PART-II

STRESS MANAGEMENT

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## AN OVERVIEW OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

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###  2.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress is difficult to define precisely. The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Selye Hans in 1936. It was derived from the

Latin word ‘stringere’; it meant the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture and pain. Selye Hans, 1936 defined stress as “the nonspecific response of the body to any demand placed upon it”. Further, stress was defined as “any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium” (Selye Hans, 1956). Another definition given by Stephen Robbins(1999) stress has been stated as “a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he / she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important.”

Stress affects not only our physical health but our mental wellbeing too. To successfully manage stress in everyday life, an individual can learn to relax and enjoy life. The best way to manage stress is to prevent it. This may not be always possible. So, the next best thing is to reduce stress and make life easier.

Stress refers to any environmental, organizational and individual or internal demands, which require the individual to readjust the usual behavior pattern.

Degree of stress results from events or situations that have the potential to cause change. Stimuli or situations that can result in the experience of stress are called stressors.

It is interesting to note that, stress has two faces. It is a good servant, but a bad master. In other words, it can be one’s best friend or worst enemy. A certain amount of stress is necessary to achieve success, but undue stress causes distress. Although we tend to think of stress as caused by external events, events in themselves are not stressful. Rather it is the way in which an individual interprets and reacts to events that makes them stressful. Stress is perceived by different people differently. If two people experience the same amount of stress or pressure, one may take it as positive or healthy types or the other may accept it as negative.

Further the stress can affect either positively or negatively the employee performance. Positive qualities are those in which the individual may feel more excited and agitated and perceive the situation positively as a form of challenge (Selye, 1956). Stress is also described as posing threat to the quality of work life as well as physical and psychological well-being(Cox, 1978).

A high level of occupational stress, not only detrimentally influence the quality, productivity

and creativity of the employees but also employee’s health, well being and morale

(Cohen and Williamson, 1991). Job related stress tends to decrease general job satisfaction.

Stress can be either temporary or long term, mild or severe, depending mostly on how long it continues, how powerful they are and how strong the employee’s

recovery powers are. But major stress problems are sustained for long period. If one does not react to the stress, it may create some other Trauma. It is another severe form of stress. The nature of loss may have an effect on the individual’s perception of the stressful events as well as the avoidance, intrusion and hyper arousal symptoms of post traumatic stress.

Stress disturbs the equilibrium of the body. It affects physically, emotionally, and mentally. When individuals experience stress or face demanding situation, they adopt ways of dealing with it, as they can not remain in a continued state of tension. How the individual deals with stressful situations is known as ‘coping’. There are two major targets of coping: changing ourselves or changing our environment. Coping refers to a person’s active efforts to resolve stress and create new ways of handling new situations at each life stage (Erikson, 1959).

### 2.2 DEFINITION OF STRESS

1 Levy and wegman (1988) provide the following terms relating to stress: stress: A (perceived) substantial imbalance between demand and response capability under ~~conditions where failure to~~ meet demands has important Stressor: environmental event, situation or condition that results in stress.

Stressful: pertaining to environment that has many stressors.

Strain (or stress reaction) short term physiological, psychological or behavioral symptoms of stress.

In the classical work of Lazarus (1966)2 Stress is defined as “A stimulus condition that results in a form of disequilibrium in the system, producing a kind of strain and changes in the system. Psychological stress is a threat, an anticipation of a future confrontation with warm based on signs which are appraised by cognitive process”

Krantz, Guruberg and Baum (1985)3 view stressors as a stimulus that makes demands on an organism which to adopts or adjusts to the stimuli.

Schlebusch (2004)4 states that an event or stimuli only becomes stressful if the individual interprets it as such. The stimuli comprises of both positive and negative experiences, with both types of experiences resulting in changes of biological nature within the individual. Thus not all the stress is perceived as negative.

Strumper (1983)5 distinguishes between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ stress. Distress or

‘bad’ stress refers to harmful, unpleasant demands on the individuals. Strumper refers ‘positive’ stress as ‘eustress’ and is derived from the Greek word ‘en’ means good. Eu-stress denotes a pleasant and facilitating form of stress and can be demonstrated in an employee who thrives in a competitive or demonstrating work environment even though stressful.

