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B.Sc. [Psychology]

V - Semester

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STRESS MANAGEMENT

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SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

Stress Management

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INTRODUCTION

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Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. It is the body's reaction to a challenge or demand. People may face stress due to a variety of reasons. These include being under a lot of pressure, worrying about some personal or professional problem, feeling like not being in control of your control, facing some big changes, and so on. Long-term effects of stress can lead to a wide variety of health problems. The management of stress is an extensive spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies whose objective is to control an individual's level of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of and for the motive of improving everyday functioning.

This book, *Stress Management*, is divided into 13 units. It is written with the distance learning student in mind. It is presented in a user-friendly format using a clear, lucid language. Each unit contains an Introduction and a list of Objectives to prepare the student for what to expect in the text. At the end of each unit are a Summary and a list of Key Words, to aid in recollection of concepts learnt. All units contain Self Assessment Questions and Exercises, and strategically placed Check Your Progress questions so the student can keep track of what has been discussed.

BLOCK - I
CONCEPT OF STRESS

Stress Management:
Stress

UNIT 1 STRESS MANAGEMENT:
STRESS

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Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Definitions
 - 1.2.1 Models of Stress
 - 1.2.2 Theories of Stress
- 1.3 Stress Reactions
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Stress is a state of mind that reflects certain biochemical reactions in the human body and is projected by a sense of anxiety, tension and depression and is caused by such demands by the environmental forces or internal forces that cannot be met by the resources available to the person. The intensity of such demands that require a readjustment of resources or operational styles would determine the extent of stress. Such environmental events or conditions that have the potential to induce stress are known as ‘stressors’. In this unit, we will discuss the concept of stress, along with various models and theories on it. We will also focus on stress reactions as well as pain and its management.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of stress
- Discuss the various models and theories of stress
- Describe stress reactions as well as pain and its management

Self-Instructional
Material

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1.2 DEFINITIONS

Medical researcher Hans Selye first used the term ‘stress’ to describe the body’s biological response mechanisms. He defined stress as ‘the nonspecific response of the body to any demand’. It must be understood that for the stress to occur, the response should be non-specific. All responses require utilization of energy. Any demand made on the body that is for some specific activity that is natural, expected and a part of daily routine, does not necessarily create stress. Even walking, thinking, writing and doing physical activities that are a part of personal and organizational existence, require energy consumption of the body but are not necessarily stress producing forces.

Stress does not necessarily occur due to undesirable developments. All situations that produce increased demand on a vital activity requiring adaptation to a new situation, produce stress in the form of a stereotyped pattern of biochemical, functional and structural changes in the human organism. These situations could be fear, pain, fatigue, emotional arousal, humiliation, frustration, need for concentration, loss of blood, drugs, loss of a loved one, non-occurrence of an expected event and even unexpected successes that require a change in the operational style.

The stress created by desirable and successful events is called ‘eustress’ and the stress created by undesirable outcomes is known as ‘distress’. It is primarily the distress form of stress that requires examination and steps to cope with it. Eustress is a positive, healthy and developmental stress response. Thus, just as tension on muscles causes them to strengthen, some level of stress may lead to better performance and a more adjusted personality. Since we learn how to deal with our problems better, it improves our capacity to confront distress better. However, even though some levels of stress are necessary for psychological growth, creative activities and the acquisitions of new skills such as learning to drive a car or learning the use of a computer, it is the highly stressful situations that weaken a person’s physical and psychological capacity to cope with the stressors that have dysfunctional consequences. Just as high-level stress is damaging to the physical and psychological well-being of the person, extremely low levels of stress are equally undesirable for they cause boredom, and result in lack of stimulation, innovation and challenges. Thus, moderate level of stress is necessary for higher level of performance. The following diagram shows the relationship between the level of performance and degree of stress.

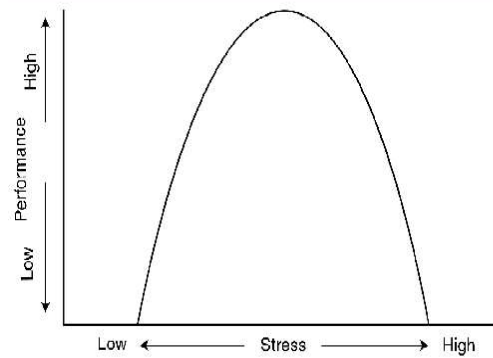


Fig. 1.1 Relationship between Level of Performance and Degree of Stress

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1.2.1 Models of Stress

Stress is an emotion in which the anxiety is so strong that it overwhelms the individual making him or her incapable of managing the simplest of tasks. It is a response of our body to an event or situation that is sudden or unpleasant. The experience of stress can overpower cognitive process and threaten the emotions of the individual with a sense of loss, low self-esteem and helplessness. Psychologists have simplified understanding of stress through different models.

The Stimulus-Based Model of Stress

Holmes and Rahe advanced this theory. It proposed that life changes, either positive or negative, are stressors that tax the adaptation ability of a person, causing physiological and psychological strains that lead to health problems. They created the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS). They speculated that people with higher scores in the SRRS that is, big life changes are more likely to experience physical or mental illness. There is some supporting evidence to this, but the correlation is fairly poor. Moreover, this hypothesis was criticised as ignoring the cognitive aspects of the symptoms of stress. In other words, it does not allow for the individual appraisal of the importance of different life events.

The Response-Based Model of Stress

This model emphasises the common physiological effects of stressful situation. It is expressed in the well-known theory of Hans Selye. It is similar to the 'Fight or Flight' response, which occurs in situation that perceived as very challenging. The response is a physiological one in which arousal of the sympathetic nervous system results in several physiological and somatic changes and eventually loss of homeostasis. Selye transformed this concept into a theoretical model of stress called the General Adaptation Syndrome theory. He defined stress as a non-specific response and demand made upon the body. According to him, different types of stimuli would result in similar physiological responses.

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The Transactional Model of Stress

Lazarus and Folkman (1980) suggested the third method. They criticised the first and the second models listed above as treating people as machines. They believe that people have the capacity to think, assess, and then respond. Thinking will make stress either better or worse. Lazarus developed an interaction theory, which emphasise the role of cognition. This hypothesis suggested that people participate in two-stage method of appraisal:

- **Primary appraisal process:** Decide if the incident poses a risk to the person. This results in three outcomes:
 - o Events treated as insignificant.
 - o Events viewed as positive to well-being.
 - o Events viewed as detrimental to well-being.
- **Secondary assessment process:** Here the individuals evaluate their coping tools. These resources include external conditions, social support or assistance, awareness, and skills to mitigate this threat.

1.2.2 Theories of Stress

Stress has been explained with three ‘Traditions of Thought’:

- The Epidemiological Tradition
- The Psychological Tradition
- The Biological Tradition

The Epidemiological Tradition

The definition of what may constitute a stressful life event has varied over a generation of time. According to the epidemiological perspective, stress has been explained primarily by how others, judge the negative impact of particular events. These explanations are suggestively appropriate in prediction of morbidity due to depression, respiratory infections, and coronary heart disease, disease progression, wound healing, and autoimmune diseases and mortality. The focus of the epidemiological tradition of stress is in determination of circumstances, along with the experiences that may be stressful to a person on and constitute as threats to social or physical well-being of the individual or society.

The Psychological Tradition

The psychological perspective concentrates upon particular observations, that is, the perspective that incidents of the same event can be stressful for some individuals but may not necessarily have any known repercussions on others. This theory dictates that hazard judgment of events is influenced by the immediacy of danger. Moreover, intensity, duration, potential accountability of the event, along with the

self-esteem and the individual's immediate surroundings, ethics, vices, values and commitments, and related personality dispositions all are considered in the psychological tradition of stress. The psychological perspective has defined stress as an experience that may occur when individuals simultaneously appraise life events as hazardous or life threatening and their coping resources or tools to manage the situation maybe imperfect or inadequate.

The Biological Tradition

In the biological approach, the impact of identified stressors is indexed through perturbations of physiological systems that are otherwise important for homeostatic regulation and metabolic control. An assumption in the biological tradition is that these physiological perturbations or responses provide assistance over the short term for adaptive behavioural action or coping. Over the long term, however, such physiological reactions can prove maladaptive and contribute to risk for disease. The biological tradition of stress believes that stress is equivalent to chronic activation of one of the body's principal neuroendocrine axes, the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) system. This school of thought is rooted in the experimental psychophysiology and psychosomatic medicine. According to this, responses of the autonomic nervous system have long figured prominently as markers of stress. These days the biological context of human stress is gaining popularity with concepts characterizing the brain and appraising the psychological and social stressors, which generate physiological reactions that might relate to disease risk.

The focal point of all these three traditions of stress have been formed as the elements of a stage model of disease, wherein events appraised as stressful are viewed as triggering affective states that in turn engender behavioural and biological responses having possible implications for disease.

Check Your Progress

1. Who was the first to use the term stress?
2. What kind of situations usually produce stress?
3. What are the outcomes of primary appraisal process?

1.3 STRESS REACTIONS

The process of stress elicits three types of responses. These are: physiological, psychological and behavioural responses.

Physiological responses

As soon as stress appears, the brain reacts, and immediate biochemical changes take place in heart beat and heightening of practically all the senses. The long

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terms physiological effects are more disturbing. Serious health problems occur as body confronts stress over a long period of time. The stress could lead to breakdowns in the body's immune systems and may result in serious health problems such as high blood pressure, ulcers and heart attack. In general, according to Baron, 'taking all evidence into account though, it seems reasonable to conclude that high level of stress can result in physical changes that threaten our health and well-being'.

Psychological responses

There are some people who can handle stress better than others. People who tend to be highly affected by stress tend to be depressed and lack self-confidence and self-esteem. They tend to believe that they are helpless and elicit sympathy from others. They have greater fear of the unknown and an increased sense of futility, tension and neurotic tendencies. They become irritated quickly, are impatient and tend to blame everybody else for their own problems. They are more worried about their job security and their job commitment is very low.

Behavioural responses

According to Cohen, people under constant stress behave differently as compared to people who are emotionally well-balanced. Stress is usually associated with increased use of alcohol, smoking, eating and sometimes drugs. People under stress may gain weight and thus behave differently. Their behaviour becomes highly defensive or highly aggressive towards others and inter-personal relationships are highly affected. Stress induces irritation and lack of patience and these elements are exhibited in behavioural patterns. The person may become an introvert, may withdraw from social situations and may avoid communication with others resulting in social isolation.

1.4 COPING AND STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Stress is an aspect of our life that cannot be avoided. Since it cannot be eliminated completely, one needs to understand the techniques and strategies to control its effects and thereby enjoy more productive, satisfying lives both at the workplace and away from the workplace. Since the source of stress lies both at the individual level and at the organizational level, the techniques to control the negative impact of stress have to be identified both at the individual and at the organizational level. The management of stress consists of the following three-step process:

- **Awareness:** The first step towards managing stress is to be aware of the symptoms of stress, specially the negative ones. Some of the consequences of stress in terms of physiological, psychological, and behavioural consequences have been discussed earlier.

- **Identifying the source:** Once the symptoms are palpable, the second step is to diagnose the source of the factors that lead to stress.
- **Coping with stress:** After diagnosing the stressors, one needs to develop strategies to cope with them. Stressors can be dealt with in two ways: one is by directly removing or changing them and secondly, by helping individuals modify or manage their emotional feelings and reactions in constructive ways (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988).

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1.4.1 Pain and its Management

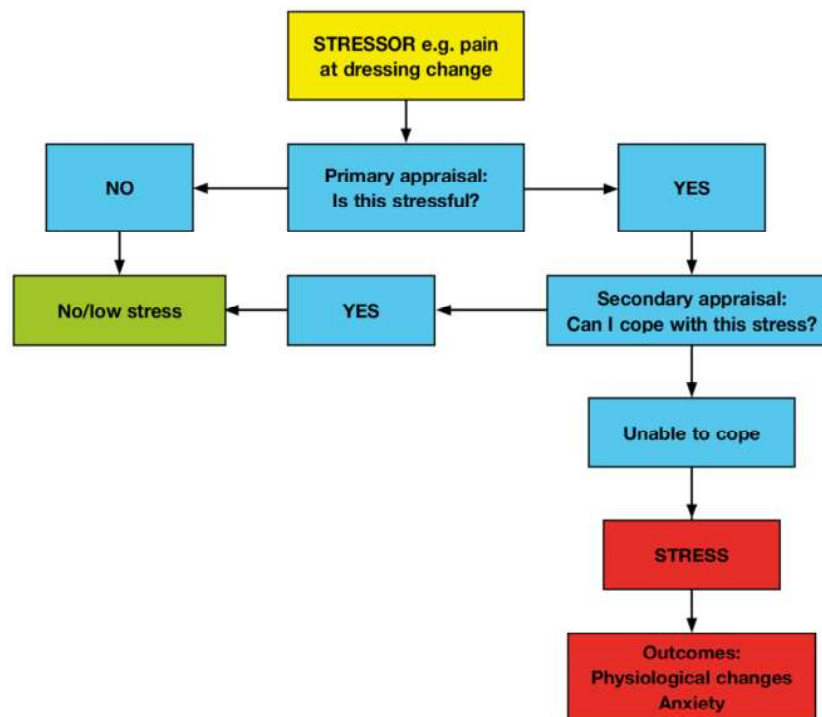
Stress is a reaction to challenges that may be perceived as a threat to the individual including psychological challenges that may limit the individual's coping capacity. Stress-inducing factors are collectively called stressors. Scientific study indicates that when pain, stress and depression become overwhelming and there are few resources available, stress seems to become prominent. It is observed that stressful situations can lower a person's ability to cope with back pain (Ellegaard & Peterson, 2012).

Stress is inevitable in human life. It is a state of disharmony or threatened homeostasis. As the stress increases, the response takes on a more stereotypical nature, termed the 'General Adaptation Syndrome'. Pain and stress share significant concrete and physiological connection. Both phenomena challenge the body's homeostasis and dictate decision-making to help individuals adapt to their environment. Persistence of either stress or pain can compromise the well-being of an individual.

Pain is understood to be the combination of emotional and sensory perceptions including motor behaviours in response to harmful stimuli. The capacity of the individual to adapt to stress and pain by regulating the internal milieu and maintaining stability is termed as *allostasis*. Interestingly, both pain and stress are both adaptive in shielding the individual from further harm, for example, from physical injury or starvation. However, if either of the two processes becomes chronic, it can lead to long-term maladaptive changes in physiology and consequently behaviour, resulting in suffering and compromised well-being.

Pain is one of the common symptoms as well as a good indicator of an anxiety disorder, termed as Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). Many individuals complaining of everyday aches and pains, or the ones suffering from diagnosed chronic pain disease such as arthritis or fibromyalgia are also prone to anxieties. Chronic pain and stress have a correlation. It is stressful to be living with pain day after day. It may also lead to mental health problems.

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Source: <https://www.researchgate.net>

- The International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) defines pain as a sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage.
- A patient's perception of pain can be influenced by psychological, emotional, cognitive and social factors, as well as learned behaviours.
- These might include: the influence of a patient's previous experience of painful and stressful events; the individual differences in strategies adopted by patients for coping with pain; negative social comparisons with other patients at different stages of recovery; and poor mobility or activity levels, to name but a few.

Treatments for stress as well as anxiety disorders shows major breakthrough in chronic pain management. There are various available options that provide relief for pain and anxieties due to associated chronic stress.

- **Medications:** Under the guidance and prescription of a certified medical practitioner medicine for pain as well as anxiety management can be taken.
- **Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT):** It is an effective medium to treat anxiety disorders as well as chronic pain conditions.
- **Relaxation techniques:** It includes breathing retraining, progressive muscle relaxation, and exercise help people develop the ability to cope more effectively with the stresses that contribute to anxiety and pain.

- **Complementary and alternative treatment:** It consists of yoga, acupuncture and massage are among the complementary and alternative techniques that relieve the symptoms of anxiety disorders as well as chronic pain.
- **Exercise:** It induces endorphins that are known to have an innate ability to increase pain bearing threshold. Regular exercise strengthens muscles, reduces stiffness, improves flexibility, and boosts mood and self-esteem. Exercise has to be modified as per individual age and condition.
- **Sleep:** It is perhaps the most underrated lifestyle goal but it is most crucial. Stress and pain do impact sleep and reduced sleep makes you more groggy and grumpy. Practicing sleep hygiene by secluding dark, comfortable space for nap along with fixed bedtime to set the body circadian rhythm. *Yoga nidra*, ambient music and massage help to relax sore muscles and relax mind as well as tired toes.
- **Nutrition:** Proper nutrition can never go wrong in providing healing. At times, simple aches and pains or acidity and maybe insomnia can be treated with appropriate diet. Seeking assistance from nutritionist for evaluation of diet, checking for deficiencies and providing supplements has always benefitted in chronic pain and stress management.
- **Fear-avoidance training:** It involves therapeutic education, instruction on active pain management techniques and routine exposure to activities that the patient may have avoided in the past. People with chronic pain may avoid movement and activity and not get enough activity due to their fear of re-injury or pain. Psychotherapists, psychologists, and social workers can work with patients to improve coping skills and develop strategies to reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep problems.
- **Mindful practices:** These practices are gaining popularity in helping people with pain and stress management. Some common therapies that are practiced by certified practitioners are relaxation techniques, meditation, biofeedback, music therapy, art therapy, pet therapy, reiki, guided imagery, aromatherapy, healing touch, hypnosis, etc.

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1.4.2 Psychological Reactions of a Patient to Loss

Loss may seem unnatural but it is a hard truth of life. Loss cannot be defined as it has many forms and each individual reacts to it differently. Living a life with sense of loss can be hard, especially initially when it hits you and leads to rock bottom. Loss is experienced in form of life events that are sad: maybe death of a loved one or of a pet, loss of family life as you've known it-a separation, divorce, and unemployment, loss of an intimate relationship and loneliness or a chronic health issue of self or dear one.

Grief is a strong feeling expressed as shock, anger, resentment, sadness, guilt, relief, and despair. It is a reaction to a sense of loss. An individual who is

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grieving is most likely disconnected with joys of life as he/she is thinking a lot about the person, who is no longer in their life or is reflecting on the failed relationship or employment. Grief can be expressed with physical responses to stress and loss as in upset stomach, muscle tension, crying, changes to sleeping or eating patterns, exhaustion, or difficulty concentrating.

Loss follows grief and grieving is cyclic

Present day psychologists and counsellors understand that there is a pattern which people go through, starting with shock and disbelief. This pattern has been called the cycle of grief.

- **Shock:** This is the first reaction to loss-shock and complete disbelief. The event seems unreal and the individual may seem numb, withdrawn, and detached. It is possible for the person to be disoriented and not know how to move forward in life. An inescapable nightmare may seem like the truth. Many people quickly experience complex and confused feelings-anger, guilt, despair, emptiness, helplessness and hopelessness.
- **Denial:** When the shock begins to wear off, many people go through a stage of denial during which they cannot accept the reality of the loss. It may seem that they are ignoring the situation and behaving unnaturally as if the hard truth doesn't exist.
- **Anger and guilt:** Denial is followed by guilt making sufferers feel that the situation is their fault somehow, which leads to anger. Seeking answer to why has this happened and to find blame, either in themselves or others overcomes the thought process of the person in grief and can cause behaviour issues and temper tantrums.
- **Despair and depression:** Chronic sense of doom and despair follows with people feeling that there is little purpose in life and nothing of interest in the outside world. People sometimes begin to question their own sanity and may have mental health issues.
- **Acceptance:** Eventually the loss may start to feel real and the phase of depression may fizzle and the individual may begin to accept the loss. This usually happens with the passage of time and as the pain eases, we are able to think about our loved one and recall the past without feelings of devastation. This can take up to a year or longer. Grief is extremely unbearable in the beginning. The shock of loss is so great that it overpowers and clouds the mind until the reality sinks in, delaying the healing. The grieving process is necessary. This period of grieving allows to lament the loss while one reflects on lessons learnt. It can be a difficult and sometimes lonely experience, however such a process can be cathartic for the person experiencing grief. Some may start thinking of making positive changes in their lives by renewing

old interests perhaps or taking up new pursuits. Some people may see such enjoyment as betrayal to the person lost, however, the past is always a part of us and is not affected by enjoying the present, or planning for the future.

1.4.3 Stages of Acceptance by Kubler-Ross

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross was born on July 8, 1926 in Zürich, Switzerland, and lived her life through August 24, 2004. She was a Swiss-American psychiatrist and is considered as a pioneer in near-death studies. She is a well-known author of the internationally best-selling book, *On Death and Dying* (1969). In this book, she discusses her theory of the five stages of grief, also known as the 'Kübler-Ross model'.

Kübler-Ross played a pivotal role in the hospice movement and her string notion that euthanasia prevents people from completing their 'unfinished business' was acknowledged by the world. She gained respect as the first individual who transformed the way that the world looks at the terminally-ill. She is the driving force towards building hospice-care, palliative-care, and near-death research, and was the first to bring terminally ill individuals' lives to attention. Treat the dying with dignity was her message to the medical fraternity. When Elisabeth Kübler-Ross shifted her residence to the US in 1958 she was appalled by how the hospitals dealt with chronically ill and near death patients. Dispassionately, patients who were terminally ill were literally left alone, with nobody to talk to them.

Kübler-Ross described in her theory the cycle of grieving that an individual goes through when experiencing loss, sickness or death:

- Denial-No, not me, it cannot be true.
- Anger-Why me?
- Bargaining -Attempting to postpone death with good behaviour.
- Depression-Reacting to the situation negatively.
- Acceptance—maintaining composure.

Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance are all part of defence mechanism that help to deal with extremely difficult situations and sense of extreme loss. However, not all people who experience grief go through all these stages. Some people may skip past some of the stages. The duration of each stage of grief may also vary from person to person depending on various reasons.

Check Your Progress

4. Mention the three types of reactions elicited by stress.
5. Define allostasis.
6. What do you mean by grief?

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1.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Medical researcher Hans Selye first used the term 'stress' to describe the body's biological response mechanisms.
2. Situations such as fear, pain, fatigue, emotional arousal, humiliation, frustration, need for concentration, loss of blood, drugs, loss of a loved one, non-occurrence of an expected event and even unexpected successes that require a change in the operational style usually produce stress.
3. Primary appraisal process involves deciding if the incident poses a risk to the person. This results in three outcomes:
 - a. Events treated as insignificant.
 - b. Events viewed as positive to well-being.
 - c. Events viewed as detrimental to well-being.
4. The process of stress elicits three types of responses. These are: physiological, psychological and behavioural responses.
5. The capacity of the individual to adapt to stress and pain by regulating the internal milieu and maintaining stability is termed as allostasis.
6. Grief is a strong feeling expressed as shock, anger, resentment, sadness, guilt, relief, and despair. It is a reaction to a sense of loss. An individual who is grieving is most likely disconnected with joys of life as he/she is thinking a lot about the person, who is no longer in their life or is reflecting on the failed relationship or employment.

1.6 SUMMARY

- Stress is a state of mind that reflects certain biochemical reactions in the human body and is projected by a sense of anxiety, tension and depression and is caused by such demands by the environmental forces or internal forces that cannot be met by the resources available to the person.
- Medical researcher Hans Selye defined stress as 'the nonspecific response of the body to any demand'.
- All situations that produce increased demand on a vital activity requiring adaptation to a new situation, produce stress in the form of a stereotyped pattern of bio-chemical, functional and structural changes in the human organism.

- The stress created by desirable and successful events is called ‘eustress’ and the stress created by undesirable outcomes is known as ‘distress’.
- The experience of stress can overpower cognitive process and threaten the emotions of the individual with a sense of loss, low self-esteem and helplessness. Psychologists have simplified understanding of stress through different models.
- Stress has been explained with three ‘Tradition of Thought’: The epidemiological tradition; the psychological tradition; and the biological tradition.
- According to the epidemiological perspective, stress has been explained primarily by how others judge the negative impact of particular events.
- The process of stress elicits three types of responses. These are: physiological, psychological and behavioural responses.
- As soon as stress appears, the brain reacts, and immediate biochemical changes take place in heart beat and heightening of practically all the senses.
- People who tend to be highly affected by stress tend to be depressed and lack self-confidence and self-esteem. They tend to believe that they are helpless and elicit sympathy from others.
- According to Cohen, people under constant stress behave differently as compared to people who are emotionally well-balanced. Stress is usually associated with increased use of alcohol, smoking, eating and sometimes drugs.
- Stress is an aspect of our life that cannot be avoided. Since it cannot be eliminated completely, one needs to understand the techniques and strategies to control its effects and thereby enjoy more productive, satisfying lives both at the workplace and away from the workplace.
- Pain and stress share significant concrete and physiological connection. Both phenomena challenge the body’s homeostasis and dictate decision-making to help individuals adapt to their environment.
- Loss may seem unnatural but it is a hard truth of life. Loss cannot be defined as it has many forms and each individual reacts to it differently.
- Grief is a strong feeling expressed as shock, anger, resentment, sadness, guilt, relief, and despair. It is a reaction to a sense of loss.
- Present day psychologists and counsellors understand that there is a pattern which people go through, starting with shock and disbelief. This pattern has been called the cycle of grief.
- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross was born on July 8, 1926 in Zürich, Switzerland, and lived her life through August 24, 2004.

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- Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance are all part of defence mechanism that help to deal with extremely difficult situations and sense of extreme loss.

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1.7 KEY WORDS

- **Fibromyalgia:** It is a disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory and mood issues.
- **Yoga Nidra:** Yoga nidra or yogic sleep is a state of consciousness between waking and sleeping, like the ‘going-to-sleep’ stage, typically induced by a guided meditation.
- **Reiki:** It is a Japanese form of alternative medicine called energy healing.
- **Hospice Movement:** The ‘hospice movement’ is an umbrella term for the growth of end of life and palliative care services in the UK over the past 50 years or so – both in the voluntary and statutory sectors.

1.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Give the definitions of stress.
2. What is the three-step process in the management of stress?
3. How are pain and stress correlated?
4. Write a short note on stages of acceptance by Kubler-Ross.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the different theories of stress.
2. Discuss the responses elicited by stress.
3. Describe the various options for the management of pain.
4. Discuss the cycle of grief in detail.

1.9 FURTHER READINGS

Cartwright, S. and C. L. Cooper. 1997. *Managing Workplace Stress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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Stress*

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UNIT 2 ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

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Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Concept of Organizational Stress
 - 2.2.1 Different Perspectives of Organizational Stress
 - 2.2.2 Symptoms
 - 2.2.3 Individual Factors Influencing Job Stress
- 2.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Words
- 2.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 2.7 Further Readings

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Job stress isn't necessarily awful. In the workplace, a little bit of stress will help you remain focused, energetic and ready to face new challenges. During a presentation or any significant task, this is what keeps you on your toes to avoid injuries or costly errors. Yet in today's hectic environment, the office seems to be an emotional roller coaster. Employees feel anxious, exhausted, and frustrated by long hours, tight deadlines, and ever-increasing demands. Stress stops being helpful when it exceeds a person's capacity to cope and starts causing harm to mind and body, as well as to work satisfaction. In this unit, we will discuss the concept of organizational stress, along with different perspectives regarding it. We will also focus on the symptoms of job stress and individual factors influencing it.

2.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the concept of organizational stress
- Discuss the different perspectives of organizational stress
- Describe the symptoms of job stress

2.2 CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

Work stress can have a disastrous effect on the quality of life and the quality of work life. It has no boundaries. It can affect men and women, executives and presidents, and people of all nationalities. The American Institute of Stress estimates that about \$300 billion is lost every year because of work-related stress and its

after-effects— lower productivity, higher employee turnover, higher absenteeism, medical costs, and alcoholism (Galinsky et al. 2001). Routine cardiac screening at the Escorts Heart Institute in Delhi suggests that most executives of corporations are highly stressed out. According to the CEO of Bajaj Electricals, Shekhar Bajaj, ‘finally corporate India is waking up to the fact that a lot of human potential is being drained away because of stress and burnout’ (Chowdhary and Menon, 1997).

