- d) **Readjusting life-goals**-Very often, stress is induced because an individual sets high goals and expectations for himself in too little time. This is often accompanied by fear of failure. Readjustment of life goals in turn with available time, resources, energy and capacity with reduce stress.
- e) **Social support**-This includes soliciting a friend's emotional support in times of trouble. Families can also be a great source of support.
- f) **Role Management**-One more strategy of managing stress is where an individual actively works to avoid role overload, role conflict and role ambiguity. This includes asking for clarifications from one's boss, learning to say 'no' etc.
- g) **Bio-feedback**-This is a methodology designed to alter undesirable physiological responses through psychological strategies. Sophisticated electronic instruments are used to measure small undesirable changes caused by stress. Then a state of relaxation is induced so as to reduce stress.

h) **Time Management**-This is an important strategy of managing stress. Very often we hear people say 'I do not have time' Very often we are told by an administrator that his desk is full of pending files and papers. This situation implies a dire need for managing time effectively.



Time management is a process by which an individual manages use of the time available to him/her. All of us have twenty four hours a day to our credit. However, we often observe some people being able to use it effectively, some whiling away their time and some always complaining about shortage of time. In the last category of situation, positive steps are necessary for effective management of time and avoiding wastage of time. This requires appropriate attitude towards and a feeling of importance. Management of time is encompassed by the function of controlling.

Organizational Coping Strategies-

Organizations can also play a role in managing their employees' stress. This is because organizations are partially responsible for producing stress and relieving stress can enhance employees' work performance, job satisfaction, morale and job-related attitudes. These organizational strategies of coping with stress are as follows-a) Institutional Programmes- These are undertaken through established organizational mechanisms such as properly designed jobs and work schedules. Organizational cultures which value individual dignity and reinforce a healthy mix of work and non work activities, democratic leadership styles, an open organizational climate, job enrichment, participative decision making, building teams, etc. will also reduce stress.

b) A collateral stress program is an organizational program specifically created to help employees deal with stress. These include stress management program, physical fitness program promoting humour, psychological counseling, etc as antidotes for stress.

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