Pestonjee (1977) 6 has noted that it is a natural and healthy thing to maintain optimal level of stress and opined that success, achievement, higher productivity and effectiveness call for stress.

Wolfe, S.G., (1986)7 observed that stress can contribute to alcoholism and drug abuse in workers and may influence accident rates on the job.



Coleman J.C (1976)8 has suggested that right from the time of birth till the last day of life, the individual is invariably exposed to various stressful situations. From the view point of physical sciences, the phenomenon stress is evident in all materials when they are subjected to “force, pressure, strain and strong efforts”.

### 2.3 KINDS OF STRESS

#### 2.3.1 Eu-stress

Eu-stress otherwise known as good /positive stress occurs for a short period of time. . It’s a kind of stress that an individual experiences right before he/she has to exert physical force, which provides immediate strength to win a game or race. When an individual confronts with unforeseen conditions, the body enters the fight or flee response which prepares the muscles, heart and mind for strength needed and it will experience Eu-stress. Eu-stress prepares the body to fight or flee from an imposing danger. It will cause the blood to pump to the major muscle groups and will increase the heart rate and blood pressure to increase. If the event passes, the body will gradually return to a normal state .Eu-stress helps us to improve our performance, prepares us to meet problems, challenges, situations which need an extra push and sometimes necessary for survival and prosperity in many parts of

life.

#### 2.3.2 Distress

Distress is otherwise known as bad stress and it has negative consequences. In this type of stress the body and mind experience an uncomfortable feeling when the normal routine is constantly adjusted and altered. Distress is associated with the persons experiencing high level of stress. The individuals suffering from distress may not be able to meet the job demands. The distress decreases the level of motivation and results in decreasing the quality of performance.

#### 2.3.3 Acute (arise fast) Stress

The acute stress is the type of stress which comes immediately with a change of routine. It usually involves immediate and intense reaction of body and mind to a significant threat, challenge, scare or other stressors, but it passes quickly. In an acute response situation, a person’s anxiety will rise in a rapid manner and then decline gradually. The individual may experience acute stress while delivering a lecture in a meeting, conflict with fellow workers, launching of new product. During this phase physiological symptoms such as dry mouth, sweating, rise of

palpitation occur due to anxiety.

#### 2.3.4 Chronic (long term) Stress

Chronic stress will occur if there is a constant change of routine for week after week. Chronic stress is dangerous and can lead to health problems, especially if people do not know that and do not treat, chronic stress can be more and more problematic. Patients are trapped in an unhappiness and never-ending "troubles"

and cannot find a way out of desperate situations.

 2.3.5 Hyperstress

Hyperstress is the type of negative stress that comes when a person is forced to undertake or undergo more than he or she can take. A stressful job that overworks an individual will cause that individual to face hyperstress. A person who is experiencing hyperstress will often respond to even little stressors with huge emotional outbreaks. It is important for a person who thinks they might be experiencing hyperstress to take measures to reduce the stress in their lives,

because hyperstress can lead to serious emotional and physical repercussions.

 **2.3.6 Hypostress**

The last one of the four types of stress is hypostress. Hypostress stands in direct opposite to hyperstress. Hypostress is basically insufficient amount of stress. That is because hypostress is the type of stress experienced by a person who is constantly bored. Someone who is in an unchallenging job, such as a factory worker performing the same task over and over, will often experience hypostress.

The effect of hypostress is a feeling of restlessness and a lack of inspiration.

### 2.4 THEORIES AND MODELS OF STRESS

#### 2.4.1 Cox’s Model of Stress

According to Cox (1978, 1985) the individual becomes stressed when a difference occurs between perceived level of the stressful demands and his or her perceived ability to respond to and to cope with demands. There is thus an imbalance between a perceived demand and a perceived capacity to cope. Cox (1985) notes that: The classical stressful situation is one in which the person’s resources are not matched to the level of demand and where there are constrains on coping and little social support. It is to do so with the person’s perception of the work environment and the emotional experience of it.