Stress is caused by a several factors such as quantitative or qualitative work overloads, ethical dilemmas, negative relationships with bosses and colleagues, and uncertainties in life. Although stress can sometimes act as a challenge, too much of it for too long a time has a negative impact on both our work life and our personal life (distress). The notion of management of stress basically focuses on the management of distress.

What is Stress?

When confronted with an uncomfortable situation like appearing for an interview, giving a formal speech, missing a deadline or ending of an important relationship, different people will have different feelings and reactions—some negative and some positive. Stress refers to the body’s physiological, emotional, and psychological responses to an individual’s well-being. When the response is in the form of a deviation from healthy functioning, the state is called distress (Quick et al. 1997). The reaction which activates and motivates people to achieve their goals, change their environment, and face life’s challenges is called eustress. In other words, this is the stress that is required for survival. However, most research focuses on distress because it is a significant concern in the organizational setting (Sauter and Murphy 1995).

2.2.1 Different Perspectives of Organizational Stress

Experiencing organizational stress is related to health problems and their associated costs. A study based on more than 46,000 U.S. employees showed that health care costs were 46% higher for workers who experienced high levels of stress (Goetzl et al., 1998). Organizational stress is assumed to be related to increased absenteeism which is associated with high costs for organizations (Moreau et al., 2004). On the most general level, one can differentiate between four models of stress, which have been already discussed in the Unit 1:

- **The Stimulus concept:** The stimulus concept concentrates on situational conditions or events. Certain stimuli time pressure, interpersonal conflict at work, or accidents are considered stressful.
- **The Response concept:** The response concept by Selye (1956) proposes attention on physiological consequence as the crucial constituent of stress. Stress exists if an individual shows a precise reactive pattern, irrespective of situational characteristics.

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- **The Transactional concept:** Lazarus in 1966 offered the transactional concept brought forward that assumes stress results from an altercation between the individual and the environment.
- **The Discrepancy concept:** The discrepancy concept by Edwards (1992) describes stress as incompatibility between what an individual desires and what the environment provides.

2.2.2 Symptoms

Stress is understood by its different forms which may be either temporary or long-term, mild or severe.

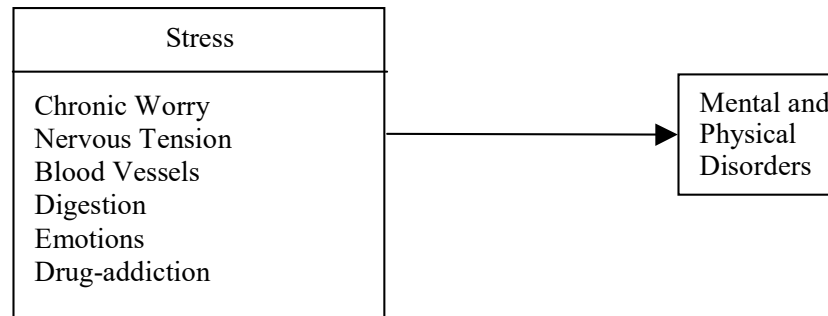


Fig. 2.1 Symptoms of Stress

The form of stress, if temporary and mild, cannot be distressing. One can recover from it easily. Many employees find stress merely superfluous but they suffer temporarily with such strenuous work. When an employee finds himself under a new and unknown situation with a different environment, he faces mild stress. He is unable to cope with the new situation. Conflicts take place and he becomes restless. When he becomes accustomed with the new situation and adjusts to it, the stress diminishes gradually. The forms of stress are mild, stiffer and chronic.

- **Milder form:** The milder form of stress is visible in digestive problems, high blood pressure, nervousness and inability to relax and insomnia.
- **Stiffer form:** If the stress is not prevented at the initial milder stage, it becomes the stiffer form.
- **Chronic form:** Chronic worry, insomnia, frustration, instability and uncooperative attitude are developed if stress is not checked initially. If high intensity stress continues for an extended duration, problems arise. An individual suffering from high intensity stress cannot cope with problems, as the human body cannot rebuild its strength for a longer period. Stress is removed by the body as it has the capacity of homeostasis. Long stressed body weakens people psychologically. This is known as Burn-out. The next chronic form of stress is trauma.
 - o **Burn-out:** Individuals are emotionally exhausted under 'Burn-out'. They are detached from work and are unable to achieve their

objectives. There are many jobs wherein burn-outs are experienced often. Intellectuals and professionals face burn-out because they suffer from continuous high stress. Managers and executives in an organisation are prone to burn-out. They have to resort to physiological and psychological therapy to reduce the recurrence of burn-out. Employees prone to burn-out experience certain symptoms. They face irritation, errors in work, frustration and apathy. They find their job monotonous. Often, they tend to leave their present job and face many problems while taking up new jobs. Organisations have to prevent situations which indicate symptoms of burn-out. Employees are told how to cope with stressful situations. Many organisations arrange yoga and meditation programs to prevent their employees from reaching this condition of a 'burn-out'.

- o **Trauma:** The most serious form of stress is 'trauma'. It occurs in a hostile atmosphere wherein employees do not find adjusting easy with the continuous stress. The workplace contributes significantly in the development of trauma—the work strains, social reactions to jobs, acute insecurity at workplace and beyond. The increasing incidence of terrorism and extortion has caused trauma to highly placed employees. Any hazardous occupation creates trauma at work as well as after work. Post-traumatic stress disorder is equally disturbing. The workplace trauma is often visible in the form of harassment, wrongful termination, biased attitudes and discrimination. Many times, employees assume responsibilities and find themselves in an emotional tailspin. Organisations witnessing the symptoms of trauma take serious steps to prevent its recurrence. Satisfaction, clarification and mutual help avoid trauma.

2.2.3 Individual Factors Influencing Job Stress

Individual factors such as personal characteristics, life changes and role perceptions create stress in different forms at different levels.

- **Personal characteristics:** It includes personality traits such as masculinity, extroversion, rigidity, spontaneity, locus of control, etc., which are potent causes of stress. These factors in themselves create tension and confusion. These traits are known as 'Type A personality'. Managers, specialists, secretaries, scientists and other professionals possess Type A personality. They have stable characteristics and experience stress because of chronic and incessant struggle to achieve more and more. They are more emotional and sensitive to achieve organisational goals. Such persons compete with others as well as with themselves based on their past achievements. They are prone to stress very easily as they are frustrated with the slightest decline in their achievement. On the contrary, 'Type B personality' is not very sensitive and is a less potent cause of stress. Persons of Type B personality are not

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concerned with time and are relaxed, mild, slow, carefree and less objective-oriented. Type B personality has patience and coolness which are required for top executives.

- **Life changes:** Life and career changes are stress-producing. Fast changes are more dangerous than the slow changes as fast changes have graver stress. Heart attacks are commonly observed in the case of fast changes in life and careers. Family problems as well as swift promotions are cases of fast changes. Economic and social problems are attached with life changes. A belief in locus of control decides the destiny. Internals, i.e. people who believe in work, are more stress prone than the externals, i.e. people who depend on god for success and failure.
- **Role perceptions:** Individuals have multiple roles to perform successfully. A person has to work as a father, husband, boss, junior, friend and so on. In his diverse roles, he comes into contact with stress as it is difficult to perform equally well in all the diverse roles. In a job, for example, he has to face role ambiguity, poor communication, role conflicts, and overloads of different roles. Stress factors are additive. It is necessary to control stress in the initial stages itself.

Check Your Progress

1. How much money is lost due to job stress according to the American Institute of Stress?
2. Define distress.
3. What is eustress?

2.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The American Institute of Stress estimates that about \$300 billion is lost every year because of work-related stress and its after-effects.
2. Stress refers to the body's physiological, emotional, and psychological responses to an individual's well-being. When the response is in the form of a deviation from healthy functioning, the state is called distress.
3. The reaction which activates and motivates people to achieve their goals, change their environment, and face life's challenges is called eustress.

2.4 SUMMARY

- Stress stops being helpful when it exceeds a person's capacity to cope and starts causing harm to mind and body, as well as to work satisfaction.

- Work stress can have a disastrous effect on the quality of life and the quality of work life. It has no boundaries. It can affect men and women, executives and presidents, and people of all nationalities.
- Stress is caused by a several factors such as quantitative or qualitative work overloads, ethical dilemmas, negative relationships with bosses and colleagues, and uncertainties in life.
- Stress refers to the body's physiological, emotional, and psychological responses to an individual's well-being. When the response is in the form of a deviation from healthy functioning, the state is called distress
- Stress is understood by its different forms which may be either temporary or long-term, mild or severe.
- Individual factors such as personal characteristics, life changes and role perceptions create stress in different forms at different levels.
- Personal characteristics includes personality traits such as masculinity, extroversion, rigidity, spontaneity, locus of control, etc., which are potent causes of stress. These factors in themselves create tension and confusion.
- Life and career changes are stress-producing. Fast changes are more dangerous than the slow changes as fast changes have graver stress.
- Individuals have multiple roles to perform successfully. A person has to work as a father, husband, boss, junior, friend and so on.

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2.5 KEY WORDS

- **The American Institute of Stress:** The American Institute of Stress (AIS), established in 1978, is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing knowledge of mind-body relationships and the role of stress in health and illness.
- **Absenteeism:** It is a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation without good reason. Absenteeism has been viewed as an indicator of poor individual performance, as well as a breach of an implicit contract between employee and employer.

2.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on organizational stress.
2. Briefly explain the different perspectives on organizational stress.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the different symptoms of organizational stress.
2. Discuss the individual factors affecting organizational stress.

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2.7 FURTHER READINGS

Cartwright, S. and C. L. Cooper. 1997. *Managing Workplace Stress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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UNIT 3 CAUSES OF JOB STRESS

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Properties of Work and Work Setting
 - 3.2.1 Organizational Structure and Change
 - 3.2.2 Job Role
 - 3.2.3 Shift Work
 - 3.2.4 Machine Pacing
 - 3.2.5 Responsibility for People
 - 3.2.6 Interpersonal Relationships
- 3.3 Personal Characteristics
- 3.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Key Words
- 3.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 3.8 Further Readings

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the work-related stress is at all-time high due to the nature of work, which is changing at a rapid pace. Employees are working long hours, for less pay, and that too at poor economic times. This results in fear, uncertainty and, stress. As we have discussed in previous units, stress is the result of emotional, physical, social, economic or other factors that require a response to change. Job stress, then, is the harmful response that can occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the employee. In this unit, we will discuss the causes of stress, including personal characteristics and organizational characteristics like organizational structure and change, properties of work and work setting, job role, machine pacing, and shift work.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the causes of stress in detail
- Discuss the personal characteristics resulting in stress
- Describe the organizational characteristics resulting in stress

3.2 PROPERTIES OF WORK AND WORK SETTING

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Almost every aspect of work can be a stressor for someone. Even though there are many factors in the work environment that have some influence on the extent of stress that people experience at the job, the following factors have been shown to be particularly strong in inducing stress.

3.2.1 Organizational Structure and Change

The nature of the job itself can determine the type and degree of stress that can be induced. Some jobs lead to more stress-related responses than others. For example, such jobs as that of a police officer, or air traffic controller are often considered to be low-stress jobs. In general, high stress occupations are those in which the employees have little control over their operations, work under time constraints and have major responsibilities for human or financial resources. Persons working under threatening working conditions such as temperature extremes, pollution, uncomfortable lighting and ventilation and loud noise are also vulnerable to high stress.

According to one study, some of the high-stress jobs are: foreman, manager, inspector, waitress or waiter and clinical lab technician. On the contrary, some of the low stress jobs are: college professor, personnel worker, craft worker, farm labourer and so on. Studies conducted by Karasek and his colleagues at Columbia University showed a higher risk of coronary disease as a consequence of stress in some jobs and less in others. They identified two job factors that affect the level of such risk. These factors are the ‘level of psychological demand’ and the ‘level of decision control’ over work. People with high psychological demands and low decision control are constantly under pressure, for they must meet the demands imposed upon them without having any say in it. For example, a waitress in a restaurant must wait on the customer as well as depend upon the cook. She is subjected to demands both by the customer as well as the cook with no control over it and thus is subjected to high pressure and risk. According to this study, some of the jobs are categorised as follows:

- Low psychological demand/Low decision control —some of the jobs are: janitor, night watchman, truck driver, billing clerk and so on.
- Low psychological demand/high decision control. The jobs in this category are: auto repair man, sales clerk, peddler, scientist and so on.
- High psychological demand/High decision control. This category contains jobs such as: sales manager, bank officer, physician, school teacher and so on.
- High psychological demand/Low decision control. These jobs carry maximum strain and are those of: waitress, telephone operator, cook, assembly line worker, and so on.

3.2.2 Job Role

A role is a set of activities associated with a certain position in the organization or in the society. According to Kahn, if these work activities are ill-defined, then the person who is carrying out these activities will not behave as others expect him to, because his role is not clearly defined. Thus, when there is a lot of uncertainty regarding job definitions or job expectations, then people experience role ambiguity.

Role ambiguity is particularly strong among managerial jobs where responsibilities are more general in nature and role definitions and task specifications are not clear. This role ambiguity is especially prevalent among companies that have merged or acquired other companies while keeping the employees. Thus, employees become uncertain of what exactly they are supposed to do and exactly whom they should report to. This role ambiguity causes stress. French and Caplan, summarised their study findings as follows: 'In summary, role ambiguity, which appears, to be widespread, (1) produce psychological strain and dissatisfaction, (2) leads to under-utilization of human resources, and (3) leads to feeling of futility on how to cope with the organizational environment.'

Role conflict

Role conflict occurs when two or more persons have different and sometimes opposing expectation of a given individual. Thus, there are two or more sets of pressures on the individual so that it is not possible to satisfy all of them. In other words, role conflict occurs when contradictory demands are simultaneously placed upon an employee. For example, an architect may be expected to produce creative designs, while on the other hand, there may be time constraints put upon him, both roles being in conflict with each other. Similarly, a contractor may ask a carpenter to do something that may be different than what the city building code prescribe, thus causing a role conflict. Another type of role conflict is the inter-role conflict where an individual plays more than one role simultaneously in his life and the demands of these roles conflict with each other. For example, a father may know that his son has committed a crime but does not inform the police or a police officer may be invited to his brother's wedding party where the guests use drugs that is against the law.

Studies conducted by Robert Kahn and his colleagues at the University of Michigan regarding role conflict, lead to the following conclusion:

Contradictory role expectations give rise to opposing role pressures (role conflict), which generally have the following effects on the emotional experience of the focal person: intensified internal conflicts, increased tension associated with various aspects of the job, reduced satisfaction with the job and its various components, and decreased confidence in superiors and in the organization as a whole. The strain experienced by those in conflict situations leads to various coping responses such as social and psychological withdrawal (reduction in communication and attributed influence) among them. Finally, the

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presence of conflict in one's role tends to undermine his relations with his role senders to produce weaker bonds of trust, respect and attraction. It is quite clear that role conflicts are costly for the person in emotional and interpersonal terms. They may be costly to the organization, which depends on effective coordination and collaboration within and among its parts.

Role overload

Role overload occurs when the work requirements are so excessive that employees feel that they do not have adequate time or ability to meet such requirements. Working under time pressure is especially stressful whether it is meeting a deadline for a report or studying near the exam period. The physiological symptoms of stress increase significantly prior to deadline and decrease sharply after the deadline has passed. The role overload can occur either when there is too much work to complete in a given time or when it is too difficult to accomplish because of lack of skills and ability.

Role underload

Role underload occurs when a person's ability is underutilised so that either there is too little work or there is too little variety in the work. If a salesman with high inter-personal skills is given a job in a department store where there are not too many customers, then he will feel that his ability is not being properly utilised. Similarly, assembly line workers whose jobs are routine and highly monotonous also experience role underload.

Role underload leads to excessive absenteeism and such workers show very little interest in the organizational activities. It results in low self-esteem and low work satisfaction. This creates stress with increased frequency of nervous complaints and other health problems. Stress as reflected in role overload and underload can be reflected diagrammatically as follows:

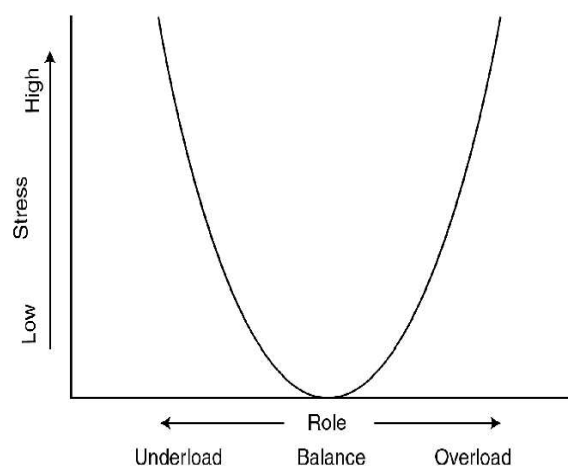


Fig. 3.1 Role Underload and Overload

3.2.3 Shift Work

A large percentage of employees are involved in shift work, with certain day, afternoon, or night-shifts and rotating shift patterns. While some employees happily handle shifting working environments without complications, many others experience severe problems as a result of shift work. Related tension and stress, family life disruption, and disruption of daily food routines can be encountered by people doing shift work and this could affect their job satisfaction in the long run. In addition, night shift work may have major long-term effects on sleeping habits, resulting in greater sympathetic cardiac regulations.

Shift work is a known workplace stressor and is reported to have had the ability to impact people's job satisfaction. Some studies have shown that shift work can contribute to metabolic syndromes. Night shift-work, in particular, has been shown to have more serious health risks across different models of shift work. For instance, a survey of prospective, longitudinal data from the nurses' health study showed an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases among nurses who worked rotating shifts for more than six months relative to nurses who never rotated shifts or who worked rotating shifts for fewer years. In Ruggiero's report, nurses who served during night shifts showed more exhaustion and were more depressed in their mood than their counterparts who had day shifts. It has been documented that nurses suffered from chronic fatigue, which not only affects the quality of patient care, but also raises the risk of health issues such as depression.

3.2.4 Machine Pacing

Many jobs allow workers to pace their own work, while hovering supervisors can put pressure on people to maintain the workload. Some functions, however, are managed, for example, by machines with assembly lines or computer systems. Many typical factories have goods that pass down a conveyor belt with workers lined up to perform a variety of assembly duties. The conveyor belt controls the speed of work because the tasks must be completed in order. Individuals have no flexibility to monitor timing, since new objects come by at a fixed interval.

The entire process breaks down if the individual leaves his or her station, so breaks must be carefully planned. Some computer systems operate similarly in that a set period of time is given to the employee to complete each task, with the system urging the employee to move on at the appropriate time to the next task. Machine pacing research has clearly shown that it can be stressful and that it is connected to strains. Studies comparing machine pacing with self-pacing have found it to be related to occupational anxiety, bad job attitudes, and physical symptoms. At the University of Stockholm, a series of studies have linked machine pacing to employee physiological responses.

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3.2.5 Responsibility for People

Any type of responsibility can be a burden upon an individual. For example, organizational responsibility for such factors as budgets, equipment and projects can cause stress. However, it is the responsibility for people working for you that is a cause for continuous concern. As a manager, your effectiveness is a function of quality performance of your subordinates. Hence, you will be held responsible for anything that goes wrong, which creates stress and this stress is intensified when the manager has a limited degree of control over the subordinates. As noted by French and Caplan: ‘If there is any truth to the adage that ‘man’s greatest enemy is himself’, it can be found in these data—it is the responsibility which organizational members have for other organizational members, rather than the responsibility for impersonal aspects of the organization, which constitutes the more significant organizational stress.’

3.2.6 Interpersonal Relationships

The effectiveness of the organization is influenced by the nature of the relations among group members. One of the major sources of stress in organizational setting is poor interpersonal relationships, be it within the group or with superiors or subordinates. When interpersonal relationships are not very cordial, the employees develop a general sense of anxiety when they have to deal with each other or depend upon each other such as a group task or departmental meetings where they have to interact with each other.

Sayings like ‘too much familiarity breeds contempt’ have validity in that too much prolonged contact with other people can cause stress. This stress is further intensified when the people we come in contact with are in distress themselves. For example, we become distressed when our friends have problems. Parents are generally under great tension when their children do not do well in schools or when they get involved in drugs. For this reason, employees in such professions as health care and social services report the highest level of stress. According to Albrecht, doctors have the highest rate of alcoholism among all the professions and psychiatrists have the highest rate of suicide.

When a person has to deal with people in other departments, conflict may also occur. For example, assume that there is a professor from Business Division who is up for promotion that is to be decided by a committee comprised of representatives from all divisions. If the professor does not get the promotion he may feel that the representatives from the Humanities Division or Social Sciences Division do not appreciate the requirements in the Business Division, thus causing conflict and stress. As another example, the X-ray technicians in a hospital may not be able to deal with the service demands of the doctors and surgeons, thus creating stress and tension. Much of the quality of interpersonal relationships also depends upon the organizational climate. An organizational climate may be

conducive to a relaxed style of working or it may be tense and crisis-oriented. The employees are continuously tense, if the organizational climate in general is unfriendly, hostile or totally task oriented.

3.3 PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

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Events in personal life cannot be isolated from events in work life. A person with an unhappy family life seldom expresses a positive attitude at work. Much of the stress brought about by non-work situations may be due to divorce, marriage, death of a loved one, financial difficulties and many other socio-cultural relationships. These difficulties are stress producers, especially if they are unexpected. For example, we know that children leave home when they grow up or when they go to college so that this is expected, and this separation does not necessarily cause stress. On the other side, problems at work can manifest in stress in personal life. Thus, job stress and life stress are often related in that high stress in one area can induce or increase stress in the other. Some of the specific non-work stressors are:

- **Job concern:** Job and career variables can become stressors when they become sources of concern, anxiety or frustration to the individual. One of the major concerns is the lack of job security. Except for jobs with tenure or strong union support, very few employees have job security. This insecurity increases during times of recessions or impending recessions. The prospect of losing a job, especially when you have a family and your social roots are well-established, is very stressful. Another reason for job related stress may be the perception of the employee regarding his status on the job. Persons who are not promoted when due or persons who feel that their jobs are beneath their qualifications may feel that they are not using their potential to the best and may become anxious about it. This is especially true for middle aged men and women when that time becomes a period of soul searching and self-doubt. Career progress then becomes a focal point.
- **Relocation:** When an employee has to relocate geographically because of a transfer or promotion, it disrupts the routine of his daily life, causing concern and stress. The fear of working in a new location, unpredictability about new work environment, and the prospect of creating new relationships always cause some anxiety. Relocation also creates problems for the spouses and children of employees. They are also uprooted from schools, friends and jobs. It is especially difficult for them because generally the family moves with the husband's job and they do not have much say in it. The stress related to this geographic mobility is greater when the wife also has a job and she has to leave the job to go with the family. Uncertainty about getting a new job at the new location creates some degree of stress. Thus the more changes that occur in a person's social relationships and family life because of relocation, the greater the person's stress will be.

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- **Changes in life structure:** The structure of life and process of living has many facets. Some of these facets are socio-cultural in nature such as family, religion, race, education, economic situation as well as a person’s interaction with the socio-cultural world in the role of a husband, a parent, a friend or a citizen. In addition, the life structure may change as we grow older from one period to another such as childhood to adolescence and so on. As we grow older, our responsibility to ourselves as well as others changes and increases. The higher the responsibility, the greater the stress.

The extent of stress is also determined by the ability to cope with stress or the kind of sources a person seeks to deal with stress. For example, people who have strong faith in God and His Will find it easier to deal with such stressful situations as the loss of a loved one. Similarly, family and friends are source of great comfort at such times of crisis. The pace of life would also determine whether a person’s life is stable or turbulent. As the responsibilities increase, so does the capacity to execute them. Professions such as those of doctors or businessmen are more stressful and hectic than those of say, college teaching.

The degree of stress created by certain events in life can be assessed by ‘Social Readjustment Rating Scale’ developed by Thomas Holmes and Richard Rake. In order to construct the stress impact scale, they asked people to rate as to how long it would take to adjust to certain stressful events and how severe the adjustment to these events would be. From the responses, they developed a ranking and a weighting for each of these stress producing events. For example, the death of a spouse was considered to be the most stress producing event. The following table shows the ranking of some of these events.

Life Event	Weight
Death of a spouse	100
Divorce	73
Jail term	63
Death of a close family member	63
Marriage	50
Fired from work	47
Pregnancy	40
Sex difficulties	39
Child leaving home	29
Change in residence	20
Christmas	12

If an individual accumulates a large number of stressor points in a relatively short period of time, it is more likely that stress would be obvious. The higher the number of points, the more likely that stress will result in serious illness.

Check Your Progress

1. When does role conflict occur?
2. What do you mean by role underload?
3. Give an account of Ruggiero's report on shift work.
4. Who developed the Social Readjustment Rating Scale?

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3.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Role conflict occurs when two or more persons have different and sometimes opposing expectation of a given individual.
2. Role underload occurs when a person's ability is underutilised so that either there is too little work or there is too little variety in the work.
3. In Ruggiero's report, nurses who served during night shifts showed more exhaustion and were more depressed in their mood than their counterparts who had day shifts. It has been documented that nurses suffered from chronic fatigue, which not only affects the quality of patient care, but also raises the risk of health issues such as depression.
4. The Social Readjustment Rating Scale was developed by Thomas Holmes and Richard Rake.

3.5 SUMMARY

- Almost every aspect of work can be a stressor for someone. Even though there are many factors in the work environment that have some influence on the extent of stress that people experience at the job.
- The nature of the job itself can determine the type and degree of stress that can be induced. Some jobs lead to more stress-related responses than others.
- A role is a set of activities associated with a certain position in the organization or in the society. According to Kahn, if these work activities are ill-defined, then the person who is carrying out these activities will not behave as others expect him to, because his role is not clearly defined.
- Role conflict occurs when contradictory demands are simultaneously placed upon an employee.
- Role overload occurs when the work requirements are so excessive that employees feel that they do not have adequate time or ability to meet such requirements.

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- Role underload occurs when a person's ability is underutilised so that either there is too little work or there is too little variety in the work.
- While some employees happily handle shifting working environments without complications, many others experience severe problems as a result of shift work.
- Studies comparing machine pacing with self-pacing have found it to be related to occupational anxiety, bad job attitudes, and physical symptoms.
- As a manager, your effectiveness is a function of quality performance of your subordinates. Hence, you will be held responsible for anything that goes wrong, which creates stress and this stress is intensified when the manager has a limited degree of control over the subordinates.
- One of the major sources of stress in organizational setting is poor interpersonal relationships, be it within the group or with superiors or subordinates.
- Events in personal life cannot be isolated from events in work life. A person with an unhappy family life seldom expresses a positive attitude at work.

3.6 KEY WORDS

- **Rotating Shifts:** The term covers a wide variety of work schedules and implies that shifts rotate or change according to a set schedule. These shifts can be either continuous, running 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, or semi-continuous, running 2 or 3 shifts per day with or without weekends.
- **Assembly Lines:** An assembly line is a production process that divides labour by breaking up the manufacture of a product into steps that are completed in a pre-defined sequence.

3.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on shift work and machine pacing as a source of job stress.
2. How does interpersonal relationships lead to stress?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss how job roles lead to stress.
2. Describe the personal characteristics which lead to job stress.

3.8 FURTHER READINGS

- Poursadeghiyan, M.; A. Khammar; Amjad, R.; M. Rohani; A. Yari; M. Noroozi; and M. Hami, 'Survey of shift work disorders and occupational stress among nurses: A cross-sectional study', *Annals of Tropical Medicine and Public Health*. 10(4): 978, 2017.
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UNIT 4 CONSEQUENCES OF JOB STRESS

NOTES

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Overview of Consequences of Job Stress
 - 4.2.1 Mental/Psychological Symptoms
 - 4.2.2 Job Behaviour, Job Satisfaction, Performance and Absenteeism
 - 4.2.3 Health Strain and Job Burnout
 - 4.2.4 Physical Illness
- 4.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 Key Words
- 4.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 4.7 Further Readings

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Stress in the workplace has adverse effects on the mental health of employees, with an increased risk of disorders of anxiety, burnout, depression, and drug use. Employees who are depressed at work are more likely to indulge in harmful habits, such as consuming cigarettes, misuse of narcotics and alcohol, and poor eating patterns. In this unit, we will discuss the consequences of job stress, especially with regards to job behaviour, satisfaction, and performance. We will also focus on the impact of stress on health, resulting in physical illness and mental/psychological symptoms.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the consequences of job stress
- Discuss the job stress with regards to job behaviour, satisfaction, and performance
- Describe the impact of stress on health

4.2 OVERVIEW OF CONSEQUENCES OF JOB STRESS

As has been discussed, the conditions that create stressful situations for employees are fairly constant: fear of losing the job, work overload, lack of participation in

decisions regarding their own work environment, non-supportive supervisors, and co-workers, limited job opportunities and so on. The stress is acute especially for current generation middle managers whose jobs are more uncertain, and who have less control over their destinies as compared with senior level managers, furthermore their stress coping capabilities are reduced because they are generally more mobile, less religious, marry later in life and have fewer children-factors that act as a buffer and reduce the impact of stress. According to Business Week:

Stress. From the corner office to the factory floor, it is epidemic in US business. Competition, Bloody Monday layoffs, mergers and acquisitions—all are taking their toll in derailed careers, broken families and emotional disorders. Signs are everywhere. Employees drink to excess and slip disastrously in their performance. They erupt into fits of uncontrollable rage at work and abuse their families at home. A few commit suicide.

It is important to deal with stress at an early stage. Early warning signs such as headaches, back pain, irritability, insomnia, absenteeism from work, or alcoholism should be taken seriously, otherwise they would lead to serious emotional disorders as well as physiological problems such as ulcers and heart disease. When stress is left untreated for a long time, it can develop into anxiety and depression. According to Business Week again, stress and depression share a common chemistry in the brain. A hormone called Corticotropin Releasing Hormone (CRH) puts a shield of defence against stress. Even after the stress subsides, the body keeps releasing the hormone, sometimes for years. When stress gets out of hand, it results in severe depression, and depression if untreated can be fatal. Depressed individuals make up some 60% of all suicides.

4.2.1 Mental/Psychological Symptoms

High degree of stress is typically accompanied by severe anxiety, frustration and depression. There is evidence that work stress is associated with heart irregularities, high levels of blood pressure and high levels of cholesterol. Studies conducted by Stole, regarding the effects of a plant closing in Detroit showed an ‘alarming rise in anxiety and illness’, with at least fifty per cent of employees suffering from ulcers, arthritis, serious hypertension, alcoholism and depression. Some of the physiological symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression are as follows:

- **Stress:** Irritability, insomnia, alcohol and food abuse. Physical changes including rapid breathing and heart rate, tensed muscles. Prolonged stress can cause muscular twitches, skin problems, baldness and sexual problems such as impotence.
- **Anxiety:** Excessive worry, irritability, anger, nervousness as well as inability to concentrate or sleep. Physical changes include palpitations, chest pain and dizziness.
- **Depression:** Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, guilt and worthlessness, loss of interest in activities, change in appetite or weight, difficulty in concentrating and suicidal thoughts.

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Also, there is strong evidence that job stress contributes directly to life threatening diseases and in fact shortens one's life.

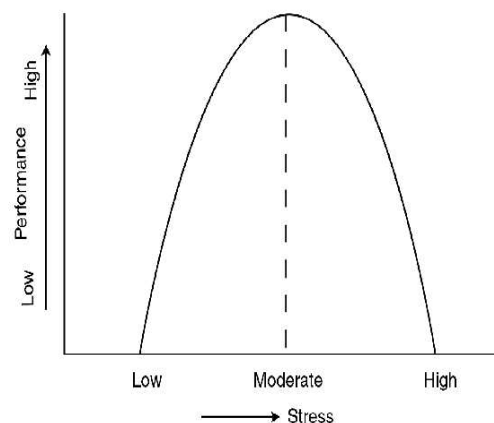
4.2.2 Job Behaviour, Job Satisfaction, Performance and Absenteeism

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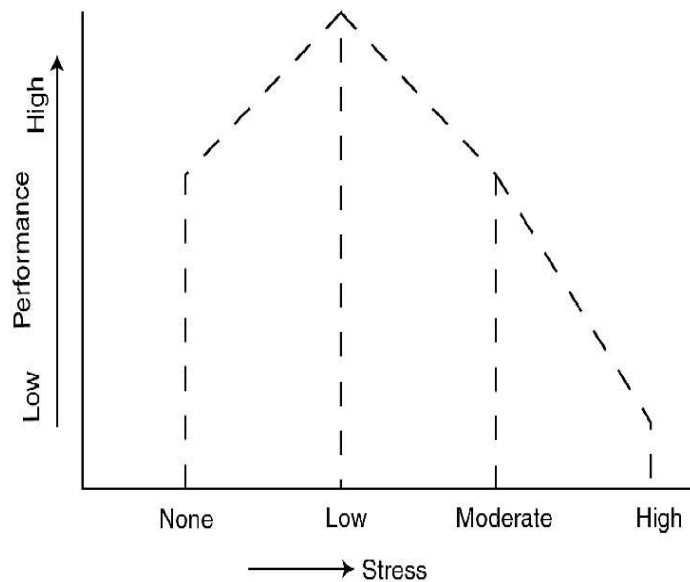
One of the major concerns of management is the negative impact stress has on performance. People under high stress tend to withdraw from the contact with the stressor in the form of turnover and absenteeism. Absenteeism is the term given when an employee is habitually and frequently absent from work. This excludes paid leave and occasions where an employer has granted an employee time off. If such absenteeism becomes frequent and excessive it begins to become a problem by affecting productivity. In extreme cases, stress may result in sabotage. Workers sometimes create mechanical failure in order to take a break from strain of monotonous work. Any factor that causes negative effects on our physical and psychological well-being is also expected to affect our work behaviour. Exposure to strong and enduring stress influences important aspects of our behaviour at job thus affecting productivity.

The relationship between stress and performance appears to be rather complex. It is affected by the difficulty of the task being performed, the nature of the specific stressor involved and a wide range of personal and situational factors. However, in general, productivity is considered to be at a peak with moderate level of stress. Performance is poor at low level of stress as well as at high level of stress. At low level of stress, the person may not be sufficiently energized and may not be whole-heartedly involved in his work, resulting in low productivity. As the level of stress increases from low levels to moderate levels, the performance level also increases to reach the peak level. An optimum level of stress exists for any task. If the stress continues to increase from this level, the person becomes too agitated and frustrated, resulting in performance deterioration.

It has been believed that the relationship between stress and performance is curvilinear. It follows an inverted U-shaped curve as shown previously and reproduced here.



However, the validity of the clear-cut relationship is being questioned and some behaviour scientists believe that performance actually decreases when stress increases from low levels to moderate levels, even though the rate of decrease in performance is less than the rate of decrease when stress increases from moderate to high levels. This relationship is shown as below:



Stress also impairs the ability to make effective decisions. People under stress are in a state of irritation and are unable to concentrate. They become impatient and are more likely to avoid or postpone making decisions. They are less likely to seek new information and are more likely to forget some important pieces of available information. As a result, the quality of decisions they make suffers, and the cost of a wrong decision can be very high.

4.2.3 Health Strain and Job Burnout

Job burnout is the extreme case of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, when stressors seem to be unavoidable and sources of relief seem to be unavailable. People feel totally drained and dread going to work. They develop negative feelings about their jobs and about their life in general. This burnout is a direct result of prolonged exposure to intense stress.

Physical exhaustion results in general feelings of tiredness and people exhibit such symptoms as low energy, frequent headaches, sleeplessness and changes in eating habits. Emotional exhaustion results in feelings of depression, helplessness, and hopelessness. People who are emotionally exhausted develop a feeling of worthlessness and tend to believe that life has no meaning or goal. Mental exhaustion result in low self-esteem and develops negative attitudes towards life and job. People tend to feel inadequate and incompetent and they often dislike their colleagues, their co-workers or their clients.

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Recent studies have shown that burnout seems to be the most common among professionals who must deal extensively with other people. Job burnout is most visible among professionals such as managers, lawyers, nurses, accountants and social workers. It has been estimated that 20% of such professionals suffer from job burnout.

4.2.4 Physical Illness

Physical symptoms of stress include:

- Low energy
- Headaches
- Upset stomach, including diarrhoea, constipation, and nausea
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Insomnia
- Frequent colds and infections
- Loss of sexual desire and/or ability
- Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear, cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth

Check Your Progress

1. Define job burnout.
2. What did studies by Stole demonstrate?
3. Mention any five physical symptoms of stress.

4.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Job burnout is the extreme case of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, when stressors seem to be unavoidable and sources of relief seem to be unavailable.
2. The studies by Stole, regarding the effects of a plant closing in Detroit showed an 'alarming rise in anxiety and illness', with at least fifty per cent of employees suffering from ulcers, arthritis, serious hypertension, alcoholism and depression.
3. The physical symptoms of stress include:
 - a. Low energy

- b. Headaches
- c. Upset stomach, including diarrhoea, constipation, and nausea
- d. Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- e. Chest pain and rapid heartbeat

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4.4 SUMMARY

- It is important to deal with stress at an early stage. Early warning signs such as headaches, back pain, irritability, etc. should be taken seriously, otherwise they would lead to serious emotional disorders as well as physiological problems such as ulcers and heart disease.
- High degree of stress is typically accompanied by severe anxiety, frustration and depression. There is evidence that work stress is associated with heart irregularities, high levels of blood pressure and high levels of cholesterol.
- One of the major concerns of management is the negative impact stress has on performance. People under high stress tend to withdraw from the contact with the stressor in the form of turnover and absenteeism.
- The relationship between stress and performance appears to be rather complex. It is affected by the difficulty of the task being performed, the nature of the specific stressor involved and a wide range of personal and situational factors.
- Job burnout is the extreme case of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion, when stressors seem to be unavoidable and sources of relief seem to be unavailable.

4.5 KEY WORDS

- **Curvilinear:** It means contained by or consisting of a curved line or lines.
- **Corticotropin Releasing Hormone (CRH):** It is a peptide hormone that stimulates both the synthesis and the secretion of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) in the corticotropin-producing cells (corticotrophs) of the anterior pituitary gland.

4.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on job burnout.
2. What is the impact of stress on job behaviour and satisfaction?

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Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the consequences of job stress.
2. Describe why the relationship between stress and job performance is complex.

4.7 FURTHER READINGS

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BLOCK - II
STRESS MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

*Stress Management
Interventions*

**UNIT 5 STRESS MANAGEMENT
INTERVENTIONS**

NOTES

Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Individual Centered Stress Management Interventions
- 5.3 Preventing, Mitigating and Moderating Organizational Stressors
- 5.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 5.5 Summary
- 5.6 Key Words
- 5.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 5.8 Further Readings

5.0 INTRODUCTION

In today's world that is characterised by competition and a desire to attain perfection, stress has become quite a common problem faced by many. In order to tackle this issue, several interventions have been devised and are being employed by individuals and organizations to help their employees stay motivated and healthy. It is essential to address this issue as it affects productivity, health and overall well-being of an individual thereby making him incapable of performing simple daily activities. In this unit, we will be discussing stress management interventions on the individual as well as the organizational level.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss individual stress management interventions such as cognitive, behavioural and physical
- Analyze the mitigation and moderation of organizational stressors

5.2 INDIVIDUAL CENTERED STRESS MANAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

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Stress is a heavy duty baggage that impacts health. Cortisol rise is directly proportionate to the stress the individual takes. Chronic stress overstretches the cortisol and wreaks havoc on the metabolism, inciting weight gain resulting in inflammation inside your body. This impacts the blood glucose readings, blood pressure levels, heart health along with cognitive abilities directly influencing personal productivity.

Stress can be managed at the individual level to decrease these counter effects on health.

These simple strategies focusing on the cognitive, behavioral and physical barriers can help decrease the strain of anxiety on individual well-being.

Cognitive impact of chronic stress in an individual includes constant worrying, racing thoughts, forgetfulness and disorganization, inability to focus, and poor judgment, being pessimistic or seeing only the negative side.

Gradually stress leads to a change in behavior and appetite such as not eating or eating too much or procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities, probably increased consumption of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes or exhibiting more nervous behaviors, such as nail biting, fidgeting, and pacing. These are seen to be indicative of an individual under stress.

Chronic stress requires attention because if it is left unattended for a long time, there remains no room for the body and mind to recuperate. Subsequently, it can result in mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, and personality disorders. Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks, and stroke are also some of the health risks observed in people who have been under stress for too long. It is common to notice obesity, anorexia, bulimia, menstrual problems, sexual dysfunction, such as impotence and premature ejaculation in men and loss of sexual desire in both men and women, skin and hair problems, such as acne, psoriasis, and eczema, and permanent hair loss as well as gastrointestinal problems, such as GERD, gastritis, ulcerative colitis, and irritable colon- amongst people who are known to internalize stress.

Our body's natural reaction to stress is to get in to a "fight-or-flight" mode that hormonally triggers the adrenal glands to release the hormones cortisol and adrenaline. These can make the heart beat faster and your blood pressure to rise.

Although it is an internal defence mechanism but with chronic stress, the constant presence of stressors in the surroundings of an individual can cause damage

to an individual as one can suffer from lack of focus and productivity, brain fog and even inflammation in the body showing up as disease or other serious conditions.

Consider a new approach to life by looking at situations with fresh perspectives. Recognizing and reducing stressors in life helps to maintain some peace. One way of reducing anxiety is to acknowledge the inner narrative and accepting frame of mind and trying to indulge in positive self-talk.

Cluttered thoughts cloud our judgment and behavior. Mindfulness is an approach talked about a lot these days and it can help an individual check himself on over thinking and understand the thought processes behind procrastination, and overcome distraction.

Physical activity is known to reduce the cortisol levels and increase endorphins that help you feel better. Exercise should be enjoyable to a person indulging in a workout as it is observed that people who find physical activity uninteresting do not continue with daily exercise schedule and find this routine itself stressful, because they pick activities they don't enjoy. Counsellors recommend that one should choose to do something that is pleasurable and doable in the long run like gardening, nature walks or yoga which is known to offer holistic healing. As an approach to tackle stress, individuals should find activities that they look forward to and find interesting as these can keep them motivated and help de-stress and recharge.

Organizing life helps de-clutter the thought process and reduces anxieties: Clutter may be a source of stress for some individuals while others may not be perturbed by it. Sabine Kastner, a professor of neuroscience and psychology at Princeton University, performed research on the science of attention in 2008. She wanted to inquire how the human brain reacts to randomness and variation in our environments. Professor Kastner created a study in which she showed images of street scenes to participants undergoing functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans, which show blood rushing to the active parts of the brain. In several experiments that spanned several years, Professor Kastner asked subjects to focus on an item in the images, such as a person or a car. Her observations indicated that in every case, the frontal cortex, which plays a key role in cognitive control, working memory, attention and emotional reactions, came alive on the fMRI screen. Her experiments indicated that the brains of the participants were expending more energy trying to concentrate than on processing any one thing in the picture.

Professor Kastner's theory claims that "many of us aren't good at processing clutter. It can become overwhelming and make our brains do more work to complete simple tasks." The more conflicting stimuli we're dealing with, the more our brain has to work to filter out what we need. When you take away this strain from your brain about competing objects, focusing becomes much easier.

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Interestingly, in 2011, Professor Kastner remarked from her experiments that people who cleaned up their homes or workspaces were able to focus better and their productivity increased. Along the same lines, many researchers also confirm that decreasing visual distractions can reduce cognitive load and free up working memory.

Clean surroundings mean a better mood. Our attention is greatly influenced by our environments. Stress in the surroundings can influence our hormones as well as our mood. Clutter is also a stressor and can cause our bodies to release cortisol, the stress hormone associated with the fight-or-flight response.

Getting organized is essential to reduce the sense of being overwhelmed. Disorganization and clutter can be stress inducing, and they are unnecessary. The primary objective of any mental health programme is to create a time for exercise, to plan healthy meals, and get on a regular schedule to ensure that you're getting enough sleep. Strategies that are chosen by any individual need to be re-assessed and revised for approach to ensure efficiency. Seeking a mental health specialist can help provide direction for guided approach to healing from stress and anxiety.

Check Your Progress

1. What is cortisol rise directly proportionate to?
2. List some of the health risks observed in people who are stressed.
3. What is the primary objective of a mental health programme?

5.3 PREVENTING, MITIGATING AND MODERATING ORGANIZATIONAL STRESSORS

Stress can not only exacerbate mental illnesses such as depression but also appears to increase risk of dementia suggesting a common mechanism for development of stress-induced affective and cognitive impairment. Modern day observations show that there have been increasing reports about stress and its impact on psychological and physical health. The new highly demanding corporate work culture has a negative impact on employee health. Organization induced stress is actively spoken about these days and these areas require a mitigation and moderation to reduce individual employee stressors:

1. Demands
2. Control over work
3. Support provided by the organization
4. Role clarity

5. Change management and communication
6. Relationships and conflict management

According to the European Union, anxiety, stress, ill-health relation to work and depression have been reported by 14 per cent people as the most serious health problems faced by them.

In the last few years, several studies have highlighted the relationship between employee health and the work environment (Podsakoff et al., 2007; Skakon et al., 2010). Consequences of stress and poor well-being faced by employees are cited as including loss of revenues caused by decreased job satisfaction, employee withdrawal and high error rate (Kerr et al., 2009).

From both an employer and an employee perspective, the impact of stress is far-reaching and exacerbated by recent economic difficulties. However, while ESENER reports that over 40 per cent of European managers consider that stress is difficult to manage, less than 30 per cent of organizations in Europe have procedures for dealing with workplace stress.

In the last few years, the subject of stress is being explored from different perspectives. Psychologists and social cognitive theorists have propounded self-efficacy, defined as ‘people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives’; Bandura, 1995: 2) as an important means of boosting motivation and performance (Wood et al., 1990). Bandura (1995) has also ascertained that self-efficacy improves with a positive state of mind but is lowered with despondency.

Past self-efficacy studies have confirmed the need to understand the cognitive and motivational factors involved in determining success and dealing with a range of complex organizational issues (Wood and Bandura, 1989).

Cognitive deficiency and chronic stress have also been linked to impaired cognitive functioning and decline (Aggarwal et al., 2014) and even degenerative disorders such as dementia (Mah et al., 2016; Wilson et al., 2007).

It is evident from different researches and theories from multiple disciplines that there are serious risks posed by stress on psychological, physiological and physical health, there are still limited data within healthy populations.

Trends indicate self-reported memory loss and cognitive failure among private sector professionals, this study considered demographic, employment characteristics, self-rated health, physiological and psychological factors associated with cognitive disorganization.

Certain research studies highlight several significant associations between cognitive disorganization and a number of psychological variables. Strong associations were found between high cognitive disorganization scores and high cardiopulmonary and anger scores, while the high cardiopulmonary and anger scores suggest sympathetic nervous system activation and possible accompanying

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emotions of frustration. The significant relationship between high cognitive disorganization and low self-efficacy endorses previous claims linking high self-efficacy to improved performance (Lai and Chen, 2012).

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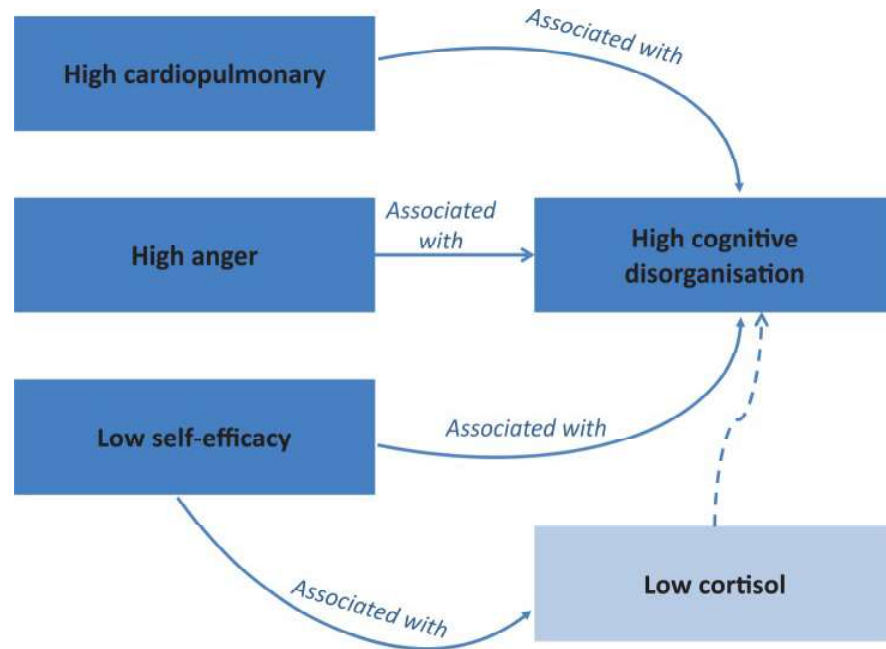


Diagram suggesting potential pathways between variables.

Psychologists and neuroscientists believe that since impairments to cognitive functionality are located largely in the hippocampus and pre-frontal cortex of the brain, implications are raised for future bio-psycho-social research into stress in the workplace. It is hoped that greater awareness of psychoneuro-endocrinological factors of well-being at work and possible correlates with the demands of the working environment may lead to improved coping mechanisms and targeted interventions to delay or reverse adverse neurological responses.

Stress is an indicator of a deviation from normal thought process of the mind. Stress can approach in an organization due to many reasons such as control over work, managerial style of manager etc. Stress in a limited quantity is beneficial to the organization and its employees as well. It helps to achieve personal as well as organizational goals. Unmanageable stress is harmful for the body, mind and psychology of employees.

Organizations have to find measures to minimize individual level stress, delegate equal work, share burden with colleagues, sparing time for family and loved ones, as well as reducing work overtime which is ranked highest as strategies for stress management.

Offices can involve in training professionals in work environment to exhibit self-control and good self-esteem; engage in continuous professional development

on skills for better organization, integration of work within specified project constraints and delegation of assignment, authority and breaking work into manageable parts so as to be able to cope with stress.

The corporate Mckinsey (<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/how-to-demonstrate-calm-and-optimism-in-a-crisis>) offers great insight into how the company considers individual stress responsible for employee burnout and offers great insight into organizational stress management. They believe:

- If you really want to improve employees' health and well-being, focus on job control and social support.
- Invest in training to equip leaders with the skills, language, and norms to support your colleagues.
- Consider a short training for team leaders that focuses on recognizing signs of distress, making clear that it's driven by a genuine desire to connect employees with the right support and resources. When companies make mental health a priority, teams can, in turn, offer greater value to their customers or clients.
- Embrace strategies to address key stressors, improve behavioral-health literacy, promote mental wellness, and prevent substance misuse.
- Make it easy to access help, ensuring that everything from self-help tools to high-quality treatment providers are visible, affordable, and available virtually as well as in person. Be clear about which options for mental health are available via telehealth services.
- Embrace and encourage self-care. Create an inclusive culture where those seeking treatment and self-care are supported, recovery is celebrated, and social connectivity is a priority.
- Maintain an open dialogue. Ask if your colleagues are taking regular breaks, prioritizing sleep, and checking in on one another. My teams make it a point to discuss what we're doing over the weekend, how we're staying healthy, and whether we're all getting enough rest.
- To stay calm and optimistic while under such pressure, leaders should practice what we call integrative awareness: being aware of the changing reality in the outside world and how they are responding emotionally and physically. This intentional practice allows leaders to shift from viewing challenges as roadblocks to seeing them as problems to be solved, and even learned from.

These are amazing ethics that offer a glimpse into positive work culture. To learn more about strategies on corporate practices to combat stress in an organization, one can search company websites.

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Check Your Progress

4. What have cognitive deficiency and chronic stress been linked to?
5. How is stress in a limited quantity beneficial to the organization and its employees?

5.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Cortisol rise is directly proportionate to the stress the individual takes.
2. Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks, and stroke are also some of the health risks observed in people who have been under stress for too long.
3. The primary objective of any mental health programme is to create a time for exercise, to plan healthy meals, and get on a regular schedule to ensure that you're getting enough sleep.
4. Cognitive deficiency and chronic stress have been linked to impaired cognitive functioning and decline and even degenerative disorders such as dementia.
5. Stress in a limited quantity is beneficial to the organization and its employees as well. It helps to achieve personal as well as organizational goals.

5.5 SUMMARY

- Chronic stress overstretches the cortisol and wreaks havoc on the metabolism, inciting weight gain resulting in inflammation inside your body. This impacts the blood glucose readings, blood pressure levels, heart health along with cognitive abilities directly influencing personal productivity.
- Our body's natural reaction to stress is to get in to a "fight-or-flight" mode that hormonally triggers the adrenal glands to release the hormones cortisol and adrenaline. These can make the heart beat faster and your blood pressure to rise.
- Physical activity is known to reduce the cortisol levels and increase endorphins that help you feel better. As an approach to tackle stress, individuals should find activities that they look forward to and find interesting as these can keep them motivated and help de-stress and recharge.
- Professor Kastner's theory claims that "Many of us aren't good at processing clutter. It can become overwhelming and make our brains do more work to complete simple tasks."

- Getting organized is essential to reduce the sense of being overwhelmed. Disorganization and clutter can be stress inducing, and they are unnecessary.
- Stress can not only exacerbate mental illnesses such as depression but also appears to increase risk of dementia suggesting a common mechanism for development of stress-induced affective and cognitive impairment.
- Past self-efficacy studies have confirmed the need to understand the cognitive and motivational factors involved in determining success and dealing with a range of complex organizational issues.
- Stress is an indicator of a deviation from normal thought process of the mind. Stress can approach in an organization due to many reasons such as control over work, managerial style of manager etc.
- Organizations have to find measures to minimize individual level stress, delegate equal work, share burden with colleagues, sparing time for family and loved ones, as well as reducing work overtime which is ranked highest as strategies for stress management.

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5.6 KEY WORDS

- **Defence Mechanism:** It is an unconscious psychological mechanism that reduces anxiety arising from unacceptable or potentially harmful stimuli.
- **fMRI Scan:** It is a functional magnetic resonance imaging scan that measures and maps the brain's activity.
- **Self-efficacy:** It is, according to psychologist Albert Bandura who originally proposed the concept, a personal judgment of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations".

5.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What does cognitive impact of chronic stress in an individual include?
2. What is our body's natural reaction to stress?
3. What steps can an organization take to cope with stress?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the role of physical activity in reducing stress.
2. Analyze Sabine Kastner's research on the science of attention.
3. Describe some of the beliefs of Mckinsey regarding its employees.