Cox (1978, 1985)9&10 maintains that perception plays an important role in recognizing stressors. The individual’s ability to cope with environmental threats or adverse events is also emphasized. This view would suggest that if the individual perceives environmental and psychological demands made on him, he can learn to recognize which are the best resources to call upon when confronted with perceived

stressful demands.

Cox (1985)11 emphasises that the stress phases experience by the individual involves a complex interactive process with various levels of appraisal, emotion and response, with the immediate response to a stressful situation being in the form of negative emotion, forcing the individual into the flight or fight action.

Cox (1978, 1985) maintains that stress is an imbalance between a perceived demand and a perceived capability, with the demands changing at various levels of appraisal during the phases of stress process. An appraisal of capability takes into account external sources as well as internal capabilities. In using the ‘capabilities’ the individual makes an assessment of the social support available (external factors) and appraises of his or her strengths or limitations in order to deal with stressor.

Successful coping with stress would thus be reliant on the individual’s assessment of where his or her coping resources exist, namely from internal or an external source.

#### 2.4.2 Person- Environment Fit Theory

Stress is the consequence of person’s appraisal process of the assessment of whether personal resources are sufficient to meet the demands of the environment.

Stress then is determined by person- Environment fit. When a person’s resources are more than adequate to deal with a difficult situation, he or she may feel little stress and experience a sense of challenge instead. When the individual perceives that his or her resources will probably be sufficient to deal with the event but only at the cost of great effort, he or she may feel a moderate amount of stress. When the individual perceives that his or her resources will not be sufficient to meet an environmental stressor, he or she may experience a great deal of stress. Stress then results from the process of appraising events (as harmful threatening, or challenging) of assessing potential responses and of responding to those events. 68

#### 2.4.3 The Demand-Control Support Model

It was developed by Karasek in 1979. It was the most common approach to understand stress and its effects on physical health. It focuses on the interaction between job demands and worker’s potential control over their work schedule. This model proposes that a combination of psychological job demands, decision making capacity and social support in the work environment can help explain the various consequences of stress. This suggests that a combination of high demand, low decision making capacity and social support, mechanization of work processes as well as routine jobs can be sources of occupational stress which is detrimental to people’s health and productivity at work. It is based on the three following variables.

#### a) Demands (Psychological Demands)

The pressures put on the individual by the work environment including work load pace of work, length of working hours, time schedules and tight deadlines and

like.

#### b) Control (Decision L Attitude)

The individual’s capacity to respond to work demands and pressures including autonomy, responsibility, skill, training, experience and the like.

#### c) Support (Social Support)

The characteristics of the social environment in which working activities are performed including organizational culture, working climate, management style, help from co-workers, involvement, participation, team working and the like.

By combining control and demand four situations can be identified and they are

#### a. Passive- Low Control and Low Demand

Passive situations where the employee has little control but demands are also low. This leads to stress in the form of monotony and boredom.

#### b. High strain- Low Control and High Demand

Situations where the employee has little control but demands are high.

This leads to high stress.

#### c. Low Strain- High Control and High Demand

Relaxed or low strain situations where the employee has a lot of control and demands are low. This leads to little stress.

#### d. Active- High Control and High Demand

Situations are shown where the employee has to respond on the levels of demands and control along arrow A or arrow B in the figure 2.1. It is possible to 70

shift situations to more favourable or unfavourable positions within a quadrant or even to a more favourable or unfavourable quadrant or even to a more favourable or unfavourable quadrant. The following figure 2.1 depicts Demand and Support Model of Stress.

**Figure 2.1**

**Demand and Supply Model of Stress**

Psychological demands

 **LOW**  **HIGH B**

 **Learning**

**Motivation to**

**Low**

**–**

**Strain**

**A**

**ctive**

**HIGH**

 **develop new**

 **behaviour pattern**

 **Risk of Psychological**

**strain and**

 **LOW** **High –Strain**

 **Passive**

 **physical illness**

**A**

According to this model, stress increases when control declines in combination with rising psychological demands or stressors. Stress decreases when control increases in combination with falling psychological demands or stressors.