5.8 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 6 COPING WITH STRESS

Structure

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Types of Coping Strategies
- 6.3 Minimizing Stress
- 6.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 6.5 Summary
- 6.6 Key Words
- 6.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 6.8 Further Readings

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6.0 INTRODUCTION

The workplace is a likely source of stress, but you're not powerless to the effects of stress at work. Effectively coping with job stress can benefit both your professional and personal life. It is important to identify stress triggers. An individual's personality, experiences and other unique characteristics all influence the way you respond to and cope with stress. In this unit, we will discuss the types of coping strategies. We will also focus on how to minimize stress.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the significance of coping with stress
- Discuss the types of coping strategies
- Describe the ways of minimizing stress

6.2 TYPES OF COPING STRATEGIES

The strategies for coping stress are as follows.

- **Individual strategies:** Under individual strategies, employees take personal responsibilities for reducing their respective stress. They try to prevent the stress as well as to reduce the stress. They may request for job transfers, find alternative employment, request for an early retirement, take tours and resort to physical exercise. Individual strategies are time management, physical exercise, behavioural self-control, relaxation training, cognitive therapy and social support.

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- **Time management:** Time management is an effective technique of managing stress. Proper and adequate time utilisation is a preventive as well as a curative device. On the other hand, poorly managed time creates stress and strain. Time management helps to reduce tension because individuals easily achieve their objectives within a specified time. The time management principles involve making daily lists of activities, priority activities, scheduling activities according to priority lists, knowing daily cycle and daily job nature. Allocation of time schedule and quantum of time to each activity of the day makes people understand as to how to use time most effectively.
- **Physical exercises:** Routine and relaxed exercises reduce the tension of employees. Competitive exercises increase tension and non-competitive exercises relax people. Non-competitive physical exercises include aerobatics, walking, jogging, swimming and riding a bicycle. Suitable physical exercises are suggested by physicians to reduce a particular type of tension. For example, blood pressure is controlled by jogging and heart disease is prevented by regular morning walks and so on. Moreover, all types of physical exercises divert the mind from tension and stress. Physical exercise is reactive and proactive to lessen the problems of stress.
- **Behavioural self-control:** Learning and personality development help manage tension. Proper behaviour prevents stress. Behaviour has a direct impact on performance which causes satisfaction and stress. Frustrated employees resort to unethical and immoral practices. People have the capacity of self-control by deliberately managing the antecedents. Individuals, if they so desire, can control their own behaviour by adopting exemplary paths of successful persons. Self-introspection makes people behave properly.
- **Relaxation training:** People adopt certain relaxation techniques such as biofeedback and meditation for getting relaxation from stress and tension. Meditation involves quiet, concentrated inner thoughts in order to rest the body and mind. It includes muscle and mental relaxation. Transcendental Meditation (TM) is practiced to reduce stressful situations. It involves meditation or sitting relaxed for fifteen to twenty minutes in a day. While concentrating, people recite certain mantras. Yoga is also used for relaxation. Meditation reduces stress and tension. It helps to maintain peace and control one's heartbeat.
- **Cognitive therapy:** A number of psychological techniques are used to keep employees free from stress. Ellis and Meichenbaum have used emotive and cognitive behaviour modification models to reduce job stress. Physiological and emotional responses are recognised for increasing work efficiency. Hormones produced by the adrenal glands have a positive impact on mental satisfaction. Cognitive strategy helps the self-control of people.

- **Social support:** People are benefitted by social support. It reduces job stress. Good listeners and confidence builders are essential for managing stress. The expansion of social support network is a means of reducing tension.

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6.3 MINIMIZING STRESS

We know that some stress is necessary for optimum efficiency. We also have a general idea as to the level of stress that is destructive to job performance. Accordingly, it is necessary for individuals, as well as management to take steps to reduce stress to acceptable levels. It is necessary for physical and psychological well-being of the person to reduce or eliminate the negative effects of stress. It is possible to manage stress, at least in the sense that a person can either avoid stressful conditions, change them or learn to cope with them. There are a number of ways by which stress can be managed so that the person has control over his life. We have already discussed some of these strategies. Some of the stress reducing strategies that strengthen the individual's well-being are discussed below.

Readjust life goals

Because of the severe competition to 'get ahead', most individuals set very high standards and goals for themselves. They are always trying to do too much in too little time. They have tremendous fear of failing and they are running to nowhere. These high expectations and limited resources to reach such expectations result in stress. Accordingly, people must readjust their goals and make sure they have the ability and proper resources to reach such goals. Perhaps the goals should be established after resources have been analysed.

Social support

There is a saying that, 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'. Good friends become highly supportive during the times of stress and crisis. Close and reliable friends may give a sympathetic hearing to your problems, a more objective assessment of the situation and support your sagging self-confidence or self-esteem. Many people turn to God for support during times of difficulties, believing God to be their 'best friend'. The idea of confession to a priest in the Catholic religion is primarily meant to receive moral support for stress created by some individual actions. Thus, God, priests, family, friends, etc. can all be a source of great comfort during times of stress.

Plan your life in advance

While the attitude of 'whatever will be, will be' is a way to accept the unexpected difficulties in life, it is better to project events in life and plan to confront them when they occur. Many times, people create situations that induce stress because they either did not plan or they did a bad job of planning. For example, students who

plan the pace of their studies during the semester seldom find exams excessively stressful. Accordingly, if we plan the proper utilization of our resources of time and money, the chances are that we will have less stress.

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Physiological fitness

There is evidence to suggest that individuals who exercise and so strengthen their endurance and cardiovascular system, are much less likely to suffer from certain types of stress-related illnesses. As the correlation between physical fitness and stress resistance has become clear, many organizations have added facilities for physical exercise in their premises. With proper exercise, diet control and non-smoking habits, blood pressure and cholesterol levels become low and the body becomes more resistant to pressures. People are more likely to get physically sick or emotionally depressed if they are overweight or poorly nourished.

Meditation

Meditation involves concentration of mind away from stress producing areas, sitting in a comfortable position, closing the eyes and clearing the mind from all disturbing thoughts. Any form of concentration that redirects our thought processes away from daily concerns can be considered meditation. Primarily, it involves silently repeating a single syllable or 'mantra' over and over again. This concentration on 'mantra' shuts out other distractions and results in physical and mental relaxation at its peak. The place of meditation should be such that the meditator is not disturbed by any outside force such as telephone, children or visitors. This technique was popularised by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, an Indian mystic, and the method is known as Transcendental Meditation or TM.

Another form of meditation that has grown popular is Benson's method or 'Relaxation Response'. This technique is similar to TM and is designed to elicit 'relaxation response' that is considered to be opposite to 'stress response'. The basic idea is to block extraneous and distracting thoughts from one's mind. It is a form of breathing meditation, where the meditator consciously thinks of a word or a symbol on every out breath. The idea is to dwell upon a particular word or sound or to gaze at a symbol or even concentrate on a particular feeling. Relaxation response should become an integral part of behaviour so that life stresses are effectively countered. Benson recommends 'relaxation response' breaks instead of coffee breaks to rejuvenate workers.

During the last twenty-five years, there has been a growing interest in yoga as a stress reduction strategy. The word 'yoga' means union and according to Amarjit Sethi, it 'implies union with the ultimate where the process of desiring has come to an end and where stress is non-existent'. To a common man, yoga is a structured set of exercises and body movements with deep breathing and mind concentration, so that it is a way of getting away from the stressors. To a serious student of yoga, it is a methodology to integrate body and mind forces to bring them into a state of harmony with the ultimate goal of being in unison with the

Infinite. At the lower levels of physical and mental fitness, yoga consists of certain postural habits (known as asanas) and these postures are non-dynamic, passive and stable, resulting in increased flexibility of skeletal structure. This in turn stimulates the nervous system. Accordingly, with proper 'asanas' and controlled breathing, the neuromuscular coordination is strengthened, affecting glandular activity that is responsible for physical as well as mental health. Thus, the development of a sound mind in a sound body improves the stress coping capabilities.

Biofeedback

Biofeedback 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 in order to bring back such bodily functions to a normal non-stress state. For example, whenever blood pressure is registered as too high, individuals then try to relax to bring the blood pressure down. This tendency to relax is voluntary on the part of the individual. The potential benefit of biofeedback is the human ability to bring some of the bodily functions under voluntary control. These functions include heart rates, brain waves, muscle tension, blood pressure and stomach acidity. Changes in these functions are most often caused by stress. By measuring these changes precisely through the system of biofeedback, an individual can respond to these changes effectively. Thus, stress management can be voluntarily practiced by individuals.

Check Your Progress

1. How does time management help to reduce stress?
2. What is transcendental meditation?
3. Define biofeedback.

6.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Time management helps to reduce stress because individuals easily achieve their objectives within a specified time.
2. Transcendental meditation is practiced to reduce stressful situations. It involves meditation or sitting relaxed for fifteen to twenty minutes in a day. While concentrating, people recite certain mantras.
3. Biofeedback 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.

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6.5 SUMMARY

- The workplace is a likely source of stress, but you're not powerless to the effects of stress at work. Effectively coping with job stress can benefit both your professional and personal life.
- Under individual strategies, employees take personal responsibilities for reducing their respective stress. They try to prevent the stress as well as to reduce the stress.
- Time management is an effective technique of managing stress. Proper and adequate time utilisation is a preventive as well as a curative device. On the other hand, poorly managed time creates stress and strain.
- Routine and relaxed exercises reduce the tension of employees. Competitive exercises increase tension and non-competitive exercises relax people.
- Learning and personality development help manage tension. Proper behaviour prevents stress.
- People adopt certain relaxation techniques such as biofeedback and meditation for getting relaxation from stress and tension.
- A number of psychological techniques are used to keep employees free from stress.
- It is necessary for individuals, as well as management to take steps to reduce stress to acceptable levels.
- Because of the severe competition to 'get ahead', most individuals set very high standards and goals for themselves. They are always trying to do too much in too little time.
- There is a saying that, 'a friend in need is a friend indeed'. Good friends become highly supportive during the times of stress and crisis.
- While the attitude of 'whatever will be, will be' is a way to accept the unexpected difficulties in life, it is better to project events in life and plan to confront them when they occur.

6.6 KEY WORDS

- **Antecedent:** It refers to a thing or an event that exists or comes before another, and may have influenced it.
- **Mantra:** It is usually any repeated word or phrase, but it can also refer more specifically to a word repeated in meditation.

6.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. How is time management an effective technique of managing stress?
2. Why is planning life in advance useful in minimizing stress?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the strategies of relaxation training, social support, and cognitive therapy for coping with stress.
2. Discuss how meditation helps in minimizing stress.

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UNIT 7 THERAPEUTIC APPROACHES TO STRESS MANAGEMENT

Structure

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Counseling
- 7.3 Hypnotherapy
- 7.4 Music Therapy
- 7.5 Occupational Stress: Perspectives, Symptoms and Framework
 - 7.5.1 Person–Environment Fit Model of Job Stress
- 7.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 7.7 Summary
- 7.8 Key Words
- 7.9 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 7.10 Further Readings

7.0 INTRODUCTION

Stress management involves techniques and therapies that are aimed at reducing stress levels of individuals thereby providing them with the ability to live a stress-free life that helps improve their health, productivity and overall well-being. These, in turn, improve one's performance and concentration in work and daily activities. Some of the notable therapeutic approaches are hypnosis, counseling, music therapy and self-talk among others. The aforementioned therapies will be discussed in detail in the present unit.

7.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the therapeutic approaches to stress such as music therapy, physical hypnosis and self-talk
- Analyze the concept, perspectives and symptoms of stress
- Describe the framework and P-E Fit model of stress

7.2 COUNSELING

Stress management may require professional assistance. Counseling is the effective approach a professional mental health coach adopts to assist individuals requiring

support in managing stress. The role of a mental health coach or psychotherapist is to help an individual to feel safe, accepted and treated with respect and perhaps also challenge him in a positive and constructive way, to be able to make good use of the counseling sessions. The counseling is customized and unique to person as well as situation.

Different approaches to counseling have different human perspectives regarding how psychological problems occur and the best way to help is the ‘talking therapy’.

Most counselors may encourage the person to initiate discussions. The purpose of these sessions is effective realization that the individual seeking counseling is actually more capable and resourceful than he may be feeling. The sessions may be ‘directive’ and the counselor may teach ways of changing one’s beliefs and behaviour by assigning the individual some activities and exercises.

A brief description of different types of counseling is given below:

Behavioural Therapy

The purpose of Behavioural therapy is objectively conceptualized on the theory that you can ‘unlearn’ learnt behaviour or change that behaviour, without focusing on the reason behind the original behaviour. Counselors help people with compulsive and obsessive disorders, fears, phobias and addictions considering they may benefit from this type of therapy.

Cognitive Analytic Therapy

It is an Integrative approach which is a short term, structured and directive therapy focused upon exploration of the client’s language and thinking. Its purpose is to create a link between historical, cultural and social factors and explain how they function. It then encourages the individual to develop the skills to change destructive patterns of behaviour and negative ways of thinking and acting.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

A well-known choice for treating symptoms of anxiety and depression, it seeks to change distressing behaviours swiftly by questioning negative mindsets and beliefs and teaching the client to use coping strategies in the future. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy aims to be ‘scientific’ by assessing and measuring change and does not prioritize finding original causes or exploring hidden potential. People with compulsive and obsessive disorders, fears, phobias and addictions tend to benefit from this type of therapy. Cognitive-behavioural therapists believe that while it is important to have a good, trusting relationship, it is not enough in itself. A willingness to do the assigned tasks in between sessions is considered very important.

The barriers to taking therapy as reported by individuals are logistical barriers including a lack of transportation to attend appointments, an inability to take time off from work to attend appointments, and/or a lack of childcare. There is a known

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stigma of walking into the office of a mental healthcare provider that pertains as a formidable barrier to obtaining treatment. Moreover, many persons cannot afford the high costs of treatment, which often cost a lot of money in out-of-pocket expenses for a given individual.

Considering patient barrier to logistics, associated stigma, and cost represent tangible patient-level barriers to receiving timely cognitive behavioural therapy. In addition to patient-level barriers, broader system-level barriers also impede patient's ability to obtain treatment.

With the growth of the Internet, mental health experts have got an opportunity to increase access to patient care. Internet cognitive-behavioural therapy (I-CBT), a first-wave technology-based movement, transfers what would have been formerly considered self-help material to a Web-based format.

With the advent of I-CBT, an individual can comfortably sit in front of their home computers, read psychoeducation content as well as practice CBT exercises and worksheets.

The therapist or coach spends a substantial amount of time in guiding the individual through the modules. I-CBT is more accessible to patients, meta-analyses have shown superiority of I-CBT to wait-list control groups, and randomized controlled trials have shown I-CBT to have approximately equivalent efficacy compared to face-to-face CBT.

Taken together, these meta-analyses suggest that I-CBT is a safe and effective method to decrease access barriers.

Family Therapy

In India, noticeably mental health professionals have always involved families in therapy. Amritsar Mental Hospital's Prof. Vidyasagar is credited to be the father of Family Therapy in India though he wrote sparingly of his work involving families. The formal involvement of families in therapy was introduced in the West by Ackerman.

We are aware that in India, families form an important part of the social fabric and support system, and as a result, they are integral in being part of the treatment and therapeutic process involving an individual with mental illness. Considering that mental health / stress afflict individuals and their families too, when an individual is affected, the stigma of being mentally ill is not restricted to the individual alone, but to family members/caregivers also. This type of stigma is known as Courtesy Stigma according to Goffman.

A family is not equipped with knowledge about mental illnesses and how to deal with them and in turn, may end up maintaining or perpetuating the illness too.

The therapist explores family relationships by looking at the family as one unit, rather than working with a single person in the family. The aim of interactions between family members is to involve the whole family in seeking positive solutions.

Considered as an ideal therapy, it is a structured form of psychotherapy that seeks to reduce distress and conflict by improving the systems of interactions between family members.

Observations indicate that:

- Family therapists tend to be more interested in the maintenance and/or solving of problems rather than in trying to identify a single cause.
- Family can find help by looking at patterns of behaviour, what the causes are, and what can be done to improve their situation.
- Family therapy offers the families a way to maintain positivity and become a functional unit.
- Family therapy and interventions are necessary for patients with difficult prognosis such as schizophrenia, conduct and personality disorder and chronic neurotic conditions.

Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7001353/>

Interpersonal and Social Rhythm Therapy

Interpersonal and Social Rhythm Therapy was pioneered in the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic at the University of Pittsburgh by Ellen Frank and team. This psychotherapy was developed to assist individuals with bipolar disorder.

The therapists focus on assistance by identifying and maintaining the regular routines of everyday life especially sleep patterns and help solve interpersonal issues and problems that may arise with directly impact a person's routines.

It is believed that disruptions of a human body's circadian rhythm and probable sleep deprivation may provoke or exacerbate the symptoms commonly associated with bipolar disorder. The approach of Interpersonal and Social Rhythm Therapy offers assistance both from interpersonal psychotherapy along with cognitive-behavioural techniques to help people maintain their routines. The treatment involves building upon better and healthier interpersonal relationships and skills.

7.3 HYPNOTHERAPY

Hypnotherapy may seem like one of the options that is used to induce a deep state of relaxation during which the unconscious mind is highly receptive to new ideas. The trained hypnotherapist gains access to the willing individual's mind through hypnosis which may encourage a change in behaviour, attitude and emotions, pain, anxiety, stress-related illnesses and habits thereby enriching personal development. Hypnotherapy is adjunct to cognitive behavioural therapy and has been recognized as a therapeutic tool by professional medical groups in a number of countries for many years, and can be powerful for changing patterns of behaviour when used as an adjunct to other therapies. In a study by Spiegel in 1993 he suggested the reasoning for hypnotherapy as a useful adjunct for smoking cessation is that as the

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process act's on underlying impulses and may weaken the desire to smoke along with strengthening the will to stop or improve the ability to focus on the treatment by increasing concentration.

A study published by Lee HH, Choi YY, Choi MG. indicates the efficacy of Hypnotherapy in the treatment of Irritable Bowel Syndrome which is one of the most common bowel disorders diagnosed by gastroenterologists. (*J Neurogastroenterol Motil.* 2014)

Modern day mental health coaches or counselors consider their approach as '**Integrative**' that is, they combine aspects of different approaches to provide the most effective way of working. The counselors describe integrative model as an approach to reach holistic goals by combining different therapies, for instance, music therapy with psychotherapy.

Multi modular therapy is an integrative approach originating in behaviour therapy that uses broader techniques with regard to the therapy to be received as per an individual's lifestyle. Techniques include assertiveness training, anxiety management and visualization that are very useful in corporate settings or athlete trainings.

Hypnosis- Self Talk

Stress management involves various tools and hypnosis is one of them. Hypnosis allows an individual to achieve a state of deep relaxation and to combat the triggers of stress.

Certain wellness enthusiasts use hypnosis-self talk to follow an exercise program, building confidence and setting boundaries with people. Psychologists can train people in self-hypnosis so that they can work on the reflections to reduce anxiety one feels when faced with situations that trigger stress or intimidating social situations.

Psychologists have effectively used hypnosis to help people overcome any negative habits impacting health, for instance, chronic smoking or compulsive eating. Hypnosis requires regular practice, focus and training with a skilled practitioner.

Positive Self-talk is a method used in hypnosis that involves repeating affirmations to oneself. To handle anxiety in turbulent situations, it is advised to mindfully speak words of appraisal to yourself every morning on waking up and at bedtime. This allows conditioning and negating the after-effects of stress.

Psychoanalysts recommend repeating positive statements to make them effective. This is also referred to as automatic conversion of negative thoughts to automatic positive thoughts. Self-talk is very effective in competitive sports training, corporate high profile leadership training as well as students appearing for examinations.

Examples of Affirmations/ Positive Self-Talk:

1. I am healthy in body, mind and soul. I will be able to meet all expectations of daily routine.

2. Stress is inevitable in daily life but I am physically and emotionally fit to not succumb to its affects.
3. I am strong and confident to complete all tasks to my best potential, successfully.

Stress Management

Stress may be inevitable today. With unprecedented times come unpredictable life events, health conditions, unemployment and loss of a dear one or probably just climate change implications. We all face stressful situations every day which could be as commonplace as long car queues, traffic jams, water shortages in community or a horrible boss. The stressors override the human system with hormones. Defensive reaction to stress is a fight or flight response that is apparent with signs such as heart pounding, fast erratic breathing and tense muscles.

This stress response may be the most obvious normal reaction to a threatening situation by a living organism. But long overlooked stress can result in chronic overdrive of our autoimmune system and impact the endocrine, cardiac and neural health and making it indispensable for us to develop healthier ways of responding to stress. The primary approach is to adopt a relaxation response. This technique was first developed in the 1970s at Harvard Medical School by cardiologist Dr. Herbert Benson.

The concept of relaxation response is to counterfeit the stress response. The human mind is to be trained to acknowledge being in a state of profound rest that can be induced with regular practice, to create a calm composure.

Focus on the Breath

1. In this technique, the person is required to take long, slow, deep breaths which are also known as abdominal or belly breathing.
2. The breathing technique facilitates disengagement of the mind from distracting thoughts and sensations.
3. The correct breath focus assists individuals with obesity, anorexia, bulimia to help them focus on their bodies in a more positive way.

Body Scan

1. This is a progressive muscle relaxation for body and mind.
2. Yog Nidra is one such approach for insomnia. In this technique, after a few minutes of deep breathing, the individual focuses on each part of the body or group of muscles at a time while mentally releasing any physical tension perceived there.
3. Individuals revert with a better awareness of the mind and body connection.

Guided Imagery

This process of healing helps individuals relieve temporary stress or discomfort. It is one of the processes used in psychotherapy or Art Therapy. Summoning up a

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pleasant scene, places, or experiences in your mind to help one relax and focus. Positive visualization is a convenient way of experiencing positivity and negating stressors in the immediate surroundings.

Mindful Meditation

Helpful for people with anxiety, depression, and pain, this technique involves living in the present moment and detaching from past, fear and phobias by focusing on the present.

Ancient Arts

Tai Chi, Yoga, Qi Gong are ancient arts that are a part of movement therapy as they combine rhythmic breathing with unique body postures along with flowing movements. The agility and balance attained through artistic movement improves mental focus and physical self-esteem.

Chants

The process of repetitive prayer helps one to focus on their breath. A few minutes a day can soothe stressed nerves by awakening the conscious and connecting with the spiritual well-being. Buddhism's faith in Gohonzon involves continuous chanting of Nam Myoho Renge Kyo offers spiritual benefits of cleansing and connecting with the cosmos.

7.4 MUSIC THERAPY

An uncongenial model to combat stress is music therapy. Research studies share observations of a significant decrease in heart rate, body temperature, and improved muscle activity when individuals listen to music that is used in the relaxation process.

The modern day wellness coaches are confident that music therapy and stress reduction play a significant role in the treatment of people suffering from mental health disorders as music has an influence on the physiological and psychological processes providing a non-threatening, pleasurable experience.

Further, the dramatic effects that music can have, as well as the variability of individual responses to music, should underscore the need for a trained music therapist, knowledgeable in this area, to ensure a more positive and successful experience when using music in stress reduction treatment and relaxation training.

Music therapy is a stimulus of relief to an overwhelmed mind. Researcher Jellison had recorded in 1975 that pleasant background music can reduce stress responses and help induce relaxation under stress. Similarly, studies conducted by Scartelli and Borling in 1984-1986 combined music with biofeedback techniques to reduce tension and facilitate relaxation responses.

The role of music therapy is in eliciting and reinforcing relaxation that elicits responses more compatible with relaxation behaviours than do other modes of reinforcement.

Sounds of cosmos, ambient music, birds chirping, classical music, organ music, are all effective reinforcers because as an auditory stimulus these sounds permeate the environment that is difficult to ignore and the person listening to these sounds or music can actively utilize the musical experience to create a pleasant experience for most individuals, for their own reinforcement. Cognitive engagement in music can create distraction and relaxation for a person who is feeling low and depressed.

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7.5 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS: PERSPECTIVES, SYMPTOMS AND FRAMEWORK

We all dwell on the dream of getting a satisfying job. It may meet all our career goals and financial requirements but a healthy job is likely to be one where the pressures on employees are appropriate in relation to their abilities and resources. A healthy work environment is conducive to a work environment where employers ensure that employees have time and space for health in their quest for work-life balance.

Work associated stress is due to the response employees may give when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope. 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, as well as little control over work processes. There is often confusion between pressure or challenge and stress, and sometimes this is used to excuse bad management practice.

Pressure in the competitive environment may be unavoidable due to the demands of the contemporary office set up. Stress perceived as acceptable by an individual may even keep employees keen to learn, focused on the job, motivated, capable of engaging in work and learning, which depends on the personal traits and resources that they have.

It should be emphasized that when that demands of a job become extreme and the employee is unable to manage the burden, it leads to stress.

Occupational psychologists warn that undue stress disables the employee's mental performance which eventually impacts the organization's productivity.

Stress on the job is obviously due to a poor work organization which relates to the way jobs are delegated and operation systems are managed. Poor work design is to be blamed for the lack of control over work processes, weak management, feeble work surroundings and conditions aggravated by the lack of moral support from colleagues and supervisors.

Research indicates that the most stressful type of work:

1. Is that which values excessive demands and pressures that are not matched to workers' knowledge and abilities.
2. Where there is little opportunity to exercise any choice or control.
3. There is no support from peers and colleagues.

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To Help Reduce Occupational Stress:

1. Team bonding activities to be encouraged.
2. On the job trainings are helpful.
3. Work delegation should be well-designed.
4. Performance leverage should be holistic.
5. Supervisor-Subordinate relationship to be nurtured.
6. Strategies to encourage inclusion.
7. Employee mental health awareness to be created on-site.
8. On location wellness strategies to be offered.
9. Subsidized healthy meals and ease commute should be thought of by management.
10. Perks, bonuses, coupons, home loans, medical insurances help motivate employees.

It is observed that during stressful situation most people tend to seek support from others whereas many would withdraw under stress. It is very predictable that the dynamics of personal and professional relationships can change for person who is experiencing stress.

7.5.1 Person–Environment Fit Model of Job Stress

Person Environment Fit (PE) is a theory that offers a framework for prediction as well as assessment of the individual characteristics of an employee and the work environment that together determine the employee’s well-being.

Some of the researchers who proposed the Person Environment Fit formulations are:

1. Dawis and Lofquist (1984)
2. French, Rodgers and Cobb (1974)
3. Levi (1972); McGrath (1976)
4. Pervin (1967).

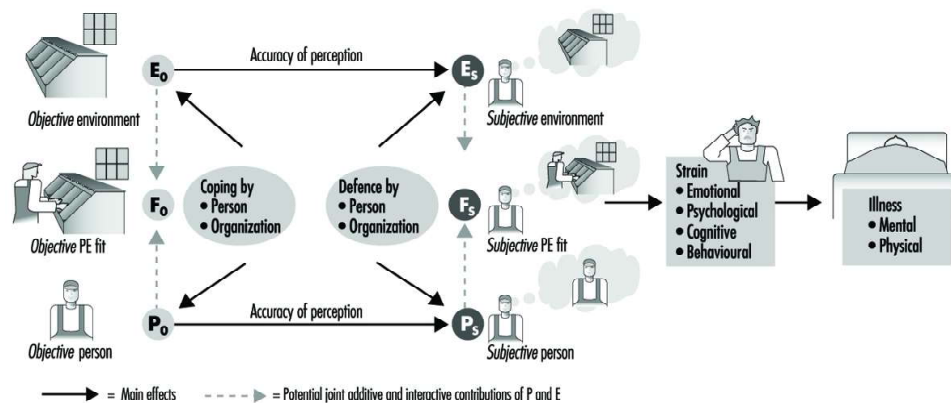


Fig. 7.1 Schematic Representation of French, Rogers and Cobb's Theory of Person-Environment (PE) Fit

What is the PE Fit Model?

As depicted in the above pictorial representation, the objective fit influences the subjective fit which, in turn, has a direct implication on the well-being of the person.

Well-being is defined as responses called strains that are potential risk factors for subsequent illnesses.

These strains are:

1. Emotional - depression, anxiety
2. Physiological - serum cholesterol, blood pressure
3. Cognitive - low self-evaluation, attributions of blame to self or others
4. Behavioural responses - aggression, changes in lifestyle, drug and alcohol use

This model explains that levels of changes in objective fit which are intended intervention or perceived accurately by the employee, so that discrepancies arise between objective and subjective fit.

Thus, employees can perceive good fit as well as poor fit objectively.

What are Statistical Models?

PE fit can have non-linear relations with psychological strain.

The figure below represents a U-shaped curve as a pictorial representation of Statistical Model. It is observed that the lowest level of psychological strain on the curve is depicted upon an employee when job characteristics fit each other ($P = E$).

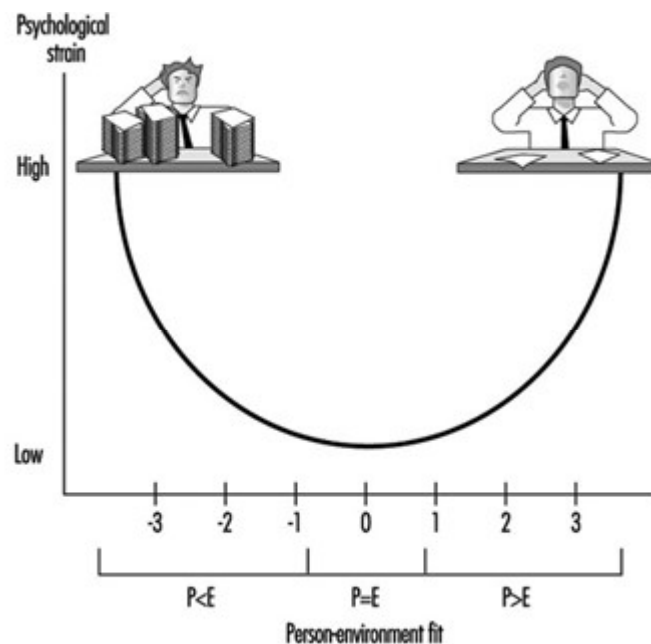


Fig 7.2 Hypothetical U-Shaped Relation of Person-Environment Fit to Psychological Strain

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The strain can increase as the individual employee and his abilities or needs respectively fall short of the job's demands or resources (PE).

The researcher Caplan and his team in 1980 reported a U-shaped relation between PE fit on job complexity and symptoms of depression in a study of employees from 23 occupations.

What is the Efficacy of the Model?

A variety of different approaches to the measurement of PE fit demonstrate the model's potential for predicting well-being and performance. The statistical modeling explain the PE fit expressed about 6% more variance in job satisfaction than was explained by measures of P or E (Edwards and Harrison 1993).

Check Your Progress

1. What is the purpose of behavioural therapy?
2. What does Cognitive behaviour therapy aim to be?
3. What has hypnotherapy been recognized as?
4. What can long overlooked stress result in?
5. What is the role of music therapy?

7.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The purpose of behavioural therapy is objectively conceptualized on the theory that you can 'unlearn' learnt behaviour or change that behaviour, without focusing on the reason behind the original behaviour.
2. Cognitive behaviour therapy aims to be 'scientific' by assessing and measuring change and does not prioritize finding original causes or exploring hidden potential.
3. Hypnotherapy has been recognized as a therapeutic tool by professional medical groups in a number of countries for many years, and can be powerful for changing patterns of behaviour when used as an adjunct to other therapies.
4. Long overlooked stress can result in chronic overdrive of our autoimmune system and impact the endocrine, cardiac and neural health and making it indispensable for us to develop healthier ways of responding to stress.
5. The role of music therapy is in eliciting and reinforcing relaxation that elicits responses more compatible with relaxation behaviours than do other modes

of reinforcement.

7.7 SUMMARY

- Counseling is the effective approach a professional mental health coach adopts to assist individuals requiring support in managing stress.
- The purpose of Behavioural therapy is objectively conceptualized on the theory that you can ‘unlearn’ learnt behaviour or change that behaviour, without focusing on the reason behind the original behaviour.
- The barriers to taking therapy as reported by individuals are logistical barriers including a lack of transportation to attend appointments, an inability to take time off from work to attend appointments, and/or a lack of childcare.
- With the advent of I-CBT, an individual can comfortably sit in front of their home computers, read psychoeducation content as well as practice CBT exercises and worksheets.
- The approach of Interpersonal and Social Rhythm Therapy offers assistance both from interpersonal psychotherapy along with cognitive-behavioural techniques to help people maintain their routines.
- The trained hypnotherapist gains access to the willing individual’s mind through hypnosis which may encourage a change in behaviour, attitude and emotions, pain, anxiety, stress-related illnesses and habits thereby enriching personal development.
- Positive Self-talk is a method used in hypnosis that involves repeating affirmations to oneself. To handle anxiety in turbulent situations, it is advised to mindfully speak words of appraisal to yourself every morning on waking up and at bedtime.
- **Tai Chi, Yoga, Qi Gong** are ancient arts that are a part of movement therapy as they combine rhythmic breathing with unique body postures along with flowing movements.
- The role of music therapy is in eliciting and reinforcing relaxation that elicits responses more compatible with relaxation behaviours than do other modes of reinforcement.
- Work associated stress is due to the response employees may give when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope.
- *Person Environment Fit* (PE) is a theory that offers a framework for prediction as well as assessment of the individual characteristics of an employee and the work environment that together determine the employee’s well-being.

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7.8 KEY WORDS

- **Psychoeducation:** It refers to the process of providing education and information to those seeking or receiving mental health services, such as people diagnosed with mental health conditions and their family members.
- **Courtesy Stigma:** It involves public disapproval evoked as a consequence of associating with a stigmatised individual or group.
- **Psychotherapy:** It is a general term for treating mental health problems by talking with a psychiatrist, psychologist or other mental health provider.
- **Circadian Rhythm:** It is a natural, internal process that regulates the sleep–wake cycle and repeats on each rotation of the Earth roughly every 24 hours.

7.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What is the role of a mental health coach?
2. Write a short note on cognitive analytic therapy.
3. What is multi modular therapy?
4. Write a short note on guided imagery.
5. What is the P-E fit model?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the characteristics of cognitive behavioural therapy.
2. Examine family therapy as a tool of stress management.
3. Explain the reasons for and nature of occupational stress.

7.10 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 8 CAUSES OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

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Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 Overview of Occupational Stress
 - 8.2.1 Personal Characteristics
 - 8.2.2 Organizational Structure, Properties of Work and Work Setting and Job Roles
- 8.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 8.4 Summary
- 8.5 Key Words
- 8.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 8.7 Further Readings

8.0 INTRODUCTION

Stress is created by a multitude of overlapping factors such as quantitative or qualitative work overloads, ethical dilemmas, difficult relationships with bosses and colleagues, and uncertainties in life. Although stress can sometimes act as a stimulant and challenge us (eustress), too much stress for too long a time has a negative impact on both our work life and our personal life (distress). The notion of management of stress basically focuses on the management of distress. We have already touched upon the causes of job stress in the Unit 3. In this unit, we will further our understanding regarding the causes of occupational stress. This includes personal characteristics, organizational structure, properties of work and work setting, and job roles.

8.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the causes of occupational stress
- Discuss the impact of personal characteristics and organizational structure on stress
- Describe the influence of properties of work and work setting, and job roles on stress

8.2 OVERVIEW OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

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Employees can experience stress both from their work life and from their personal life. These sources interact with each other to give rise to various stress symptoms. Stress in our daily life is the result of many interacting factors. We as individuals with some exclusive personality traits contribute towards generating stress. The organizational environment may also play host to potential stressors. The minor or major changes that occur in the external environment may also contribute towards generation of stress. The major contributors to stress are depicted in Figure 8.1.

8.2.1 Personal Characteristics

Personality plays a significant role in how we perceive stress. An experience that is stressful for one person may be part of a normal days work for another. Our personality types play a critical role in determining our reactions to stress.

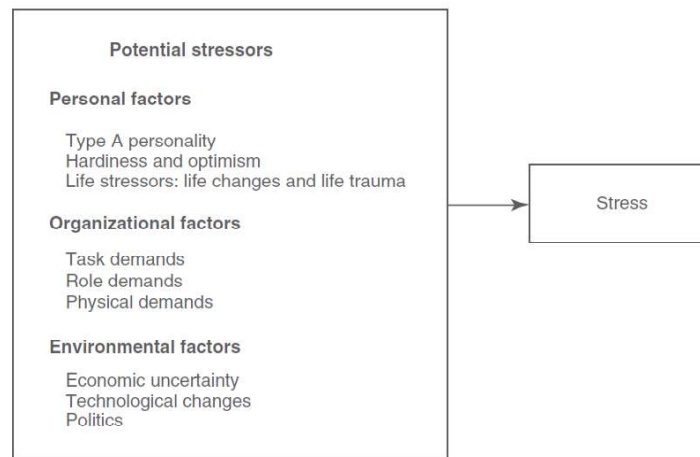


Fig. 8.1 Sources of Stress

Type A Personality

Cardiologists Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman have identified two different personality types and have labelled them Type A and Type B (Friedman and Rosenman, 1974). The main characteristics of people with Type A personality are that they are impatient, competitive, aggressive, restless and under intense perceived time pressure, always attempting to accomplish several things at once. The Type B personalities do not feel rushed even under pressure and they take things in a more relaxed manner and enjoy a variety of non-work-oriented activities.

As Type A personalities tend to work under tight deadlines and devote long hours to accomplishing their duties and responsibilities, they achieve promotions at a very rapid speed. Initially, they report a high level of job satisfaction and do not report a high incidence of health problems (Lee et al., 1990). However, they

seldom manage to retain good health for a long time and, therefore, do not generally reach top-level positions in organizations. The reasons for these can be ascribed to the fact that they do not spend much time on the analysis of complex problems and this impatience and hostility produces stress and discomfort for those with whom they work. As a result of this, most successful business executives at the top level are Type B individuals who are more patient and try to maintain pleasant interpersonal relationships with their employees to maintain organizational harmony (Jackson, 1988).

Out of all the characteristics of Type A personalities, hostility and anger are the most 'toxic' contributors to coronary heart disease for both men and women (Williams Jr., 1984). Type A managers need to be more open to feedback about themselves and try to make positive changes based on the feedback. Suggestions would include being less distrustful of others and not doubting their motives; trying to reduce the intensity of their anger, frustration, and rage; and learning to treat others with kindness and consideration (Williams, 1989).

Hardiness and optimism

Two other important individual differences related to stress are hardiness and optimism. Research suggests that some people have what are termed hardier personalities than others. Hardiness is a person's ability to cope with stress. People with hardy personalities have an internal locus of control, are strongly committed to the activities in their lives, and view change as an opportunity for advancement and growth. Such people are seen as relatively unlikely to suffer illness if they experience high levels of pressure and stress.

On the other hand, people with low hardiness may have more difficulties in coping with pressure and stress. Optimism is the extent to which a person sees life in positive or negative terms. A popular expression used to convey this idea concerns the glass half filled with water. A person with a lot of optimism will tend to see it as half full, whereas a person with less optimism (a pessimist) will often see it as half empty. In general, optimistic people tend to handle stress better. They will be able to see the positive characteristics of the situation and recognize that things may eventually improve. In contrast, less optimistic people may focus more on the negative characteristics of the situation and expect things to get worse, not better.

Other research suggests that women are perhaps more prone to experience the psychological effects of stress, whereas men may report more physical effects. Finally, some studies suggest that people who see themselves as complex individuals are better able to handle stress than people who view themselves as relatively simple. We should add, however, that the study of individual differences in stress is still in its infancy. It would, therefore, be premature to draw rigid conclusions about how different types of people handle stress.

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Life stressors

Stress in an organizational setting can also be influenced by events that take place outside the organization. Life stressors generally are categorized in terms of life change and life trauma.

Life changes

Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe first developed and popularized the notion of life change as a source of stress. A life change is any meaningful change in a person's personal or work situation. Holmes and Rahe (1967) reasoned that major changes in a person's life could lead to stress and eventually to disease. Holmes and Rahe identified a list of life events (a partial list is presented in Table 8.1) that can have a major or minor impact on individuals. They assigned points to each of these events depending on their intensity. There are 42 life events identified by them.

Table 8.1 Stress Impact of Life Changes as Measured by Life Change Units

Life Events	Mean Life Change Units
Death of spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital separation	65
Imprisonment	63
Death of a close family member	63
Marriage	50
Being fired from job	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Gain of new family members	39
Major business readjustment	39
Death of a close friend	37
Change to a different career	36
Beginning or ending formal schooling	26
Trouble with boss	23
Change in residence	20
Minor violation of the law	11

Each event's point value supposedly reflects the event's impact on the individual. At one extreme, a spouse's death, assumed to be the most traumatic event considered, is assigned a point value of 100. At the other extreme, minor violations of the law rank only 11 points. The points themselves represent life change units, or LCUs. Note also that the list includes negative events (divorce and trouble with the boss) as well as positive ones (marriage and vacations).

Holmes and Rahe argued that a person can handle a certain threshold of LCUs, but beyond that level problems can set in. In particular, they suggest that people who encounter more than 150 LCUs in a given year will experience a decline in their health the following year. A score of between 150 and 300 LCUs supposedly carries a 50% chance of major illness, while the chance of major

illness is said to increase to 70% if the number of LCUs exceed 300. These ideas offer some insight into the potential impact of stress and underscore our limitations in coping with stressful events. However, research on Holmes and Rahe's proposals has provided only mixed support.

In another research, it was proposed that stressful life events along with the cognitive appraisal and the personality characteristics of the individual will lead to the development of personal life stress. However, the essential requirement is that these events have to be accurately perceived and interpreted by the individual under stress (Bhagat, 1983).

Life trauma

Life trauma is similar to life change, but it has a narrower, more direct, and shorter-term focus. A life trauma is any upheaval in an individual's life that alters his attitudes, emotions or behaviours. According to the life change view, a divorce adds to a person's potential for health problems in the following year. At the same time, the person will obviously also experience emotional turmoil during the actual divorce process. This turmoil is a form of life trauma and will clearly cause stress, much of which may spill over into the workplace.

Major life traumas that may cause stress include marital problems, family difficulties, and health problems initially unrelated to stress. For example, a person learns that she has developed arthritis and this will limit her favourite activity, swimming. Her dismay over the news may translate into stress at work. Similarly, a worker going through a family break-up will almost certainly go through difficult periods, some of which will affect his job performance. For example, the experience of Vikas Bhalla, an automobile engineer, depicts how personal and organizational factors collectively add up to the levels of stress a person may have to go through. Vikas felt that he was doing quite well in his job and making valuable contributions to the company he worked for. However, his performance appraisal appeared to be bland and he did not get the kind of raise he was expecting. At the same time, his wife left him to go to stay with her parents and filed for divorce. As a result of all this, he started losing interest in his job and ultimately was held responsible for a major breakdown in the plant. So many different problems were hitting Vikas simultaneously and he began to show signs of stress.

8.2.2 Organizational Structure, Properties of Work and Work Setting and Job Roles

Stress at the organizational level can emanate from different factors. A few of these are discussed in this section:

- **Task demands:** Stress from the task demand emerges from changes enforced on employees. Change often brings in uncertainty and unpredictability. Change emerges from changes in the economic condition, technology, leadership, and structure. Any kind of change requires

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adjustments from the employees. If one is not able to respond to these changes effectively, it adds on to the level of stress.

- **Job roles:** Certain negative characteristics of a person's role at work can increase the likelihood of his experiencing stress. Job role demands include high workloads, idle period of time, job ambiguity, and conflicting performance expectations. Sona Khanna is a fine example of how excessive demands at work can stress out employees. A shift in-charge in an electronics plant, Sona is stressed out by frequent emergencies and conflicts at work. She hardly has any authority to match her responsibility. A medical examination after she fainted at work revealed that she was suffering from high blood pressure. Stress caused by the excessive demands at work had started affecting her health.
 - o **Overload:** When there is an expectation from the organization to accomplish more than the ability of the person, it results in work overload. It has been found that for top- and middle-level managers, unreasonable deadlines and constant pressure are the frequent stressors in their jobs (Zemke, 1991). Quantitative overload exists when people are requested to do more work than they can comfortably do in the allocated time, and qualitative overload happens when the job requires them to perform beyond their levels of competence and skills.
 - o **Underload:** Most people wish to remain occupied and face optimum challenges while performing their jobs. Work underload occurs when people have insufficient work to fill their time or are not allowed to use enough of their skills and abilities. Employees who are underloaded often feel bored, weary, are prone to injury, and frequently absent from work. Machine-based assembly lines are an example of such a work environment. Operating nuclear power plants involves periods of boredom that must be endured simultaneously with sufficient alertness to respond to potential emergencies. Awareness of the costs of an ineffective response to an emergency makes these jobs all the more stressful (Cooper 1987).
 - o **Role conflict:** Role conflict exists when job functions contains duties or responsibilities that conflict with one another. It is most commonly found among middle managers, who find themselves caught between top-level management and lower-level managers (Giordano et al. 1979). A typical example of a role conflict would be when an employee has to decide between the demands made by the boss to put in extra effort while doing the job or a demand made by the colleagues to restrain one's effort while doing the job. Sometimes, role conflict is also experienced when one has to act contrary to one's own belief and value system; for example, when an individual is expected to take unethical or illegal decisions to safeguard the interests of the organization at the cost of his

own principles and beliefs. Role conflict brings about increased tension and reduced satisfaction to the person concerned. In addition, it also destroys the level of trust and respect between the two parties concerned, especially the one who is exerting conflicting role pressures on the role incumbent. The results of this in the form of decreased morale and social and psychological pressure can prove to be very costly for the person and the organization.

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- **Physical demands:** The physical demands of the workplace can also have a devastating impact on the mental and physical health of the employees. Poor working conditions in the form of extreme temperatures, loud noises, too much or too little lighting, radiation, and air pollutants are some examples of working conditions that can take a toll on employees. The first impact of these factors is on job performance, which starts deteriorating. High travel demands or long-distance commuting, excessive travel, and long hours all add up to increased stress and reduced performance. In addition to this, advancements in technology which provides immense relief and efficiency to people who are proficient at it can cause damage and stress to those who are averse to it. With the increase in the number of call centres and business process outsourcing firms (BPOs) in the business environment, the threat of physical demands on employees has increased in intensity and can be the cause of stress-related disorders if not checked immediately.
- **Career development:** One of the major sources of stress in organizations today is the aspiration level of employees. The issues related to career planning and development such as job security, promotions, transfers and other developmental processes like under promotion (failure to grow in the job as per the aspiration levels) or over-promotions (promotion to a job that exceeds the competency levels of employees) can create high anxiety and stress among the persons concerned. Whenever any change is introduced in the organization, employees are concerned about its effects on their future. The employees experience many career-related concerns such as, ‘Will I be able to contribute effectively in the new job?’, ‘Is there a possibility of growth?’, or ‘Is the new job secure?’ These concerns are the main sources of stress among them.
- **Organizational politics:** Each and every employee of the organization is a part of a formal or an informal group or team. Good working relationship with peers, subordinates, and superiors is very crucial for the successful performance of the organization and also to help employees to achieve their personal and organizational goals. The disregard for each other in the organization results in rude behaviour and becomes a cause for stress. A high level of political behaviour or office politics can also be a source of stress for managers and employees. A by-product of power struggles within an organization is heightened competition and increased stress for

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participants. Managers who are caught up in power games and political alliances also pass on pressure to subordinates (Matteson and Ivancevich, 1987).

- **Aggressive behaviour:** A very common form of aggressive behaviour in organizations is observed in the form of violence and sexual harassment. Aggressive behaviour that intentionally threatens or causes physical harm to other employees has been defined as workplace violence. It has been found to be one of the major sources of stress in firms (Atkinson, 2001). Sexual harassment is unwanted contact or communication of a sexual nature (Mink, 2000). Today, with more number of women employees entering the corporate world, this issue has become very pertinent and has to be dealt with in right ways. Management, therefore, has a strong responsibility to prevent sexual harassment from happening in organizations. If at all it occurs, it has to be dealt with quickly and firmly. Ignoring genuine complaints can prove to be costly. Mitsubishi had to pay \$34 million to 350 female workers at its Illinois plant because it repeatedly ignored their complaints about a sexually hostile working environment. Infosys had to make a \$3 million payout to settle a sexual harassment case filed against it and its former director, Phaneesh Murthy.

Environmental factors

The environment in which the organizations operate has a profound impact on their working. The economic, political, and technological events happening in the external environment cause stress in varying degrees as they have many uncertainties associated with them. The anxiety aroused by uncertain environmental factors carries over into the workplace and then to our personal lives. Some of these factors are included here:

- **Economic uncertainty:** Downsizing, rightsizing, retrenchment, restructuring, etc. are all done in the name of efficiency and cost reduction to improve profitability. The employees who are made redundant as a result of these exercises are forced to look for other means of sustenance. With the regulatory announcement made by the government, organizations are left to find ways to manage these uncertainties which can cause anxiety and stress both for the employer and the employees.
- **Technological changes:** Advancements in technology in the form of automation, computerization, and robotics has contributed immensely to the productivity and profitability of organizations. However, it also has caused displacement of skilled workers who have to now unlearn and learn new skills to match up with the expectations of the organization. The knowledge of advanced technology also creates a disparity between the new breed of workers and the old masters of the game. Older employees are generally

resistant to learning necessary technical skills and competing against the younger employees who are proficient in them. This gap creates a feeling of negativity and antagonism between the two breeds of workers, thereby generating stress.

- **Political uncertainty:** Political disturbance in the external environment has tremendous impact on the working of business organizations. The philosophies, policies, and the systems approved by the political party which is in power determine the ways organizations have to operate. This is more visible in government-funded organizations like aerospace, defence, and science and technology. Even unemployed persons can feel stressed out about political uncertainties as they might affect their social security and welfare.

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Check Your Progress

1. Who identified two different personality types, that is, Type A and Type B?
2. Which are the most 'toxic' contributors to coronary heart disease in Type A?
3. Define hardiness.
4. What are the two extremes of life changes as measured by Life Change Units (LDUs)?

8.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Cardiologists Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman have identified two different personality types and have labelled them Type A and Type B.
2. Out of all the characteristics of Type A personalities, hostility and anger are the most 'toxic' contributors to coronary heart disease for both men and women
3. Hardiness is a person's ability to cope with stress. People with hardy personalities have an internal locus of control, are strongly committed to the activities in their lives, and view change as an opportunity for advancement and growth. Such people are seen as relatively unlikely to suffer illness if they experience high levels of pressure and stress
4. The two extremes of life changes as measured by Life Change Units (LDUs) include at one extreme, a spouse's death, assumed to be the most traumatic event considered, is assigned a point value of 100, while at the other extreme, minor violations of the law rank only 11 points.

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8.4 SUMMARY

- Employees can experience stress both from their work life and from their personal life. These sources interact with each other to give rise to various stress symptoms.
- Personality plays a significant role in how we perceive stress. An experience that is stressful for one person may be part of a normal days work for another.
- The main characteristics of people with Type A personality are that they are impatient, competitive, aggressive, restless and under intense perceived time pressure, always attempting to accomplish several things at once.
- The Type B personalities do not feel rushed even under pressure and they take things in a more relaxed manner and enjoy a variety of non-work-oriented activities.
- Two other important individual differences related to stress are hardiness and optimism. Research suggests that some people have what are termed hardier personalities than others. Hardiness is a person's ability to cope with stress.
- People with low hardiness may have more difficulties in coping with pressure and stress. Optimism is the extent to which a person sees life in positive or negative terms.
- Stress in an organizational setting can also be influenced by events that take place outside the organization. Life stressors generally are categorized in terms of life change and life trauma.
- The organizational factors leading to stress are task demands, role demands, and physical demands.
- Certain negative characteristics of a person's role at work can increase the likelihood of his experiencing stress. Job role demands include high workloads, idle period of time, job ambiguity, and conflicting performance expectations.
- The disregard for each other in the organization results in rude behaviour and becomes a cause for stress. A high level of political behaviour or office politics can also be a source of stress for managers and employees.
- A very common form of aggressive behaviour in organizations is observed in the form of violence and sexual harassment.
- The environmental factors causing stress have been classified as economic uncertainty, technological changes, and politics.
- Older employees are generally resistant to learning necessary technical skills and competing against the younger employees who are proficient in them.

This gap creates a feeling of negativity and antagonism between the two breeds of workers, thereby generating stress.

- Political disturbance in the external environment has tremendous impact on the working of business organizations.

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8.5 KEY WORDS

- **Stressors:** Stressors are events or conditions in your surroundings that may trigger stress. Your body responds to stressors differently depending on whether the stressor is new or short term—acute stress—or whether the stressor has been around for a longer time—chronic stress.
- **Retrenchment:** It is an act of cutting down or reduction, particularly of public expenditure.

8.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Do managers with Type A personality make better managers? Why or why not?
2. Briefly explain the environmental factors causing organizational stress.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the life stressors which contribute to stress.
2. Discuss the different factors causing stress at the organizational level.

8.7 FURTHER READINGS

- Cartwright, S. and C. L. Cooper. 1997. *Managing Workplace Stress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
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BLOCK - III
STRESS MANAGEMENT INTERVENTION

NOTES

**UNIT 9 EFFECTS OF
OCCUPATIONAL STRESS**

Structure

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Objectives
- 9.2 Overview of Effects of Occupational Stress
 - 9.2.1 Effects on Employee's Physical Health
 - 9.2.2 Effect on Employee's Psychological Health
 - 9.2.3 Effect on Job Satisfaction
 - 9.2.4 Absenteeism
 - 9.2.5 Effect on Job Behaviour
 - 9.2.6 Effect on Job Performance
- 9.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 9.4 Summary
- 9.5 Key Words
- 9.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 9.7 Further Readings

9.0 INTRODUCTION

Stressors in workplaces are categorised as physical and psychosocial. Noise, inadequate lighting, poor office or job layout, and ergonomic factors, such as bad working postures, represent physical stressors. The most predominant stress factors are arguably psychosocial stressors. These include high demands for jobs, inflexible working hours, poor management of jobs, poor design and layout of work, bullying, abuse, and insecurity of employment. Stress in the workplace not only affects the worker, it also has detrimental effects on the output of the business. The consequences of work-related stress are visible in the physical health, mental health and behaviour of workers. We have already touched upon the effects of job stress in the Unit 4. In this unit, we will further our understanding regarding the effects of occupational stress. This includes effect on job behaviour, job satisfaction, performance, absenteeism, as well as effects on employee's physical and psychological health.

9.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the effects of occupational stress
- Discuss the effect of occupational stress on job behaviour, job satisfaction, and performance
- Describe the effects of occupational stress on employee's physical and psychological health

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9.2 OVERVIEW OF EFFECTS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Unhealthy chronic stress can result in physiological, psychological, and behavioural changes in individuals. Some of these symptoms remain unnoticed for a very long period of time. Individuals who rely on fast-track living tend to assume these symptoms as a part of their life style and, therefore, keep avoiding it for a very long period. Since the symptoms of stress are so varied, they may be overlooked or mistaken. Special attention should be paid to prolonged headaches, elevated blood pressure, fatigue, and depression (Schwimmer, 1991). The physiological, psychological, and behavioural consequences of stress are depicted in Figure 9.1.