Social support operates as a “facilitator” in reducing stress at work. Stress will decrease when social support increases. Within this model the more

one moves into the lower-right part of the high strain area, the more negative stress is generated, this can lead to the most extreme consequences such as burnout, suicide and violence. Negative stress as a source of violence has been identified for several occupations.

##### 2.4.4 Transactional Model of Stress

The wider content of the stress process in the context of the interaction or transactional approach has been defined as including the following five stages:

Demands the person to comply with; the individual’s perception of these demands; psycho physiological changes; outcome of coping action or response by individual; feedback and feed forward response.

#### a. Stage 1

This stage is recognized by the origin of the demand with direct relation to the person, integrated with his or her environment. In this case the demand can be perceived as part of the external environment, while the psychological and physiological needs can be recognized as the internally formed demand as stipulated by the model. The fulfillment of these needs constitutes a person’s behavior.

#### b. Stage 2

The person’s perception of the demand, as well as the individual ability to cope, forms part of stage 2 and it is believed that stress can be the result of an

imbalance between the perceived demand and the person’s perception of his capability to meet the demand. It is of cardinal importance to realise that stress is not the result of the demand and the actual capability but the perceived demand and the perceived capability. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on a person’s cognitive appraisal of the stressful situation at hand and his ability to cope. The person will thus experience stress or imbalance when he perceives that his limitations have been reached or the perceived demand exceeds his perceived capability. This perceptual factor differentiates from individual to individual, as personality traits, amongst various factors, constitute the output. This imbalance is associated with emotional expressions, accompanied by changes in the physiological state as well as by cognitive and behavioural attempts to reduce the stressful nature of the perceived demand or stressor, in other words the direct result of psycho physiological changes.

#### c. Stage 3

The psycho physiological changes as mentioned above is considered as the next stage and characterised by the person’s response to stress. Although this stage is often seen as the result of a demand or stressful situation, it should in fact be regarded as the individual’s coping skills either positive or negative.

#### d. Stage 4

The outcome of coping action or response displayed by the individual is also an easily forgotten but most essential part of the stress process and the actual

or perceived outcome should be considered here. The concern is therefore mainly focused on the consequences of coping.

#### e. Stage 5

The fifth and final stage of the model considered as the feedback and feed forward response is not only as a final result after the consequences have occurred, but in fact at the level of all preceding stages. The outcome of each stage can thus be shaped accordingly if this fifth stage is implemented in the correct manner. These five stages not only define the stress process as such and an understanding of this process can also facilitate the association of the causes of stress, might it be within or outside of the work environment.

##### 2.4.5 Adaptation Theory

Hans Selye developed a framework to describe how people respond to stress. He said that the entire body responds to stress in an attempt to maintain or adapt to the circumstances of the stress events creating stress. But if the demand or the stressor continues, the adaptive capacity of the body may be exceeded and disease may result. This response is called General Adaptation Syndrome. It provides an automatic defense system to help people to cope with external environmental demands. The defense system occurs in three stages:Alarm Reaction, Resistance, and Exhaustion

#### a. The Stage of Stress Alarm Reaction(Fight or Flight Concept)

In the alarm reaction stage also called ‘ initial or shock phase’, the perception of a threatening or challenging situation causes the brain to send a biochemical

message to various parts of the body that in turn make the defense mechanism active. This stage is characterised by increased respiration rate, heartbeat, blood pressure, muscle tension, adrenalin discharge and gastrointestinal ulceration. At first, individual’s energy level or resistance capacity and coping effectiveness decrease in response to the initial shock. The extreme shock may result in capacity of individual to cope with stress. In most situations, the alarm reaction alerts the person to the environmental condition and prepares the body for the resistance stage.

#### b. The Stage of Resistance

The bodily signs characterised of the alarm reactions disappear and the body has activated various biochemical, psychological, and behavioural mechanisms. As a result, the person’s resistance increases above the normal level during this stage. However, if the stress persists or the defensive mechanism proves ineffective, the person’s organism deteriorates to the next stage of exhaustion.

**c. The Stage of Stress Exhaustion:**

At this stage the stress has continued for some time. The body’s resistance to the stress may gradually be reduced or may collapse quickly. Generally this means the immune system and the body’s ability to resist disease may be almost totally eliminated. Patients who experience long term stress may result in heart attacks or severe infection due to their reduced immunity. For example, a person

with a stressful job may experience long term stress that might lead to high blood pressure and an eventual heart attack.

##### 2.4.6 The Stress Model of Richard Lazarus

Richered Lazarus’s interpretation of stress responses had a significant impact on psychologists. Lazarus ( in Brannon and Feist,2005)emphasized that it is not the environment or the stressor that is so important, but the perception of the individual pertaining to the stressful situation that reveals how he or she will cope.

12 reveals that the ability of

Lazarus’s research (in Brannon and Feist, 2005) the people to think and evaluate future events, makes them more vulnerable in ways that animals are not. Thus the effect that stress has on the individual is based on that individual’s feeling of vulnerability and ability to cope. Lazarus recognized that individuals use three kinds of appraisal to analyze situations namely: primary

appraisal, secondary appraisal and reappraisal.

Primary appraisal concerns the first encounter with stressful event. At this point, the individual appraises the situation with respect to its effort on his or her wellbeing. The situation may be viewed as positive or negative or unimportant.

A stressful appraisal would indicate that the individual sees the situation as harmful or threatening. This type of interpretation is likely to generate an emotion

or what Lazarus refers to as ‘harm’ which results in anger, sadness or

disappointment. The interpretation of ‘threat’ is seen as the anticipation of harm and in anticipation of ‘challenge’ as individual’s confidence in overcoming the demands of the situation. After the individual’s appraisal of the event, he or she performs an impression of his or her ability to control or cope with the situation, be it ‘harm’ or ‘threat’ or ‘challenge’. This stage is referred as secondary appraisal.

The third type of appraisal is reappraisal. This implies that individual appraisal of the situation may change as new information may be available. Reappraisal does not always reduce the stress, it can increase it since a previous non-threatening situation may be viewed as threatening when once more

information has become available. Important in the Lazarus theory is the ability to

cope with stressful situation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984)13 define coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person”.

##### 2.4.7 Systems Model of Stress

Lumsden (1975) considers all the salient features of different models and calls for a systems analysis of stress. Stress as a system is thought of open system



13 Flokman.S, “Personal control and stress and coping process: a theoretical analysis”, Journal of Personality and social Psychology,1984, Vol. 46,(4), pp.839-852.

that is constantly interacting with the environment. Stressors, appraisal and coping are related to each other and occur in cyclical fashion. When the stressor encroaches upon the person, the process of appraisal begins followed by coping process.

“Various mediator factors enter into the stressor – coping relationship such as person variables namely age, sex, birth order, marital status of the person and child rearing practices” (Dodge and Martin 1970).

##### 2.4.8 Response – Based Model of Stress

Theorists who define stress from a response perspective, see it as an imbalance between the requirements to make an adaptive response and the repertoire of the individual. The greater the perceived discrepancy between demand and response capacity, the more stress will be felt by the individual. Stress has been used to refer as the response to stressor by Beehr (1984, 1985) Caplan, Cobb, French, and Harrison and Pinneau (1975). The response based perspective concerns with “response patterns which may be taken as evidence that the person is under pressure, from a disturbing environment”. The pattern of response is treated as stress. This approach views stress as the dependent variable i.e. a response to disturbing stimuli. The stress response is seen in form of manifestation of stress.

The response based model of stress explains stress response in form of manifestations of stress namely psychological, physiological and behavioural.