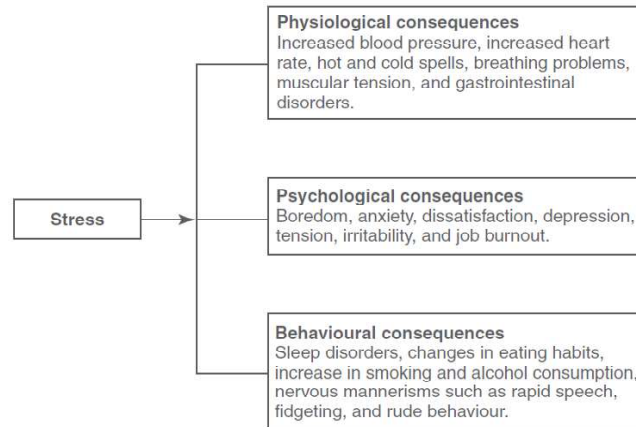


Fig. 9.1 Consequences of Stress

9.2.1 Effects on Employee's Physical Health

The physiological consequences of stress include heightened blood pressure, increased pulse rate, sweating, hot and cold flashes, headaches, and gastrointestinal disorders. Medical experts have attributed more than 50% of illnesses such as ulcers, arthritis, and allergies to stress. A very high correlation has been observed between job dissatisfaction and heart diseases among workers in more than 40

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different occupations (Fletcher 1988). Besides this, stress-related illnesses are a heavy load on individuals and organizations. The cost is borne not only by individuals but by organizations as well. The cost to the employer can be visualized from three different perspectives. The first cost could be in terms of health insurance that the employer has to pay for very serious illnesses such as heart disease. Secondly, the majority of the accidents caused by employees in the workplace setting could be because of the emotional turmoil the employee is going through. Thirdly, there could be legal hassles between the employer and the employee because of stress-related worker compensation claims.

9.2.2 Effect on Employee's Psychological Health

Excessive amount of stress in an organization can cause boredom, dissatisfaction, anxiety, tension, irritability, and depression. All of these take the feeling of well-being away from the individual and contribute to poor concentration, indecision, and decreased attention span at work (Watson and Tellegen, 1985). If individuals are not able to change or move away from the stressors, they may resort to psychological substitutes such as anger, feeling of persecution, displacement, criticism, negativism, denial, apathy, fantasy, hopelessness, withdrawal, forgetfulness, and procrastination (Fletcher, 1988).

9.2.3 Effect on Job Satisfaction

Excessive and unmanageable amount of stress depletes the individual's effort to combat stress, resulting in job burnout. Job burnout refers to the adverse effects of working conditions in which the ability to confront and manage stress reduces significantly and job satisfaction and relief from stress seem impossible. According to Lee and Ashforth (1996), the burnout phenomenon typically contains three components:

- A state of emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalization of individuals
- Feeling of low personal accomplishment

A state of emotional exhaustion occurs most commonly among individuals who have both a high frequency and a high intensity of interpersonal contact. This kind of interpersonal contact may lead to emotional exhaustion, a key component of job burnout (Moore 2005). Most vulnerable to this problem are teachers, police officers, and social workers. Depersonalization refers to the treatment of people as objects. When a teacher refers to her student by roll number and not by name, she has actually dissociated herself with the student as a person. The student is, then, treated not as a human being but as a numbered object. These factors combined together lead to a feeling of low personal accomplishment. According to a study conducted by Advani et al. (2005), it was found that organizational politics and coordination expertise was significant in influencing burnout level among software professionals. While organizational politics had a greater influence on

emotional exhaustion and depersonalization aspects, coordination expertise had a greater influence on the personal accomplishment aspect of burnout. According to Etzion et al. (1998), the characteristics which are found to be associated with high degree of burnout are as follows:

- Burnout candidates experience a great deal of stress as a result of job-related stressors.
- They tend to be idealistic and self-motivated achievers.
- They often seek unattainable goals.

9.2.4 Absenteeism

Absenteeism refers to a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation without good reason. Generally, absenteeism is unplanned absences. Traditionally, workplaces viewed absenteeism as an indicator of poor individual performance, as well as a breach of an implicit contract between employee and employer. It was seen as a management problem, and framed in economic or quasi-economic terms. However, more recent analysis seeks to examine absenteeism as an indicator of psychological, medical, or social adjustment to work. Heavy workloads, stressful meetings/presentations and feelings of being unappreciated can cause employees to avoid going into work. Personal stress outside of work can lead to absenteeism.

9.2.5 Effect on Job Behaviour

When stress becomes distress, job performance gets affected and workplace accidents become very common. High stress levels impair our ability to remember information, make effective decisions, and take appropriate actions (Jamal 1984). Some of the initial behavioural consequences of distress are sleep disorders, change in eating habits, increase in smoking and alcohol consumption, and nervous behaviour such as rapid speech, stuttering and rude behaviour towards others. Negative stress causes even very polite and sober people to shout at their colleagues or subordinates. The most extreme form of distress results in workplace violence directed towards self or others resulting in suicide attempts or physical attacks on others.

9.2.6 Effect on Job Performance

Performance decline is another major outcome of negative stress. It is estimated that nearly 75% of all work loss is due to stress (Bell 1990). The relationship between stress and performance can be explained with the help of a violin string. For a violin, an optimum degree of tension is essential to play on it; similarly for an effective performance, optimum level of stress is mandatory. In the absence or low levels of stress, there will be boredom, apathy, and the lack of desire to do any work. This can be easily understood with an example of a student who does not study consistently all through the year because of lack of tension. Just before the commencement of the examination, the tension or stress starts building up and

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this forces the student to pick up the books and study so that he is able to perform effectively in the examination. But if the stress continues to increase beyond that and persists for a long period of time, the ability to perform effectively will decrease because of depleted energy, overload, and anxiety. In that state, the student who otherwise has prepared well will suffer from examination anxiety and will not remember the material that he knows so well for his answer and might perform miserably. This process can be easily explained with the help of the Yerkes–Dodson Law (1908), which states that stress leads to improved performance up to an optimum point. After that, stress has a detrimental impact on performance. McGrath (1976) suggests that performance declines beyond the midpoint in the Yerkes–Dodson curve because of the increased difficulty level of the task to be performed.

Check Your Progress

1. What constitutes as physical stressors in an organization?
2. What are the components of the burnout phenomenon?
3. What is the result of the most extreme form of distress in the workplace?

9.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Noise, inadequate lighting, poor office or job layout, and ergonomic factors, such as bad working postures, represent physical stressors in an organization.
2. According to Lee and Ashforth, the burnout phenomenon typically contains three components:
 - a. A state of emotional exhaustion
 - b. Depersonalization of individuals
 - c. Feeling of low personal accomplishment
3. The most extreme form of distress results in the workplace violence directed towards self or others resulting in suicide attempts or physical attacks on others.

9.4 SUMMARY

- Stressors in workplaces are categorised as physical and psychosocial. Noise, inadequate lighting, poor office or job layout, and ergonomic factors, such as bad working postures, represent physical stressors.
- The consequences of work-related stress are visible in the physical health, mental health and behaviour of workers.

- Unhealthy chronic stress can result in physiological, psychological, and behavioural changes in individuals. Some of these symptoms remain unnoticed for a very long period of time.
- The physiological consequences of stress include heightened blood pressure, increased pulse rate, sweating, hot and cold flashes, headaches, and gastrointestinal disorders.
- Excessive amount of stress in an organization can cause boredom, dissatisfaction, anxiety, tension, irritability, and depression.
- Excessive and unmanageable amount of stress depletes the individual's effort to combat stress, resulting in job burnout.
- Absenteeism refers to a habitual pattern of absence from a duty or obligation without good reason. Generally, absenteeism is unplanned absences.
- The most extreme form of distress results in workplace violence directed towards self or others resulting in suicide attempts or physical attacks on others.
- Performance decline is another major outcome of negative stress. It is estimated that nearly 75% of all work loss is due to stress.

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9.5 KEY WORDS

- **Procrastination:** It is the act of putting off doing something that you should do till another day or time, because you do not want to do it.
- **The Yerkes-Dodson Curve:** It is the curve representing Yerkes-Dodson law, a model of the relationship between stress and task performance, which can be depicted as an upside-down U-shaped curve. The left side of the curve represents low arousal, or stress. The right side represents high arousal. And at the centre is a medium level of arousal.

9.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. One of your colleague remarks that he is feeling burnt out. How would you determine, on the basis of your understanding of job burnout, whether he is burnt out or not?
2. What kind of behavioural changes are observed due to stress in employees?

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Long-Answer Questions

1. How do physiological and psychological consequences impact the health of an individual? Discuss.
2. Describe the effects of organizational stress on job performance.

9.7 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 10 INDIVIDUAL-CENTERED STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

*Individual-Centered
Stress Management
Techniques*

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Structure

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Objectives
- 10.2 Stress Management Techniques
 - 10.2.1 Cognitive Techniques
 - 10.2.2 Hypno-Suggestion
 - 10.2.3 Behavioural and Physical Interventions
- 10.3 Coping Strategies
- 10.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 10.5 Summary
- 10.6 Key Words
- 10.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 10.8 Further Readings

10.0 INTRODUCTION

Stress management is necessary to enhance and improve one's response to different stressors. Stressors can be both external and internal. Optimal level of stress is healthy for success and productivity. However, the inability to manage stress can have a detrimental effect on individuals. Various stress management techniques are in practice today to increase stress tolerance and avoid the vicious cycle of maladaptive behaviour. This unit will discuss in detail these stress management techniques and also delve into the types of coping strategies individuals can adopt.

10.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss in detail various stress management techniques
- Explain the various types of coping strategies

10.2 STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Stress seems to be as old as the mankind. Stress in multiple ways touches each of us in various ways. It is an integral part of our life. It can be seen both as a stimulus (as a property of the event or situation we face, for example, natural disaster,

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noise, crowding etc) and as a response (to a stimulus event known as a stressor that threatens to disrupt one's physical and social functioning).

Stressors can be external or internal. Examples of external stressors are earthquake, pollution, etc. and internal stressor can be one's thinking pattern. Stressors threaten one's well-being and demand some kind of an adaptive response.

Stress is usually experienced in terms of three components, that is, emotion (such as anxiety or fear), thought (such as pessimistic self-talk) and behaviour (such as smoking). All situations, positive and negative, that require adjustment can be stressful. Thus, according to Hans Selye (1956), there are two kinds of stress: Eustress (refers to stress caused by positive situations such as marriage, promotion, etc.) and Distress (refers to stress caused by negative situations such as death, divorce, loss of a job, etc.). Though both eustress and distress tax an individual's coping skills and resources but distress has more potential to cause damage.

While stress is considered a major cause of various mental and physical health problems, its effects is not always undesirable. In fact, stress is a basic ingredient of life and has several advantages as well. They are as follows:

- Our biological system is equipped with some stress alarms that are essential for survival and allow one to function effectively in many situations.
- Stress seems to underlie all creative and constructive activities. A certain level of stress is necessary to perform better. Stress quite often increases our efficiency and makes us search for new coping strategies.
- It improves our adaptive system, thereby making us better equipped to deal with such situations in future. It is seen that individuals who have not experienced any stress in their lives have a poor adaptive mechanism and may succumb to even mild forms of stress. On the other hand, there are people who thrive on stress and show greater efficiency in handling crisis. In essence, intermittent stress (i.e., occasional exposure but with recovery periods) leads to enhanced stress tolerance.

Thus, optimal level of stress is natural and healthy for success, productivity and effectiveness. It is advisable that each individual finds out his or her optimal level of stress as too little stress results in a boring and apathetic existence whereas too much of stress leads to undue wear and tear, making us more vulnerable to illness.

Stress Management Techniques

Generally speaking, increased levels of stress threaten a person's well-being. It usually results in the individuals taking some steps to do away with stress, which can have a detrimental effect on their well-being. What action an individual takes often depends on a complex interplay between internal factors like a person's frame of reference, motive, competency, or stress tolerance and external factors like one's social demand and expectation.

Ironically, some people create stress for themselves by engaging in maladaptive behaviours and cognitions. Some individuals get caught in the vicious cycle of generating life events that in turn produce adjustment problems.

There are various ways to manage stress. Some of the techniques are discussed below.

10.2.1 Cognitive Techniques

Stress is subjective in nature and is more about how we perceive or look at a situation. Our thoughts and cognitions are key determinants in the degree and the amount of stress we experience. Therefore, one of the key ways to overcome stress is to replace negative maladaptive thoughts, behaviours and actions with more adaptive and functional ones.

Altering one's negative thoughts: Research has shown that our mind listens to what we say to ourselves. The more negatively we talk to ourselves, the more negatively we think, thereby becoming more anxious. This will lead to poor performance. Therefore, it is important to rectify the statements we tell ourselves. One should try to talk positively to oneself by focusing more on the solutions to the problem rather than procrastinating or avoiding the problem. For example, instead of saying that lot of syllabus is still left, I will surely fail; it is better to say that I can choose at this point to cover those concepts properly that carry more marks in exams. Similarly, instead of repeatedly telling oneself that one would forget everything, it's better to say that I have studied hard and I know the concept; hence I will be able to write it in my own language.

Problem solving and Goal setting: To deal with the current situation at hand, we must set adequate achievable, clear, and specific goals. One should work towards solving the issue at hand. Once the key concerns are resolved, we feel less stressed. Prioritizing one's goals is essential. One can make use of following steps to set effective goals as a way of resolving key problems and stressors we face every day:

- Set clear concrete goals by breaking larger tasks into simpler ones and try to achieve them bit by bit.
- Reward yourself. After achievement of each goal, one should reward oneself. The rewards can be small, like treating oneself with ice cream, or buying a new outfit or playing a game, etc.
- One needs to regularly review the extent to which one has achieved their goals.

10.2.2 Hypno-Suggestion

Hypnosis is used as a stress management technique by making people get into a deep state of relaxation. Hypnosis can also be used to prevent health problems that may result from chronic stress. Hypnotic techniques are also seen quite useful in enabling people to bring about various healthy changes in their life style. Hypnosis

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comes very handy in reducing anxiety levels and can help one to overcome negative habits like smoking or compulsive eating. It can also be used to induce a state of relaxation and reduce pain in situations like child birth which can at times be very painful and stressful for few.

Hypnosis has many benefits. It potentially has no major side effects and its positive impact can be quite lasting. But, some people find it difficult to get into the state of trance.

10.2.3 Behavioural and Physical Interventions

Stress management refers to the use of various methods that have been designed to reduce the impact of potential stressful experiences. The various stress management techniques can be broadly divided into eastern and western techniques. The eastern techniques include meditation, Yoga, pranayam and self-awareness (Anashakti). The western techniques include relaxation techniques (Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique, Autogenic Training), biofeedback, assertiveness, time management, and effective communication.

Meditation: The various relaxation techniques are closely associated with meditation practice in eastern religion. Earliest evidence of formal relaxation was seen in Hinduism in India between 3000 and 4000 BC. Religious rituals stressed on meditation. This meditation aspect represented the beginning of Yoga.

Meditation means directing one's attention to an object. It may provide direct access to inner conscious energies. For meditation, one requires a quiet room free from distraction, a comfortable place to sit, a mental desire to focus one's attention, and a passive attitude. It is effective as it slows metabolism, lowers blood pressure and reduces arousal.

Yoga: Yoga literally means to unite. It is the unity of physical and mental energy. It may mean different things to different people. For some, it is a way to keep the body free from ailments by reducing stress but for others it is a way of life. It helps one to control one's intellect, emotion, and behaviour.

Yoga prescribes some asana (bodily postures) to restore balance. 'Asana' is a Sanskrit word meaning at ease and relaxed. Shavasana is the simplest asana and a quite effective relaxation technique. It requires a quiet room with subdued lighting free from distraction. In it, the individual is asked to lie down straight on his back by keeping his head in a comfortable position. He asked to focus on his breathing, on the air that passes in and out of the nostril. It focuses on passive observation of one thoughts, which is quite difficult but essential for total relaxation to take place. Individual is instructed to release tension from the body from time to time.

Those who cannot relax in Shavasana because of its resemblance to a dead body can benefit from Makarasana (crocodile position). Depending upon needs and capabilities of each individual, different technique can be prescribed. Research has shown that it is effective in regulating blood pressure, anxiety, stress, insomnia, etc.

Pranayam: It refers to breathing exercise. It is based on the principle that if one could harmonize breathing then one can alter their thought, behaviour and emotion. The lungs take in air which is rich in oxygen and hence energises both the body and the mind.

Self-awareness or Anasakti: It is an Indian concept based on self-realization/self-actualization. But it is a health promoting attitude that gradually develops. It is a relative concept. It is emotional detachment from something/someone. In spiritual love, it means detachment of the spiritual principal (basis of consciousness) from body and ego and body movement that create tension and interfere in lifetime function of internal organs and may result in psychosomatic illness.

Anasakti person tends to perceive his work as duty and shows lack of concern for the consequences of action. He appraises his own success and failure in objective rather than egoistic terms and is less governed by external standards like social approval and concerns. He does not insist on seeking pleasure or avoiding pain. He shows absence of egoism and maintains an emotional equipoise both in the face of positive and negative experience. He is a man of stable wisdom with little mood swings. He shows total absorption in the work/task at hand and shows heightened concentration, trying to make efforts towards achieving task excellence. The statement that 'this too shall pass' very well expresses the attitude of an anasakti person.

Relaxation technique: Relaxation is often misunderstood as rest or lying down. It is rest after effort, or more accurately, conscious rest after conscious effort. Stebbins (1960) has defined relaxation as the complete resignation of body to law of gravity and of the mind to the law of nature. It involves the total energy transformation into deep dynamic breathing. It is both a means and an end to self realization.

The main goal of relaxation is not to eliminate stressors or to prevent its recurrence but to increase one's tolerance. Though it is suitable for all people, when and how it is introduced varies. It possesses both curative and preventive characteristics.

For the relaxation techniques to be effective, they should be administered live by the therapist. The client should be told about its nature and how it works. The clients should be motivated and encouraged to use it on regular basis. The benefits of the technique should be transferred to real life situations and the client should be made to see its several beneficial applications. Some of the relaxation techniques commonly used are Jacobson's muscle relaxation technique and Autogenic Training.

Biofeedback: It converts physiological response into electrical activity and provides a visual/auditory feedback about them. It is based on the principle that when we make a response, then feedback about the consequence of the response enable us to make appropriate adjustment. It requires making an individual aware

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of a metabolic response, drawing his attention to a signal that indicates desirable changes in internal responses, trying to control biofeedback signal and thereby controlling physiological response. It involves transferring control from laboratory to everyday setting. Two majorly used biofeedback technique are EMG (electromyography), which measures muscle tension and Thermal biofeedback, which measure skin temperature. It is based on the principle that under stress, blood vessels constrict and temperature becomes cold.

The method of biofeedback has been criticized for being expensive; also it is difficult to transfer control from laboratory to real life settings. Till date it is not certain whether the change is due to biofeedback only or anything else. One does not know how it exactly works and its effects are short lived. Biofeedback has been found to be effective in treating chronic tension, headaches, blood pressure, muscle tension and lower back pain.

Assertiveness training: Individuals who are unable to say 'NO', that is, those who are non-assertive, are likely to experience stress as they are unable to express their feelings and tend to suppress their emotions like anger, hostility, disgust which are associated with chronic stress. Hence, assertiveness training is likely to benefit such individuals. Assertiveness training involves teaching individuals using modeling, instruction, rehearsal and feedback. Assertiveness training involves three components namely, refusal (the ability to say no for things that you do not wish to do), commendatory (i.e., the ability to express positive emotions), and request (i.e., asking someone to do things that help you to accomplish your goal).

Time management: It helps individuals to learn to prioritize their tasks and do them efficiently. One should first make a list of the task that one needs to, rate them in terms of their importance, assign the amount of time you wish to spend at it and review how much you were able to achieve. Stress usually occurs when various tasks pile up and one is not able to finish them on time.

Effective communication or calming self-talk: It involves engaging in silent, relaxing, reasoning that aims at telling oneself that stress is temporary and it shall soon go away. It also helps individuals to preserve a sense of personal control, such as telling oneself that one handle the stress.

Diet: Eating a well balanced healthy diet is seen to reduce stress. One should avoid fast foods and drinks like tea and coffee which contain caffeine as it lessens the process of grasping. Drinking plenty of water keeps the brain hydrated.

Exercise and rejuvenation: Exercise such as walking, jogging, swimming or cycling 15 minutes a day helps by keeping one physically active. Taking short breaks helps one refocus and gives time for relaxation, rejuvenation and assimilation. Physical exercise and sports help improve general circulation, facilitate increased blood flow to the brain, and is instrumental in raising the levels of nor-epinephrine and endorphins – all of which may reduce stress, improve mood, and perhaps as a result improve achievement.

Sleep: Adequate sleep routine helps you feel fresh for longer duration and reduces stress. Regular seven or eight hours of sleep is mandatory for the body to function well and keeps one alert and responsive. Staying up late a few nights in a row and then trying to catch up on the weekend does not help.

Check Your Progress

1. What are the two types of stress?
2. Mention the two commonly used biofeedback techniques.
3. What are the three components of assertiveness training?

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10.3 COPING STRATEGIES

Individuals tend to cope with stress at three levels: at the biological or the physiological level (through the use of immunological defenses and damage-repair mechanisms), the psychological or the interpersonal level (through the use of learned coping patterns, self-defenses, and support from family and friends) and at the socio-cultural level (through group resources, such as labor unions, religious organizations, and law-enforcement agencies). The failure of coping efforts at any of these levels may seriously increase a person's vulnerability on other levels and also to other stressors.

In order to effectively cope with stress, individuals are seen to engage in various coping strategies. Coping strategies refer to various cognitive, behavioural and emotional ways people engage in to manage stress. They are dynamic processes which neither eliminate a stressor nor prevent its re-occurrence but increase one's tolerance of the situations. All the coping strategies an individual engages in are not equally effective.

Lazarus has given two kinds of coping strategies: emotion focused coping strategy and problem focused coping strategy.

(a) Emotion focused coping

It involves the use of cognitive and behaviour strategy to manage one's emotional reaction to stress. Emotion focused coping primarily aims at diverting attention from unpleasant situations, stress evoking events and problems. An individual tends to make use of them when nothing significant can be done to alter the stressor or stress evoking situation and events and when he or she lacks the skills or resource to meet demands posed by the stressors. Three types of emotion focused coping strategies that are frequently used are:

- **Escape avoidance:** In it, the individual physically/psychologically separates himself or herself from the stressors. For instance, to avoid failing one may either not give the exam or may engage in excessive sleeping.

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- **Distancing:** It refers to psychological detachment of oneself from the stressor. For instance, over-weight people may stop thinking about their weight.
- **Position reappraisal:** It refers to reinterpreting the situation to turn the negative aspects of the situation or the stressor into its positive aspects. For example, one may look at the loss of job as an opportunity to get something better.

(b) Problem focused coping

It involves directly dealing with the stressful situation by either reducing its demands, or by increasing one's capacity to deal with it. The types of problem focused coping strategies that are frequently used are:

- **Proactive coping (preventive coping):** It anticipates potential stressors and acts in advance to either prevent their occurrence or to reduce its impact. To achieve this goal, it may make use of several mechanism like, improving problem solving skills, developing stronger social support network, etc. For example, the fear of failing can be prevented by studying in advance for one's exams. This coping strategy usually has a long term effect and may bring about a change in one's attitudes, cognitive styles and behaviours.
- **Combating coping:** It involves escaping from stressors that cannot be avoided. It involves the active use of Relaxation techniques, meditation and eating nutritious diet.

Research has shown that women in general and individuals from a low socio-economic status are more likely to use emotion focused strategy than men and people from a high socioeconomic status. The latter make use of problem focused strategies. One reason behind this could be that women react more emotionally to stress than men and past experiences may create feelings of helplessness and hopelessness in individuals from a low socio-economic status. In fact, in dealing with various stressors, both the above mentioned coping strategies are often used together.

In addition to the various coping strategies, certain factors that can affect one's ability to cope with stress are as follows:

Hardiness: It is associated with better coping. It is seen that individuals high on Hardiness are more likely to make use of problem focused coping strategy.

Resilience: Some individuals are more resilient than others. For instance, it is seen that some children have the ability to become competent and well-adjusted despite being raised in an extremely disadvantaged environment. Resilience may be a result of child's personality trait and the available social support. Resilient children tend to have well-developed social, academic and creative skill; an easy temperament; high self esteem, high self description; better personal control; healthy social relationship with others; and at least one consistently supportive person in their life.

Explanatory style: It can be of two types, namely, positive explanatory style and a negative explanatory style. Individuals who adopt a positive explanatory style tend to attribute outcomes always to a positive event such as one's personality, hard work, etc. whereas, individuals who adopt a negative explanatory style tend to attribute outcomes always to a negative event. These individuals tend to feel that they are always surrounded by failures. Pessimists have a negative explanatory style and are vulnerable to experience negative emotions like depression, anger, anxiety and hostility. They are also likely to have suppressed immune systems. However, in contrast, optimists have a positive explanatory style and are more likely to experience positive emotions and are likely to increase one's social, physical and cognitive resources. They are also likely to have healthy attitudes and healthy habits. The functioning of their immune system is also seen to be better.

Self-regulation: It refers to the ability to modulate thoughts, behaviours, and emotions in each and every situation. However, too much of self control is not healthy as it leads to suppression of anger and may make an individual vulnerable to develop ulcers later in life.

Repression: It is a defense mechanism adopted by some individuals who tend to repress or block the awareness of negative stress emerging out of consciousness. It is unhealthy and may result in complications.

Learned helplessness: It is a phenomenon, in which after experiencing a series of negative uncontrolled events, the individual comes to an understanding that he is helpless in the face of adverse circumstances and hence does not make effort to overcome his difficulties.

Social support: The presence of adequate social support is likely to reduce stress. There are two hypotheses, namely buffering hypothesis and the direct effect hypothesis, which have been proposed to explain how social support reduces the negative effects of stress. According to the buffering hypotheses, social support reduces stress by providing resources on the spot to cope with the stress effectively. People with good social support tend to ruminate less and this further minimizes the negative impact of the stressor on the individual. According to the direct effect hypotheses, social support enhances the physical response to challenging situations. For example, pressure of others may reduce Sympathetic Nervous System arousal and may decrease the release of CRH.

Individuals with better social skills tend to create stronger social network and are likely to receive more social support.

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Check Your Progress

4. Define coping strategy.
5. What are the two types of coping strategy?
6. What is repression?

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10.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. There are two kinds of stress: Eustress (refers to stress caused by positive situations such as marriage, promotion, etc.) and Distress (refers to stress caused by negative situations such as death, divorce, loss of a job, etc.).
2. Two commonly used biofeedback techniques are EMG (electromyography), which measures muscle tension and Thermal biofeedback, which measure skin temperature.
3. Assertiveness training involves three components namely, refusal (the ability to say no for things that you do not wish to do), commendatory (i.e., the ability to express positive emotions), and request (i.e., asking someone to do things that help you to accomplish your goal).
4. Coping strategies refer to various cognitive, behavioural and emotional ways people manage stress.
5. The two types of coping strategy are emotion focused coping strategy and problem focused coping strategy.
6. Repression is a defense mechanism adopted by some individuals who tend to repress or block the awareness of negative stress emerging out of consciousness.