 2.4.9 Monitoring and Blunting

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The conception of monitoring and blunting (Miller 1980, 1987)

originated from the same basic assumptions formulated earlier by Eriksen (

1966) 16 for the repression–sensitization construct. Miller conceived both constructs as cognitive informational styles and proposed that individuals who encounter a stressful situation react with arousal according to the amount of attention they direct to the stressor. Conversely, the arousal level can be lowered, if the person succeeds in reducing the impact of aversive cues by employing avoidant cognitive strategies such as distraction, denial, or reinterpretation. However, these coping strategies, called blunting, should only be adaptive if the aversive event is uncontrollable. Examples of uncontrollable events are impending

~~surgery or an aversive med~~ical examination (Miller andMangan1983)17. If control is available, strategies called monitoring, i.e., seeking information about the stressor, are the more adaptive forms of coping. Although initially these strategies are associated with increased stress reactions, they enable the individual to gain control over the stressor in the long run, thus reducing the impact of the stressful situation. An example of a more controllable stressor is preparing for an academic exam.

The general relationship between a stressor's degree of controllability and the employment of monitoring or blunting strategies can be moderated by situative and personal influences. With regard to situation, the noxious stimulation may be so intense that blunting strategies, such as attention diversion, are ineffective with respect to reducing stress-related arousal. Concerning personality, there are relatively stable individual differences in the inclination to employ blunting or monitoring coping when encountering a stressor.

##### 2.4.10 Model of Coping Modes

Similar to Miller's monitoring-blunting conception, the model of coping modes (MCM) deals with individual differences in attention orientation and

emotional-behavioral regulation under stressful conditions (Krohne1993).18 The



MCM extends the (largely descriptive) monitoring blunting conception (as well as the repression–sensitization approach) in that it relates the dimensions vigilance and cognitive avoidance to an explicative cognitive-motivational basis.

It assumes that most stressful, especially anxiety evoking, situations are characterized by two central features: the presence of aversive stimulation and a high degree of ambiguity. The experiential counterparts of these situational features are emotional arousal (as being primarily related to aversive stimulation) and uncertainty (related to ambiguity). Arousal, intern, should stimulate the tendency to cognitively avoid (or inhibit) the further processing of cues related to the aversive encounter, whereas uncertainty activates vigilant tendencies.

These two coping processes are conceptually linked to personality by the hypothesis that the habitual preference for avoidant or vigilant coping strategies reflects individual differences in the susceptibility to emotional arousal or uncertainty. Individuals who are especially susceptible to states of stress-induced emotional arousal are supposed to habitually employ cognitive avoidance. The employment of avoidant strategies primarily aims at shielding the person from an increase in arousal (arousal-motivated coping behavior). Individuals who are especially affected by the uncertainty experienced in most stressful situations are supposed to habitually employ vigilant coping. Thus, the employment of vigilant strategies follows a plan that is aimed at minimizing the probability of unanticipated occurrence of aversive events(uncertainty-motivated coping behavior).

The MCM conceives the habitual coping tendencies of vigilance and cognitive avoidance as independent personality dimensions. That means,aggregated across a multitude of stressful encounters, the employment of vigilant strategies and of avoidant ones does not preclude each other. Thus, four coping modes can be defined. (a) Persons who score high on vigilance and low on cognitive avoidance are called sensitizers. These persons are primarily concerned with reducing uncertainty by directing their attention towards stress- relevant information. (b) Individuals with the opposite pattern are designated as repressers. These persons minimize the experience of arousal by avoiding aversive information. (c) Non defensives have low scores on both dimensions. These persons are supposed to flexibly adapt to the demands of a stressful encounter. Instead of frequently employing vigilant or avoidant coping strategies, they prefer to act instrumentally in most situations. (d) Individuals who exhibit high scores on both dimensions are called high anxious. In employing vigilant as well as avoidant coping strategies, these persons try to reduce both the subjective uncertainty and the emotional arousal induced by stressful encounters. Because the two goals are incompatible in most situations, high-anxious persons are assumed to show fluctuating and therefore less-efficient coping behavior. Approaches to assess individual differences in vigilance and cognitive avoidance

are described in Krohne et al. ( 2000)19. Empirical results related to predictions

 

##### 2.4.11 Optimal Information Flow and Moods

It was proposed in1981 and it is along the same line as overload and under load model. It posits the same type of U-shaped relationship between stress and stimulation. An additional aspect in Hamilton’s model is proposed relationship between optimal information flow and mood. Positive moods are an outcome of optimal information; Negative moods (anxiety at the high end and boredom at the low end) reflect a mismatch between what is considered the optimal level and actually available stimulation. Negative moods will impact behaviour negatively. However human beings are not totally in the hands of environmental stimulation.