10.5 SUMMARY

- Stress is an integral part of our life. It can be seen both as a stimulus and as a response. Stressors can be external or internal.
- According to Hans Selye (1956), there are two kinds of stress: Eustress (refers to stress caused by positive situations such as marriage, promotion, etc.) and Distress (refers to stress caused by negative situations such as death, divorce, loss of a job, etc.).
- Optimal level of stress is natural and healthy for success, productivity and effectiveness. It is advisable that each individual finds out his or her optimal level of stress as too little stress results in a boring and apathetic existence whereas too much of stress leads to undue wear and tear, making us more vulnerable to illness.
- Stress is subjective in nature and is more about how we perceive or look at a situation. One of the key ways to overcome stress is to replace negative maladaptive thoughts, behaviours and actions with more adaptive and functional ones. This is known as cognitive technique.
- Hypnosis is used as a stress management technique by making people get into a deep state of relaxation. Hypnosis can also be used to prevent health problems that may result from chronic stress.

- The various stress management techniques can be broadly divided into eastern and western techniques. The eastern techniques include meditation, Yoga, pranayam and self-awareness (Anashakti). The western techniques include relaxation techniques (Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique, Autogenic Training), biofeedback, assertiveness, time management, and effective communication.
- Meditation means directing one's attention to an object. It may provide direct access to inner conscious energies. For meditation, one requires a quiet room free from distraction, a comfortable place to sit, a mental desire to focus one's attention, and a passive attitude. It is effective as it slows metabolism, lowers blood pressure and reduces arousal.
- Yoga prescribes some asana (bodily postures) to restore balance. 'Asana' is a Sanskrit word meaning at ease and relaxed. Shavasana is the simplest asana and a quite effective relaxation technique. Those who cannot relax in Shavasana because of its resemblance to a dead body can benefit from Makarasana (crocodile position).
- Pranayam refers to breathing exercise. It is based on the principle that if one could harmonize breathing then one can alter their thought, behaviour and emotion.
- Self-awareness or Anasakti is an Indian concept based on self-realization/self-actualization. But it is a health promoting attitude that gradually develops. It is emotional detachment from something/someone.
- The main goal of relaxation is not to eliminate stressors or to prevent its recurrence but to increase one's tolerance. For the relaxation techniques to be effective, they should be administered live by the therapist.
- Biofeedback converts physiological response into electrical activity and provides a visual/auditory feedback about them. Two majorly used biofeedback technique are EMG (electromyography), which measures muscle tension and Thermal biofeedback, which measure skin temperature. It is based on the principle that under stress, blood vessels constrict and temperature becomes cold.
- Assertiveness training involves teaching individuals using modeling, instruction, rehearsal and feedback. Assertiveness training involves three components namely, refusal (the ability to say no for things that you do not wish to do), commendatory (i.e., the ability to express positive emotions), and request (i.e., asking someone to do things that help you to accomplish your goal).
- Individual's tend to cope with stress at three levels: at the biological or the physiological level (through the use of immunological defenses and damage-repair mechanisms), the psychological or the interpersonal level (through the use of learned coping patterns, self-defenses, and support from family and friends) and at the socio-cultural level (though group resources, such as labor unions, religious organizations, and law-enforcement agencies).

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- Coping strategies refer to various cognitive, behavioural and emotional ways people manage stress. They are dynamic processes which neither eliminate a stressor nor prevent its re-occurrence but increase one's tolerance of the situations.
- Emotion focused coping involves the use of cognitive and behaviour strategy to manage one's emotional reaction to stress. Emotion focused coping primarily aims at diverting attention from unpleasant situations, stress evoking events and problems.
- Three types of emotion focused coping strategies that are frequently used are escape avoidance, distancing and position reappraisal.
- Problem focused coping involves directly dealing with the stressful situation by either reducing its demands, or by increasing one's capacity to deal with it. The types of problem focused coping strategies that are frequently used are proactive coping and combating coping.

10.6 KEY WORDS

- **Eustress:** It refers to stress caused by positive situations such as marriage, promotion, etc.
- **Distress:** It refers to stress caused by negative situations such as death, divorce, loss of a job, etc.
- **Coping Strategy:** It refers to various cognitive, behavioural and emotional ways people manage stress. They are dynamic processes which neither eliminate a stressor nor prevent its re-occurrence but increase one's tolerance of the situations.

10.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. State the advantages of stress.
2. Write a short note on cognitive technique.
3. What is emotion focused coping strategy?
4. Briefly mention the various types of problem focused coping strategies.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Examine the stress management techniques.
2. Discuss in detail various eastern and western techniques used for stress management.
3. Analyze the factors that can affect one's ability to cope with stress.

10.8 FURTHER READINGS

- Cotton, Dorothy H.G. 2013. *Stress Management: An Integrated Approach to Therapy*. New Delhi: Taylor and Francis.
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*Individual-Centered
Stress Management
Techniques*

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UNIT 11 ORGANIZATION CENTRED STRESS MANAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS

Structure

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Objectives
- 11.2 Stress Management Interventions at Organizational Level
 - 11.2.1 Stress Preventing Activities
 - 11.2.2 Stress Mitigating Activities
 - 11.2.3 Stress Moderating Activities
- 11.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 11.4 Summary
- 11.5 Key Words
- 11.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 11.7 Further Readings

11.0 INTRODUCTION

It is important to minimize stress at the organizational level as doing so benefits both the individual and the organization. Reduced stress enhance performance of employees, leads to reduction in anxiety and burnout, and improves well-being. Stress management interventions can be grouped into individual-level intervention and organization-level intervention. These intervention change the relationship between the individuals and the organization. This unit will discuss in detail the stress preventing, stress mitigating and stress moderating practices at the organizational level.

11.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the stress preventing measures taken at organizational level
- Explain the stress mitigating measures
- Analyse the stress moderating practices at the organizational level

11.2 STRESS MANAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS AT ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Working in an organization can be a very stressful experience for many. Research has shown that there are several benefits of minimizing stress at the organizational

level both for the organization and for its employees. For instance, reduced stress level is associated with enhanced performance, improved relationships, lesser instances of burnout, anxiety and depression among employees, less number of sick leaves and reduced absenteeism. It is also associated with positive psychological well-being of the employees. To achieve these benefits, every organization adopts several stress management interventions. These interventions adopt certain set of activities that are aimed at improving employee well-being and reducing stress at the organizational level.

Stress management interventions can be largely grouped into individual-level intervention and organizational-level intervention. Interventions that help employees develop the skills to manage, cope and reduce stress are called individual-level interventions. Whereas, organizational-level interventions refer to those activities that make systematic changes in organizational practices and are aimed at reducing stress of all employees or a specific group of workers in an organization. Both these interventions focus mainly on changing the relationship between the individual and the organization. Both these interventions can be primary, secondary and tertiary in nature.

11.2.1 Stress Preventing Activities

The basic aim of primary interventions is to remove the sources of stress and enhance well-being. It includes several activities. They are as follows:

- **Selection and Assessment activities:** It aims at selecting those applicants who have skills and abilities so that the demands of the job can be managed. It also aims at screening out those applicants who might be susceptible to experiencing stress in the target role, particularly in highly-stressful occupations (Bartone, Roland, Picano & Williams, 2008).
- **Pre-employment medical examination of employees:** This is done to screen those employees who may be undergoing several medical concerns that can interfere with their ability to work and thereby increase their stress level.
- **Job Redesign:** It refers to reviewing job responsibilities and tasks so as to re-allocate them among staff to improve output. This can lead to improvements in productivity and lead to job satisfaction through job enrichment, job enlargement and job rotation. Job enrichment provides each employee with more tasks to do as a part of their job and also gives them the responsibility and authority to complete these additional tasks on time. These tasks can provide variety and new challenges to employees, thus leading to employee satisfaction. Job design also involves changing organizational practices and policies, especially those which are concerned with leadership, working time, and occupational health and safety, as a way of reducing stress.

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- **Working time and schedules:** This guarantees that tasks are done adequately on time. Only achievable goals are set and they are prioritized to ensure that schedule is maintained.
- **Management training:** Training, for example, mentoring given to employees at different times in an organization is also seen to be an effective way of reducing stress at the organizational level.

11.2.2 Stress Mitigating Activities

The aim of these secondary interventions is to reduce the severity or duration of stress once it occurs and also to prevent the level of stress from becoming problematic. They include the following activities:

- **Mindfulness training:** It aims at promoting a state of mindfulness by focusing on the current experiences, thoughts and emotions in a nonjudgmental, compassionate, accepting and non-reactive way. It helps to promote psychological well-being by primarily helping the person to dissociate negative thoughts and emotions from maladaptive behavioral and emotional responses.
- **Health promotion:** Encouraging employees to actively engage in physical exercise every day is quite effective in reducing stress.
- **Cognitive behavioural therapy:** It aims at identifying and altering maladaptive cognitions, feelings and behaviors with more adaptive and functional thoughts, feelings and behaviors. It also aims to identify misconceptions about the nature and causes of stress in order to test the validity of existing thoughts and understandings. This helps in developing new conceptions about stress. Stress can also be reduced by encouraging employees to adopt a healthier lifestyle involving exercise, better diet, effective support system, etc.
- **Relaxation:** Various relaxation techniques aim to reduce negative states of anxiety, tension and anger, etc. (Russell, 1979). One of the most popular relaxation technique is progressive muscle relaxation technique. This technique consists of tensing and then relaxing different muscles in our entire body in a prescribed order. For example, one might start by clenching and unclenching one hand then the other, then focus on the muscles in one forearm and then the other, and so on. The length, duration and range of muscles covered can vary, but once the employees practice it, they can induce a deep state of muscle relaxation in minutes (Murphy, 2003).
- **Meditation:** It focuses on relaxing the mind and involves mental processes rather than physical processes. Most of the meditative techniques typically involve sitting in a quiet place and then repeating a word or sound while maintaining a passive mental state that excludes intrusive thoughts. It also involves focusing on the air that we inhale and exhale.

- **Personal and interpersonal skill training:** It aims at enhancing communication, goal setting and time management skills, which are seen to reduce stress. It helps employees by preventing stressful situations such as conflict, high work load, etc. from occurring.
- **Acceptance and commitment therapy:** Also known as ACT, it is a kind of behavioral therapy that works on inculcating the practice of self-acceptance with mindful actions in an individual, so that one could live a value based life. It focuses on enhancing psychological flexibility in an individual. It makes use of 6 core processes. They are as follows:
 - o Attention to the present moment
 - o Values
 - o Committed Action
 - o Self-as-Context
 - o Defusion
 - o Acceptance

These processes are together known as ACT hexaflex. Through these processes, an individual is guided by their therapist to become consciously aware of the present moment and take steps to make things happen with full purpose and engagement. It encourages people to embrace their thoughts and feelings instead of fighting or feeling guilty for them. ACT when paired with mindfulness-based therapy is quite effective in reducing stress.

- **Psychosocial intervention training:** It focuses on enhancing an individual's psychological, behavioral or social aspects of functioning to reduce the amount of stress they experience and to minimize the negative impact of the same on the individual. It is a broad heading under which a wide range of interventions are included. Some of these interventions are psychotherapies (e.g., psychodynamic therapy, CBT, interpersonal therapy, problem solving therapy, etc.); community based treatments (e.g., assertive community treatment, first episode psychosis interventions); vocational rehabilitation, peer support services, and integrated care interventions.
- **Coping skills training:** To deal with stress, conflicts, and issues at hand, we all make use of certain strategies which may be adaptive (seeking social support, resolving concerns, etc.) or maladaptive (drinking, escape-avoidance, etc.) in nature. Various mechanisms which one adopts to deal with stress are broadly called as coping skills. The effectiveness of the coping skills depends on the type of stress, the individual, and the circumstances. How one copes with issues at hand partially depends on the circumstance and the personality of the individual. The most commonly used six adaptive coping strategies are as follows:

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- o **Appraisal-focused coping strategies:** It modifies the way we look at a thing or a circumstance or event in our life. One may modify their thinking by altering their goals and values.
- o **Adaptive behavioral coping strategies:** It focuses on dealing with the cause of the problem. Learning new skills is one of the ways the problem can be taken care of. The three problem-focused coping strategies identified by Folkman and Lazarus are: taking control, information seeking, and evaluating the pros and cons.
- o **Emotion-focused coping strategies:** It focuses on releasing pent-up emotions, distracting oneself, managing hostile feelings, meditating, mindfulness practices, using systematic relaxation procedures, etc. These strategies primarily focus on changing the meaning of the stressor (by trying to drive a positive meaning out the stressful event that has happened) or transferring attention away from it. These strategies are very effective in dealing with stressors that are uncontrollable.
- o **Reactive and proactive coping:** It focuses on anticipating a future stressor and becoming prepared for the stressor in advance.
- o **Social coping:** It refers to actively seeking social support from others as a way of dealing with current stressors at hand.
- o **Humor:** This minimizes the stress that one experiences. With humor, people can develop a sense of control over a more powerless situation and this helps them to temporarily escape from feelings of helplessness.
- **Resilience training:** Resilience training focuses on four areas, namely, emotional, cognitive and mental, physical, and spiritual resilience. The key aim of resilience training is to enable people to deal with a crisis, enhance their quality of life, and decrease their stress and anxiety. Resilience training helps one view the inevitable challenges of life as opportunities where they can grow and learn. According to Dr Ginsburg, there are seven integral and interrelated components – called as 7 C's – that make one resilient. The details of the same are, as follows:
 - o **Competence:** It refers to one's ability to handle stressful situations effectively by facing the challenges at hand by developing the skills that are needed.
 - o **Confidence:** It refers to one's belief in their own abilities.
 - o **Connection:** It refers to having a stronger sense of security and sense of belonging with our fellow beings.
 - o **Character:** It refers to a strong sense of self-worth and confidence that some of us may feel within.
 - o **Contribution:** It implies the valuable contributions one makes to one's world.

- o **Coping:** It means using a wide variety of skills and strategies that allow one to cope and overcome life's challenges more effectively.
- o **Control:** It refers to a sense of realization that one has control over one's decisions and actions. This allows them to bounce back from life's challenges more effectively.
- **Improving communication and decision making:** Effective Communication is significant for managers and employees in the organization to perform basic functions of management, such as Planning, Organizing, Leading and Controlling. It serves many functions such as promoting motivation, offering adequate information to make effective decisions, altering an individual's attitude, enhancing the socialization experience, and assisting in controlling process, thus minimizing conflict and stress as far as possible.
- **Conflict management:** Conflict management is the process by which disputes are resolved, wherein negative results are minimized and positive results are prioritized. This key management skill involves using different tactics depending on the situation, negotiation, and creative thinking. The most widely used five effective conflict management styles are as follows:
 - (a) **Accommodating:** It refers to simply putting the needs of others before one's own. It primarily aims at ensuring peace and not putting in more effort than the issue is worth. It is an effective way to resolve small conflicts.
 - (b) **Avoiding:** It refers to reducing conflict by ignoring it, removing the conflicted parties, or evading it in some manner, such as by removing team members who are in conflict, pushing the deadlines or reassigning people to other departments.
 - (c) **Compromising:** It aims to find the middle ground by asking both parties to concede some aspects of their desires so that a solution can be agreed upon.
 - (d) **Competing:** It means rejecting a compromise and not giving in to viewpoints or wants of others.
 - (e) **Collaboration:** It involves coming up with solutions that cater to needs and wants of each person to arrive at a win-win solution so that everyone is satisfied in the end. This technique produces the best long-term results and is often the most difficult and time-consuming approach of resolving conflict.
- **Peer support groups:** It refers to regular meetings of people or employees in an organization, where people talk about their experiences, struggles and challenges so that they can learn from one another. These groups are usually moderated by a trained peer support specialist.

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- **Coaching and career planning:** It is quite beneficial for everyone including leaders, managers, and individual employees, as it increases work engagement, boosts confidence, and improves overall productivity, leading to an increase in retention and a higher profit margins for the organization.

11.2.3 Stress Moderating Activities

Also known as Tertiary interventions, it aims at rehabilitating and maximizing the functioning for those employees in an organization who are already experiencing or suffering from psychological ill-health. They include the following activities:

- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAP):** It provides counselling and advice to those employees that are experiencing high-levels of stress or mental health problems, irrespective of whether these issues are related to work or not.
- **Counseling:** Some organization hire counselors who provide various counseling services to employees to deal effectively with the problems or concerns they may be experiencing at the work or the personal front. Counselors help employees to deal with issues related to family, relationships, drug abuse, etc.
- **Post-traumatic stress assistance:** Employees who have experienced a traumatic experience in their life and are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be referred to a qualified clinical psychologist who can deal with their concerns in a far better manner.
- **Disability management:** It offers help to people with disability. It involves combined and coordinated use of medical, social, educational, and vocational measures for training or retraining the individual to the highest possible level of functional ability especially if they have become disabled in an organizational hazard or have met with an accident while at work. This enables people to restart their life in a far more meaningful manner.
- **Vocational rehabilitation:** It is a process which enables persons with functional, psychological, developmental, cognitive, and emotional disabilities, impairments or health disabilities to overcome barriers to accessing, maintaining, or returning to employment or other useful occupation. It primarily focuses on job retention.
- **Outplacement:** It refers to finding new employment for some employees who have become redundant for an organization. Outplacement services are also called as career transition services as they help employees to find better career paths and employment opportunities that can bring a greater sense of satisfaction in their life. By providing such services, the organization is able to save the organizational or legal costs that may arise while terminating an employee from work. The key benefit this service offers to employees is that it helps them survive financially during the transition, and do it swiftly and successfully.

Check Your Progress

1. State the main aim of primary interventions.
2. Why is pre-employment medical examination of employees done?
3. What is the most popular relaxation technique?
4. What is resilience training focused on?
5. Mention the 7C's that make one resilient.
6. What are employee assistance programs?

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11.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The basic aim of primary interventions is to remove the sources of stress and enhance well-being.
2. Pre-employment medical examination of employees is done to screen those employees who may be undergoing several medical concerns that can interfere with their ability to work.
3. The most popular relaxation technique is progressive muscle relaxation technique.
4. Resilience training focuses on four areas, namely, emotional, cognitive and mental, physical, and spiritual resilience.
5. According to Dr Ginsburg, there are seven integral and interrelated components – called as 7 C's – that make one resilient. They are competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control.
6. Employee assistance programs provides counselling and advice to those employees that are experiencing high-levels of stress or mental health problems, irrespective of whether these issues are related to work or not.

11.4 SUMMARY

- Working in an organization can be a very stressful experience for many. Research has shown that there are several benefits of minimizing stress at the organizational level both for the organization and for its employees.
- Stress management interventions can be largely grouped into individual-level intervention and organizational-level intervention. Interventions that help employees develop the skills to manage, cope and reduce stress are called individual-level interventions. Whereas, organizational-level

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interventions refer to those activities that make systematic changes in organizational practices and are aimed at reducing stress of all employees or a specific group of workers in an organization.

- The basic aim of primary interventions is to remove the sources of stress and enhance well-being. It includes Selection and Assessment activities, Pre-employment medical examination of employees, Job redesign, Working time and schedules and management training.
- The aim of secondary interventions is to reduce the severity or duration of stress once it occurs and also to prevent the level of stress from becoming problematic. They include mindfulness training, health promotion, cognitive behavioural therapy, mediation, acceptance and commitment therapy, resilience training, conflict management, etc.
- Mindfulness training aims at promoting a state of mindfulness by focusing on the current experiences, thoughts and emotions in a nonjudgmental, compassionate, accepting and non-reactive way.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy aims at identifying and altering maladaptive cognitions, feelings and behaviors with more adaptive and functional thoughts, feelings and behaviors. It also aims to identify misconceptions about the nature and causes of stress in order to test the validity of existing thoughts and understandings.
- Various relaxation techniques aim to reduce negative states of anxiety, tension and anger, etc. (Russell, 1979). One of the most popular relaxation technique is progressive muscle relaxation technique. This technique consists of tensing and then relaxing different muscles in our entire body in a prescribed order.
- Meditation focuses on relaxing the mind and involves mental processes rather than physical processes. Most of the meditative techniques typically involve sitting in a quiet place and then repeating a word or sound while maintaining a passive mental state that excludes intrusive thoughts.
- Personal and interpersonal skill training aims at enhancing communication, goal setting and time management skills, which are seen to reduce stress. It helps employees by preventing stressful situations such as conflict, high work load, etc. from occurring.
- Acceptance and commitment therapy is a kind of behavioral therapy that works on inculcating the practice of self-acceptance with mindful actions in an individual, so that one could live a value based life.
- Psychosocial intervention training focuses on enhancing an individual's psychological, behavioral or social aspects of functioning to reduce the amount of stress they experience and to minimize the negative impact of the same on the individual.
- To deal with stress, conflicts, and issues at hand, we all make use of certain strategies which may be adaptive (seeking social support, resolving concerns,

etc.) or maladaptive (drinking, escape-avoidance, etc.) in nature. This is known as coping skills.

- Resilience training focuses on four areas, namely, emotional, cognitive and mental, physical, and spiritual resilience. The key aim of resilience training is to enable people to deal with a crisis, enhance their quality of life, and decrease their stress and anxiety.
- Conflict management is the process by which disputes are resolved, wherein negative results are minimized and positive results are prioritized. This key management skill involves using different tactics depending on the situation, negotiation, and creative thinking.
- Stress moderating activities, also known as tertiary interventions, aims at rehabilitating and maximizing the functioning for those employees in an organization who are already experiencing or suffering from psychological ill-health. They include employee assistance programs, counselling, post-traumatic stress assistance, disability management, etc.

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11.5 KEY WORDS

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy:** It is a type of psychotherapy in which negative patterns of thought about the self and the world are challenged in order to alter unwanted behaviour patterns or treat mood disorders such as depression.
- **Meditation:** It is a practice where an individual uses a technique such as mindfulness, or focusing the mind on a particular object, thought, or activity to achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm state.
- **Conflict management:** It is the process by which disputes are resolved, where negative results are minimized and positive results are prioritized.
- **Disability management:** It refers to the coordination between parties to reduce the impact of illnesses and injuries in the workplace and to assist injured employees in performing their jobs in the best way possible.

11.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on job design.
2. What is mindfulness training?
3. What is acceptance and commitment therapy?

4. Briefly mention the commonly used adaptive coping strategies.
5. What do you mean by conflict management?

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Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss in detail the stress preventing activities that can be taken at the organizational level.
2. Explain with examples the various stress mitigating activities at the organizational level.
3. Analyze the aim of various activities that are part of tertiary interventions.

11.7 FURTHER READINGS

- Cotton, Dorothy H.G. 2013. *Stress Management: An Integrated Approach to Therapy*. New Delhi: Taylor and Francis.
- Pestonjee, D.M. 1992. *Stress and Coping*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
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BLOCK - IV
STRESS MANAGEMENT

*Work Related Stress and
Stress Management*

**UNIT 12 WORK RELATED STRESS
AND STRESS
MANAGEMENT**

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Structure

- 12.0 Introduction
- 12.1 Objectives
- 12.2 What is Stress?
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- 12.3 Individual Differences in Stress
 - 12.3.1 Consequences of Distress
- 12.4 Managing Work Related Stress
 - 12.4.1 Stress Reduction Techniques: Case Studies
- 12.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 12.6 Summary
- 12.7 Key Words
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- 12.9 Further Readings

12.0 INTRODUCTION

Work-related stress can be caused due to poor work organization, bad work design, lack of resources, poor management, dissatisfying work conditions, and lack of support. The level of stress varies from person to person, depending upon the personality, attitude, emotional intelligence, etc. Not only does work related stress affect the performance of the organization, it also influences the emotional and physical well-being of employees. This unit will discuss in detail the stressors at work and its impact on employees. The various stress reduction techniques will also be discussed in detail.

12.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss in detail work related stress and its causes
- Explain the factors that influence an individual's experience of stress
- Examine stress reduction techniques and ways to manage stress at work

12.2 WHAT IS STRESS?

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Stress is a psychological and physical response of the body towards the demands of the situation. No individual can claim that he/she has never experienced stress in their lifetime. The feeling of stress occurs in case of unfulfilled or unfinished tasks. In a stressful situation, the body releases hormones which prepares the body to fight or flight. The body prepares itself to either confront the situation or get to the safe zone as soon as possible. Stress can arise due to a situation that makes you feel uncomfortable and as soon as you deal with the situation the feeling of stress starts reducing. Stress can occur due to many reasons and these causes vary with each individual. Stress can also be understood as a state of mind and depends on the interpretation of situation. Stress cannot always be termed negative, as it also forces the individual to finish the task in time. If the needs are not met within the given period of time, stress starts making negative impressions.

To understand it in more precise manner, stress can be categorized into two categories as per experience:

Positive form of stress or Eustress: It is the force that motivates the individual to meet the target.

Negative form of stress or Distress: It is the force that reduces the energy and efficiency of the individual.

There could be many causes of stress, namely, financial losses, personal life, relationships and work-related stress. Many individuals all over the world report about workplace stress. With the change in work style and increasing expectations, the stress level among employees is also increasing day by day. Work related stress can be due to poor work organization, poor work design, lack of resources, poor management, dissatisfying work conditions, over expectations and lack of support.

12.2.1 Stressors

Stress associated to work, is a rising problem around the globe that people are experiencing on a continued basis. Work related stress not only affects the mental and physical health of the individual but also affects the productivity or output of the organization. There is no single reason for stress. Work stress might arise due to number of different reasons which basically depends upon the psychological sensitivity of the individual and on personal and professional experiences as well.

The following factors could be considered as potential stressors at the workplace:

- **Work overload:** Repeated assigning of heavy workload can lead to tiredness and eventually stress. Workload also reduces the work capacity of employees. Overwork leads to a kind of stagnation in the brain which further influences the performance of employees.

- **Deadlines:** Meeting the deadlines engages the individual physically and psychologically. Completion of task on time leads to anxiety which in return can cause stress and restlessness. The efforts to meet the deadline increases the blood pressure of the individual and tires the body easily which further causes increased pressure to meet the deadline.
- **Lack of support:** If an individual does not get needed support at the workplace, it results in helplessness, which in turn causes stress. Several kinds of supports are required at work. Psychological and physical support can be considered as the example of resources needed. Inability to get support increases mental and physical stress.
- **Lack of resources:** Resources are a must for any employee to function properly. A task cannot be completed without the required resources; lack of resources can affect the speed or quality of the task, leading to a stressful outcome. Lack of resources causes the delay in meeting target.
- **Unclear/undefined targets:** When the target is unclear, the chances of taking a wrong path of work is more. This can lead to a stressful situation. Proper direction of work makes it easy to finish it in time.
- **Organizational change:** Changes in the organizational structure and job description causes uncertainty regarding job security. The style of work and the processes also change with the change in the organizational structure. The alteration in the structure should be properly communicated to employees.
- **Role conflict:** When the roles, responsibilities and power is not defined, it can lead to a lot of confusion. The capacity of work and power should always be clear to all the employees. When the hierarchy is defined, then the process of work become easier, and the number of obstacles reduces. Role conflicts also becomes an obstacle in meeting organizational goals.
- **Lack of learning outcomes:** When an individual is doing the same work for a long time and does not see any further learning from the same, it can become a stressor. Employees usually want to grow with the organization, but when the learning becomes stagnant then the trouble starts. The repetition of same kind of work reduces the interest in the job and then becomes a reason of dissatisfaction. Ambiguity about the future also leads to stress. Employees need to know where they stand and where the current job is going to take them; uncertainty about it causes high attrition rate.
- **Lack of recognition:** Recognition is one of the most important factors that increases motivation among employees. If the work is not recognized, the employees would not be able to know whether they are going in the right direction. Recognition also increases enthusiasm among

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employees. With less recognition, employees do not feel like working with passion, and so the performance decreases.