The susceptibility to such negative loads is monitored by Attention Regulators

~~(ARs). These ARs act to ei~~ther augment or reduce the information available. The important point is that they are cognitive mechanisms and are under voluntary control of the individual. It is therefore clear that if one is bored, one should use one’s AR’s to self regulate one’s experiences. For instance, one can find challenge in one’s job; look around and one will find many jobs which demand one’s attention. If a party is getting boring and one can’t leave it because it is a celebration called by the boss, one need not keep grumbling. One should circulate among the guests and may be able to have a conversation with someone who is extremely interesting. Boredom is therefore as much due to one’s own frame of mind as it is to environmental conditions. One always has the ‘take it’ or ‘leave it’ option. However it should be remembered that while boredom or its other extreme, information overload can be aversive and stressful; there is a middle level which is just right for a person. Each one has their own optimal level.

##### 2.5 Symptoms of Stress

Schlebush (2000)22 organizes the symptoms of stress in to three categories namely: Physical, Psychological and Behavioural reactions. Some of the physical reactions include difficulty in relaxing, unexplained headaches, erratic bowel function, unusual tiredness, dizziness, breathlessness, excessive perspiration,

muscle tension and high blood pressure (Schlebush).

Schlebush (2000) states that the skin often the ‘target organ’ for stress with studies reporting that approximately 40% of all skin disorders have been associated with excessive stress. Examples of skin disorders are eczema, acne, and psoriasis.

Roger and Graham (1999)23 include the aforesaid physical symptoms of



stress but add that infections, hair loss and skin disorders have also been associated with excessive stress.

Graham (2005) 24 states that stress can also cause hypertension which affects major organs in the body, frequently resulting in cerebral strokes and renal disease.

Holford (2006)25 posits that prolonged stress causes heart disease with symptoms like tension, frustration, sadness, and hostility, significantly increase the risk of a heart attack. The individual who experiences intense emotions, for example frustration anger and hostility, doubles the risk of having a heart attack in

one hour immediately after the stressful event (Holford 2006).

A heavy work load had a high degree of responsibility and it increases the

risk of heart attacks (Trauer,1990)26.

 

### 2.6 SOURCES OF STRESS

#### 2.6.1 Extra Organisational Stressors

Job stress is not limited to things that happen inside the organization, during the working hours. Extra organizational factors also contribute to job stress. Theses stressors include the following factors:

##### 2.6.1.1 Political Factors

Political factors are likely to cause stress in countries which suffer from political uncertainties as in Iraq, for example. The obvious reason is that the countries have stable political system where changes are typically implemented in an orderly manner.

##### 2.6.1.2 Economic Factors

Changes in business cycle create economic uncertainties. When the economy contracts People get worried about their own security. A very important example is the great depression of 1930s. During this period, suicide rates touches sky. Minor recession also causes stress in the work force as downward swing in the economy is often accomplished by permanent reduction in the work force, temporary lay off or reduction in the pay.

##### 2.6.1.3 Technological Factors

Technological uncertainty is the third type of environmental factor that causes stress. In today’s era of technological development, new innovation makes

an employee’s skills and experience obsolete in a very short span of time. Computers automations are other forms of technological innovations, which are

threat to many people and cause them stress.27

#### 2.6.2 Organisational Stressors

##### 2.6.2.1 Stressors Intrinsic to the Job

The nature of job itself can determine the type and degree of stress that can be induced. Some jobs lead to more responses than others. For example such jobs as that of a police officer, air traffic controller are often considered to be more stressful. On the other hand the job of a college professor is considered to be a low stressed job.

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, pollutions, poor lighting and ventilation and loud noise are also vulnerable to high stress.

#### 2.6.2.2Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity occurs when a worker has inadequate information regarding



his or her work role. If work activities are ill defined, then the person 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 specially 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 report to. This role ambiguity causes stress.