- **Relationship at work:** Healthy relations at workplace leads to a positive work environment and decreases employee absenteeism.
- **Organizational environment:** Health work environment impacts psychological and physical wellbeing which further leads to high efficiency of the employee.
- **Harassment:** Psychological or physical (sexual) harassment has become a looming reality of workplaces. This unwanted behavior of the senior authority has become a major concern for the employees.
- **Lack of interest in work:** When an individual does not get the profile of his/her choice, it leads to dissatisfaction at work.
- **Work-life balance:** Personal and professional sides of life should be maintained well for a healthier experience. Work overload or overtime creates an imbalance which in turns leads to stressful life.

Check Your Progress

1. What are the causes of work related stress?
2. How does workload lead to stress at work?

12.3 INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN STRESS

Experience of stress varies according to the sensitivity level of the individual. Many factors play role in experience of stress.

- **Personality:** The type of personality determines how a person responds to stress. Type A personality individuals generally exhibit a high sense of competitiveness and a tendency of working against the clock. On the other hand, type B personality people are comparatively less competitive and are more relaxed in their approach towards work. Both the personality types have some pros and cons. Highly competitive individual gets stressed very quickly due to running with the clock whereas the individual who is easy going also faces stress issues as he delays the task and completes it at the last moment.
- **Attitude:** The attitude of observing our surrounding impacts our experience of stress. Optimistic point of view can lead to better understanding of environment, which in turn makes us focus on good in people and not in bad. An optimistic point of view leads to a positive approach in life and enhances motivation.

- **Emotional Intelligence:** If a person has high emotional intelligence then the ability to cope with stress automatically increases. An emotionally intelligent person majorly focuses on positive feelings and is more capable of restraining negative feelings like stress and anxiety. Emotional intelligence helps an individual to cope with distress.
- **Previous Experiences:** Unpleasant experience with the previous job or boss can also cause a pessimistic approach towards new work or employer. Bad experience with the earlier job shakes the motivation or confidence of the employee and makes an individual doubtful about his/her abilities to do well in future.

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12.3.1 Consequences of Distress

Experiencing a high level of stress for a long period can reduce the body's immunity and may generate many biological symptoms.

The common side effects of stress could be the following:

- **Biological Consequences:** Prolonged and persistent stress might cause many biological reactions. Elevated levels of stress hormones can cause increased heart rate and high blood pressure. Frequent occurrence of stress might increase the risk for hypertension, stroke or heart attack. Recurring episodes of stress might cause inflammation in the respiratory system. Cholesterol level of the individual also gets impacted by the way they respond to stress.
- **Headache:** Headache is a very common trigger of stress. Complexity of life and irregular daily routine disturbs the diet and sleep of the individual which in turns might cause headache.
- **Muscle tension and body ache:** Stress can cause pain in neck and back. Stress can also cause sensitivity on scalp and shoulder muscles. Chronic fatigue syndrome may arise due to prolonged muscle tension.
- **Weakened immune system:** Stress and immunity go hand in hand. As stress increases, it reduces the ability to fight against germs or antigens. Immunity deteriorates every time we experience stress. Exceeding stress conditions may lead an individual to illness due to compromised immunity.
- **Insomnia:** Stress is one of the most common causes of insomnia. Work stress, performance stress, financial stress, etc. increases the activity of the brain, which in turn disturbs our sleep pattern. Lack of sleep cause various malfunctions in the brain.
- **Change in appetite:** Appetite has a surprising connection with stress. Stress triggers emotional and psychological changes in the body to deal with the pressure. These changes might affect a person's digestive system. Sometimes high metabolism causes excessive hunger, or it might also lead to lack of appetite. In some cases, stress causes people to overeat and on the other hand, it can also cause loss of appetite.

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- **Psychological consequences:** Stress can create many psychological concerns like emotional strain, anxiety, and depression, etc. Emotional instability can trouble an individual's personal and professional relationship. Emotional connections, motivation, drive for achievements, etc. gets impacted by stress.
- **Reduced performance:** Motivation to perform better reduces due to the unpleasant state the individual is in. Lack of interest in work and doubt about one's own capabilities might occur due to stress. Lack of self-esteem might cause difficulty in performance efficiency. A stressed individual cannot perform their best at work which in turns aggravates the feelings of stress.
- **Increased absenteeism:** Stress reduces the interest in work which causes increased absenteeism. Efficiency of the individual gets negatively impacted and it leads to reduced motivation. Stress increases the chances of experiencing burnout and increases unpredictability, which can cause employees to avoid going to work. Stress has also become the reason of increasing attrition rate among employees.

Check Your Progress

3. What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and stress?
4. How does stress lead to insomnia?

12.4 MANAGING WORK RELATED STRESS

The following measures can be taken to manage work related stress:

- **Take a break:** Take a small break after every hour of work. Distract your mind from work for a few minutes. Stretch your back, shoulder and all body muscles to reduce physical stress, which will further reduce mental stress. Never skip your meal due to work.
- **Pen down your stressors:** Always try to write about the issues which are causing stress. Writing about them can help you develop a better understanding of the problem.
- **Understand the side effects of stressors:** Our body gives signals in response to the stressors. Psychological and physical responses can be noticed if observed properly, e.g. body ache, change in appetite, sleep disturbance, reduced work efficiency, mood fluctuations.
- **Balance your work and personal life:** Keeping balance between professional and personal life can be very challenging but it is vital for a balanced life. A properly differentiated work and personal responsibilities enhances one's work efficiency. Employers who are committed to provide

an environment which provides work-life balance for their employees experience more loyal work force, reduced absenteeism, and reduced expenses.

- **Prioritize and organize:** Finishing the work in time increases confidence and satisfaction towards the job. Try making a priority list ranking them according to the importance at the beginning of the work, enlist the estimated time required for the same and try to abide by the timing allotted for each task.
- **Reduce the gap between real and ideal self:** We have so many expectations from our life and in order to meet those expectations we often set unrealistic targets which creates an added pressure on our life. This pressure keeps on increasing when we are not able to meet the target. It is better for you that do not burden yourself with unrealistic targets; understand your efficiency and set your targets and keep on setting higher target with your achievements.
- **Talk to your supervisor:** Sometimes, discussion of the current situation helps in resolving many concerns. An employee's mental and physical health is related to the productivity and in order to perform best at work, an effective plan of work can be developed.
- **Build positive relations at work:** Relationships at work are equally important to develop interest at workplace. When you build positive relationships, you feel more comfortable with your interactions and less intimidated by others. You feel a closer bond to the people you spend the majority of your time working with.
- **Maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine:** A healthy diet has a significant role in living a stress-free life. Eating healthy, small and frequent meals helps in maintaining blood sugar level in stressful situation. A proper diet prevents mood swings and maintains your energy and focus. Minimize the craving for food intake that adversely effects the mood and body. Along with healthy diet, a proper routine of exercise is also important. Simple stretching, yoga, brisk walk, running, swimming, etc. can also help. Deep breathing for 5-10 mins can help very well. Do not smoke when you feel stressed.

12.4.1 Stress Reduction Techniques: Case Studies

Some of the commonly used stress reduction techniques are discussed below:

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is a relaxation technique that is used in other relaxation practices such as yoga, meditation, and visualization. It involves using the lungs and the abdomen or diaphragm. Most of us take shallow breaths from our upper chest instead of using our diaphragms. Shallow breathing limits the amount of oxygen

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we take in and when we are stressed our breathing becomes shallower. This makes us feel more tense and anxious. Deep breathing encourages full oxygen intake throughout the chest and lungs which calms the mind and the body.

The easy way of doing deep breathing exercise is by doing the following:

- Breathe into a slow count of four.
- Hold your breath to a slow count of eight.
- Exhale to a slow count of twelve.

If you have trouble breathing from your diaphragm while sitting up, lie on the floor, put a small book on your stomach, and try to breathe so that the book rises when you inhale and drops when you exhale.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation involves a two-step process in which you systematically tense and relax different muscle groups in the body. We are often unaware that we are holding our bodies in tension until it becomes very painful. This technique teaches you to become very familiar and aware of how tension and complete relaxation feels in different parts of the body. It is designed to teach you to recognize the first signs of muscular tension that accompanies stress so that you can quickly counteract the effects of tension by intentionally relaxing.

The following is a procedure for achieving deep muscle relaxation quickly. Whole muscle groups are simultaneously tensed and then relaxed. Repeat each procedure at least once, tensing each muscle group from five to seven seconds and then relaxing from 20-30 seconds.

Remember to notice the contrast between the sensations of tension and relaxation.

1. Curl both fists, tightening biceps and forearms. Relax.
2. Wrinkle up your forehead. At the same time, press your head as far back as possible, roll it clockwise in a complete circle, reverse. Now wrinkle up the muscles of your face like a walnut: frowning, eyes squinted, lips pursed, tongue pressed to the roof of your mouth, and shoulders hunched. Relax.
3. Arch your back as you take a deep breath into the chest. Hold. Relax. Take a deep breath, pressing out the stomach. Hold. Relax.
4. Pull feet and toes back toward face, tightening shins. Hold. Relax. Curl toes, simultaneously tightening calves, thighs, and buttocks.

Check Your Progress

5. Why is it important to write about issues causing stress?
6. What is deep breathing?

12.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Work related stress can be due to poor work organization, poor work design, lack of resources, poor management, dissatisfying work conditions, over expectations and lack of support.
2. Repeated assigning of heavy workload can lead to tiredness and eventually stress. Workload also reduces the work capacity of employees. Overwork leads to a kind of stagnation in the brain which further influences the performance of employees.
3. If a person has high emotional intelligence then the ability to cope with stress automatically increases. An emotionally intelligent person majorly focuses on positive feelings and is more capable of restraining negative feelings like stress and anxiety.
4. Stress is one of the most common causes of insomnia. Work stress, performance stress, financial stress, etc. increases the activity of the brain, which in turn disturbs our sleep pattern. Lack of sleep cause various malfunctions in the brain.
5. One should always try to write about the issues which are causing stress. Writing about them can help you develop a better understanding of the problem.
6. Deep breathing is a relaxation technique that is used in other relaxation practices such as yoga, meditation, and visualization. It involves using the lungs and the abdomen or diaphragm. Deep breathing encourages full oxygen intake throughout the chest and lungs which calms the mind and the body.

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12.6 SUMMARY

- Stress is a psychological and physical response of the body towards the demands of the situation. No individual can claim that he/she has never experienced stress in their lifetime. The feeling of stress occurs in case of unfulfilled or unfinished tasks. In a stressful situation, the body releases hormones which prepares the body to fight or flight.
- There could be many causes of stress, namely, financial losses, personal life, relationships and work-related stress. With the change in work style and increasing expectations, the stress level among employees is also increasing day by day. Work related stress can be due to poor work organization, poor work design, lack of resources, poor management, dissatisfying work conditions, over expectations and lack of support.
- The potential stressors at the workplace are work overload, deadlines, lack of support, lack of resources, undefined targets, organizational change, role conflict, lack of recognition, organizational environment, etc.

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- Experience of stress varies according to the sensitivity level of the individual. Many factors play role in experience of stress. Some of these factors are personality, attitude, emotional intelligence, etc.
- Experiencing a high level of stress for a long period can reduce the body's immunity and may generate many biological symptoms. The common side effects of stress could be headache, muscle tension, body ache, weakened immune system, insomnia, etc.
- Work related stress can be managed by taking a break, writing about the stressors, understanding the side-effects of the stressors, maintaining a healthy diet and balancing the work with personal life.
- Some of the commonly used stress reduction techniques are deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation.
- Deep breathing is a relaxation technique that is used in other relaxation practices such as yoga, meditation, and visualization. It involves using the lungs and the abdomen or diaphragm. Deep breathing encourages full oxygen intake throughout the chest and lungs which calms the mind and the body.
- Progressive muscle relaxation involves a two-step process in which you systematically tense and relax different muscle groups in the body. This technique teaches you to become very familiar and aware of how tension and complete relaxation feels in different parts of the body.

12.7 KEY WORDS

- **Emotional intelligence:** It is the ability to understand, use, and manage your own emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate effectively, empathize with others, overcome challenges and defuse conflict.
- **Deep breathing:** It is a relaxation technique that is used in other relaxation practices such as yoga, meditation, and visualization. Deep breathing encourages full oxygen intake throughout the chest and lungs which calms the mind and the body.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** It involves a two-step process in which you systematically tense and relax different muscle groups in the body.

12.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on work related stress.
2. What are the factors that influence an individual's experience of stress?

3. What are some of the measures that can be taken to manage work related stress?
4. Briefly mention the steps involved in progressive muscle relaxation technique.

*Work Related Stress and
Stress Management*

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyze the potential stressors at the workplace.
2. Examine the common side effects of stress.
3. Discuss in detail some of the commonly used stress reduction techniques.

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12.9 FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 13 AREAS OF COUNSELLING

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Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Different Areas of Counselling
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 - 13.2.2 Career Counselling
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13.0 INTRODUCTION

It is the people in the organization who are the most important and valuable commodity. They have emotions, thoughts and a tender spirit. Often emotions and feelings cause difficulties and people fail to manage them, losing their motivation they struggle to put their mind in the job. These issues do not inherently apply to the job. They could be family issues, financial problems, marital problems, etc. All have a negative effect on their careers. The need of the hour is to eliminate the issue and help the person to recover his or her self-confidence and esteem. Counselling can do the magic and help a person to resolve their lost confidence. In this unit, we will discuss the different areas of counselling, along with the stress management oriented counselling. We will also focus on the counselling for terminal disease patients.

13.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the different areas of counselling
- Discuss the stress management oriented counselling
- Describe counselling for terminal disease patients

13.2 DIFFERENT AREAS OF COUNSELLING

Let us discuss different areas of counselling that exist today to help with different issues.

13.2.1 Education Counselling

Educational counselling is concerned with providing advice and support to students in the development of their educational plans, choice of fitting courses, and choice of college or technical school. Counselling can also help in improving study skills or provide support in case of school-related problems that interfere with performance (e.g., learning disabilities). Due to the relationship between educational preparedness and occupational choices, vocational counselling is also associated with educational counselling. An educational counsellor usually works with academic institutions like school and college. Nowadays, most of the schools have their own educational counsellor for an easy access to consultation regarding their higher education and career-related queries, and to stay informed regarding study choices especially for special needs children.

To resolve student's issues, sometimes an educational counsellor also interacts with the student's primary caregivers (parents, guardian, or teachers) to help them find the best solutions for the student's issues or problems. An educational counsellor also follows up with each student that is in his/her charge until they successfully complete their program or school year. In case of a primary and secondary educational counsellor, one will also be responsible in part for assisting parents and teachers determine a student's readiness to move to the next grade. Education counsellors work with students of all ages on issues specific to their academic, vocational, and professional success. Education counsellors understand the barriers to success that many students experience such as learning disabilities, lack of motivation, language barriers, lack of accountability, test anxiety, and myriad of other things that hold students back from achieving their academic potential. They also typically have detailed knowledge of specific teachers, subjects, and resources available to help students achieve their goal. Educational counsellors also provide detailed assistance about the professional opportunities that students might not be aware of, and also the pros and cons of opting any particular program. Educational counselling might get associated with other education-based occupations, which include:

- Teacher
- Guidance counsellor
- Rehabilitation counsellor

13.2.2 Career Counselling

Career counselling can help to choose suitable career track. Since people spend most of their time as a professional, the choice of career becomes significant in ensuring happiness. The purpose of the career counselling is that people should enjoy the work they do and the profession should suit their goals and personality. A career should reflect the goals and the personal values of the individual and should not be something which creates discomfort.

Functioning of a career counsellor

In this form of counselling, interests, preferences and possibilities of the career path of the people are discussed. Many standardized tests and tools are generally

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used such as personality and aptitude tests to know more about the person's inclinations. The values, beliefs, temperament, and natural tendencies of the client are studied by the career counsellor. These topics are discussed based on one-on-one interactions with the client. Career counsellor might have very diverse client base depending on his/her expertise. They can work with varied organizations like educational institutions, corporates, etc. Many career counsellors work in private practice, employment agencies and social service offices.

Need of a career counsellor

In society many important roles are played by career counsellors. For school and college going students, career counsellors help to explore the areas of interest and availability of opportunities and options. As a result of counsellor's interaction, students can realize the possible course for their career and set their goals accordingly. The people who have left their job, are planning to change the job, or are fired from the job can also receive help from a career counsellor. Career counsellors provide guidance in finding the resources people need to retrain for a new job. In order to regenerate the interest and enthusiasm in the existing job, workers can take help of a career counsellor. A career counsellor can guide a person in maintaining a better work-life balance, improved positive attitude towards current job and to enjoy their careers.

13.2.3 Marriage Counselling

Marriage counsellors provides guidance to the couples to help manage their marital relationship in case they are facing any conflict. With the help of conversation with a couple, a counsellor assists by helping to uncover their conflicts and finding the roots of their problems. However, counsellors offer little to no suggestions to the couple and helps only via making them understand their own situation. With the discussion and better clarity about the situation, the couple can begin to think of better strategies for coping with these areas of conflict, resolving them together. By managing and solving the continuing issues, marriage counsellors can develop long term connections with the couples. Marriage counsellors are usually referred in case of serious marital disputes such as divorce or separation.

Though marriage counsellors work with only a specific population, they do offer a multiple type of services to the society. They also provide individual counselling for both the partners, couple counselling and if required they can call for family counselling with children. The onus of the counselling is on the relationship and its effects on the family. Some programs like martial enrichment courses to improve communication skills are being conducted by the counsellor to build trust between the couple and determine the cause of the problems between marriage partners.

Relationships impacted by alcohol, drugs, or domestic violence are also being addressed by the marriage counsellors. Marriage counsellors can also work with spouses that have been abused by their loved one to help them overcome the trauma of the abuse. Yet another duty of marriage counsellor is to work with spouses that have committed abusive acts in order to help them work through the

anger or other underlying issues that led to their behaviour. Wherever, there is a communication gap, which leaves couples at odds with each other, a marriage counsellor can provide better options for bridging that gap. Marriage counsellors can diagnose and treat the mental and emotional disturbances experienced by the couple due to the ongoing marital conflicts.

13.2.4 Gerontological Counselling

Gerontological counselling provides help related to mental or emotional health issues to people during the difficult stages of advanced aging and loss of independence. Common problems of aged individuals are addressed to make their lives manageable and comfortable. The unique needs of the client are understood in depth by the gerontological counsellors. They review the client's case history, medical conditions, and other related conditions to support them properly. They will also seek to understand their client's social, personal, and financial situation. To improve the client's quality of life, they will create the concise plan according to their needs. The services might involve health care, financial management, daily life activities and client's hospital social workers. The most common jobs in gerontology include nursing home administrator, case management and hospital executive. Probable workplaces for gerontological counsellors include old age home or adult care facilities community, retirements and human services.

13.2.5 Stress Management Oriented Counselling

Any cause of stress which is left unaddressed may become overwhelming and trouble causing which can further lead to other mental, physical, social, and emotional problems. A counsellor can provide numerous ways to manage and support employees experiencing stress or other associated concerns at work. Every type of work-related stress can be addressed by the counsellor.

While stress sometime is a normal part of life and in some cases even manageable without the need for professional support, this might not be true in every situation. The process of talking to the professional counsellor about the issues and concerns that an individual is experiencing is called as stress management counselling. Many workplaces organize employee assistance programs to provide them support related to stress creating issues. These services are kept confidential and according to the need of the employees the trained counsellors can be hired.

Counselling can help employee to understand the causes of their stress and find the solution to reduce the experience of the same. The stress can be worked out by understanding and identifying the source. The counsellors create judgment free environment to make individual more comfortable. Experience of stress at workplace is very common for people of different ages and genders, but it can disturb one's daily routine, mood, and social interactions with family, friends, and colleagues. This impact can in turn increase their stress. If the stress stays for a very long period of time, then it might cause various risks for individual such as anxiety and depression. This is the situation when the counsellor is required to be consulted. The counsellor can help in identifying the cause of the stress and then

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look for the solutions of the problems. In the process of counselling, employee can talk openly with the counsellor and develop better understanding to manage their concerns. The counsellor can use a specific technique of interaction depending on the need of the client.

Benefits of stress management counselling

Discussion with the counsellor is an approved step towards finding solution of stress, anxiety, and depression. With the help of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), a counsellor suggests the client to open up and express their feeling and negative thoughts to reduce stress and manage their mental health. Other benefits include:

- **Better self-understanding:** A counsellor can help in developing better self-understanding, which leads people to find solutions to their problems. When the issues are resolved then self-confidence of the individual also increases.
- **More engagement at workplace:** It is proven that expression of the feelings might help in reducing stress, if not eliminating it fully. Employees might feel more comfortable and relaxed once they have dealt with their concerns.
- **Reduced absences and employee turnover:** When an employee is aware of one's concerns and issues, it becomes easier to deal with them. When individual is less stressed about their organization, then they are more motivated to work with them, thus reducing absenteeism.

Suggestions for managing stress

There are multiple ways to release stress. Numerous methods can be suggested by counsellors which can help people to get free from stress that affects them physically, mentally, and emotionally. Some tips for reducing stress in all of these areas are mentioned below:

- **Biological:**
 - o Deep breathing exercise
 - o Hot water bath
 - o Exercise such as running, dancing, swimming, or yoga
 - o Acupuncture
 - o Playing with a pet
 - o Going for a nature walk
 - o Listening to music
 - o Body massage
- **Mental:**
 - o Checking on to the negative thoughts and disastrous thinking
 - o Organizing and planning
 - o Concentrating on positive life events
 - o Meditation
 - o Positive self-talk or affirmations

- **Emotions:**

- o Laughing or crying
- o Articulating emotions with the help of art or writing
- o Sharing thought with someone you connect well
- o Engaging yourself in hobby or interesting activities such as dancing, cooking, singing, etc.

NOTES**13.2.6 Counselling for Terminal Disease: Cancer and HIV/AIDS**

A terminal illness is a disease that cannot be treated or cured and thus can cause death within a few years. The individual diagnosed with such illness is most likely to experience a varied range of emotions such as regrets, grief, depression or sadness. The similar kind of feeling can also be experienced by family members, spouse/romantic partners, friends and relatives. In such a situation, seeking help from a health professional can be beneficial for both individual and the people related with the patient.

Terminal illness is a broad term that can include many different medical diagnoses. Some diseases, such as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also called Lou Gehrig's disease, are known to be terminal from the time of diagnosis, while others may not necessarily be terminal at first onset. Cancer, for example, can be highly treatable and people can experience complete remission, while in others it is terminal. Late-stage cancer may progress quickly, however, and the period of time between diagnosis and death may be relatively short (from a few weeks to a few months). Some illnesses for which there is no cure, such as HIV/AIDS, have a long period of progression, and in many cases, those who receive early treatment may not see a significant decrease in quality of life or life expectancy. It is often recommended that those diagnosed with a terminal illness join a support group and/or see a counsellor who can help them understand and come to terms with their diagnosis. In counselling or support groups, people may be able to express the complex emotions and feelings that are often likely to accompany a terminal diagnosis.

Coping with a terminal diagnosis

The individuals who are experiencing any terminal illness may go through some conflicting and diverse emotions. After knowing about the diagnosis for the first time, an individual might feel numb, calm, or accept it as fate as the reality of life. Many people might experience doubts as to how long they are going to live and how their body will react in the coming days. As the symptoms of the disease increases, the feeling of sadness, stress, depression, frustration, anger or regret might aggravate. The uncertainty about life and death might cause grief in a person and in such a situation an individual needs experts' support to manage all these emotions and to stay calm and positive.

People who are at the end of their lives typically face several decisions: What type of care they will need; where they should seek care; how they should manage their finances; what type of funerary services they want; how they would like to spend the remaining duration of their life (is in general the most important decision

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to make by individual who have a terminal illness). Some individuals might seek to fill the rest of their lives with joy and may pursue activities that provide them with satisfaction and happiness. Others might feel the need to play a meaningful and quality role before saying goodbye to the world.

Impact of diagnosis on family and friends

The knowledge about terminal illness not only affects the individual who is suffering, but also their family and friends. Loved ones may find it difficult to deal with the feeling of loss and grief. The primary caretaker of the patient might experience high level of anxiety and depressing feeling and may be guilty, if they are not able to devote adequate time for the caring of a terminally ill loved one. This might lead to stress, resentment, or caregiver burnout. The family members and the dependent individuals also need emotional support to be ready to face the situation. Other challenges that loved ones may face include feelings of isolation, insomnia or other sleep issues, and general irritability.

Therapy for a person with a terminal illness typically differs from other types of therapies. It may be more time-limited and focused, and the goals of therapy may be more modest, especially if the individual is restricted by their medical condition. Therapy may be a collaborative approach that involves medical providers, spiritual advisers, and family members. Counselling may use a variety of therapeutic approaches for end-of-life situation, but it frequently involves the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, who identified the stages of grief that a person is likely to go through while they are slowly dying that is: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance (DABDA). The individuals with terminal illness might be suggested to attend support groups for managing their remaining life. These support groups can be very helpful for some people and the patient can get opportunity to share their concerns and seek companionship from others who are going through the same situation.

Check Your Progress

1. What is an additional duty of a primary and secondary educational counsellor?
2. What is the purpose of career counselling?
3. Define gerontological counselling.
4. What kind of decisions are faced by people who are at the end of their lives?

13.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. An additional duty of a primary and secondary educational counsellor will be assisting parents and teachers determine a student's readiness to move to the next grade.

2. The purpose of career counselling is that people should enjoy the work they do and the profession should suit their goals and personality.
3. Gerontological counselling provides help related to mental or emotional health issues to people during the difficult stages of advanced aging and loss of independence.
4. People who are at the end of their lives typically face several decisions like: what type of care they will need; where they should seek care; how they should manage their finances; what type of funerary services they want; how they would like to spend the remaining duration of their life, etc.

NOTES

13.4 SUMMARY

- Educational counselling is concerned with providing advice and support to students in the development of their educational plans, choice of fitting courses, and choice of college or technical school.
- To resolve student's issues, sometimes an educational counsellor also interacts with the student's primary caregivers (parents, guardian, or teachers) to help them find the best solutions for the student's issues or problems.
- Career counselling can help to choose suitable career track. Since people spend most of their time as a professional, the choice of career becomes significant in ensuring happiness.
- In career counselling, interests, preferences and possibilities of the career path of the people are discussed. Many standardized tests and tools are generally used such as personality and aptitude tests to know more about the person's inclinations.
- In society many important roles are played by career counsellors. For school and college going students, career counsellors help to explore the areas of interest and availability of opportunities and options.
- Marriage counsellors provides guidance to the couples to help manage their marital relationship in case they are facing any conflict.
- Gerontological counselling provides help related to mental or emotional health issues to people during the difficult stages of advanced aging and loss of independence.
- A terminal illness is a disease that cannot be treated or cured and thus can cause death within a few years. The individual diagnosed with such illness is most likely to experience a varied range of emotions such as regrets, grief, depression or sadness.
- Terminal illness is a broad term that can include many different medical diagnoses. Some diseases are known to be terminal from the time of diagnosis, while others may not necessarily be terminal at first onset.

- Counselling may use a variety of therapeutic approaches for end-of-life situation, but it frequently involves the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross.

NOTES

13.5 KEY WORDS

- **Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS):** It is a nervous system disease that weakens muscles and impacts physical function.
- **Employee Turnover:** It refers to the number or percentage of workers who leave an organization and are replaced by new employees.

13.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the educational counsellor.
2. Why is marriage counselling significant?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the need and functioning of career counselling in detail.
2. Explain in what ways counselling for terminally ill people differs from regular counselling.

13.7 FURTHER READINGS

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