French and caplan in their study (1972)28 have found that role ambiguity is wide spread; it produces psychological strain and dissatisfaction, leads to underutilization of human resources and leads to feeling of futility on how to cope with organizational environment.

Kahn et al., (1964) 29 has found that workers who suffer from role



ambiguity are more likely to experience lower job satisfaction, high degree of job related tension, lower level of performance and self confidence.

French and Caplan (1970)30 have studied psychosocial factors in coronary heart disease and found that role ambiguity is related to a similar cluster of symptoms. The results of the study show that role ambiguity is related to increased blood pressure and higher pulse rate.

Margolilis et al., (1974)31 has found that there is a significant relationship between role ambiguity and symptom of depression and low job motivation and intention to leave the job.

#### 2.6.2.3Role Conflict

Role Conflict occurs when two or more persons have different and sometime opposing expectations of a given individual. Thus there are two or more sets of pressures the individuals 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 constrains put upon him, both roles being conflict with each other.

 2.6.2.4 Inter-role Conflict

Inter-role conflict is another type of 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 police officer may be invited to his brother’s wedding party where the guests use drug which is against the law.

Khan and his colleagues (1974)32 have shown that the greater role conflict in men, low job satisfaction and the grater job-related tension.

Shirom et al. (1973)33 in a large study of Israeli men drawn from a range of occupations found that there was a significant relationship between role conflict and coronary heart disease in the case of white-collar workers.

Cooper and Smith (1986)34 have concluded that white- collar workers are more prone to role conflict than the manual workers.

Margolis and Kroes (1974)35 have fund that foremen were seven times more likely to develop ulcers than shop floor workers.

##### 2.6.2.5 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 requirement. Working under time pressure is specially 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.

##### 2.6.2.6 Role Underload

Role underload occurs when a person’s ability is underutilized so that either ~~there is too little work or th~~ere 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 utilized. 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 life satisfaction. This creates stress with increased frequency of nervous complaints and symptoms and other health problems.

Brook (1973)36 and Bhalla et al.,(1991)37 have found that role insufficiency lead to feeling of stress and associates with psychological strain and low job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

##### 2.6.2.7 Lack of Career Development

The lack of career development may be a source of stress, particularly in organisations which emphasis the relationship between career and quality of work or when an employee fails to receive an anticipated promotion may also lead to stress. If career aspirations are not satisfied, frustrations can be intense. Over promotion can be stressful when employees are advanced beyond their level of competence to positions with which can induce considerable stress.

##### 2.6.2.8 Lack of Participation

When the employees are invited to participate in decision making process in ~~their areas of concern, then~~ the employees perceive to have more control over their own environment thus reducing the extent of role conflict and role ambiguity that cause stress.

For example, in a work situation where high role conflict is created because of inconsistent demands from the superiors, the stress created by high role conflict is reduced if the subordinates and superiors can participate and work together in reducing such inconsistencies. The participation in decision making also influences in reducing role ambiguity and role overload resulting in reduced stress.

French et al.(1982)39 have reported that lack of participation shows a strong relationship to job dissatisfaction but that this effect may be mediated by other variables relating to the overall person-environment fit.

##### 2.6.2.9 Organisational Change

Another stressor is the organisational change. Employees who see change as exciting and challenging are less vulnerable to stress than are those who view change as threat. It is the way we perceive or respond to change, rather than the change itself, that is the source of the stress. Many people resist change, preferring the familiar so that they will know what to expect. Consider the relationship between employees and supervisors. Once that relationship has been established, assuming it is positive, all parties feel comfortable with it because each knows what to expect from the others. The situation is predictable, safe, and secure. When the supervisor leaves and employees face a new boss, they no longer know what behaviors will be tolerated, how much work will be expected or how their job performance will be evaluated. Such changes in the work environment can be stressful. Other stressful changes include revised work procedures, required training courses and new work place facilities.

##### 2.6.2.10 Interpersonal Relationship at Work

Interpersonal relationship at work place is one of the important factors for smooth functioning of the organisation. Cordial relationship between the workers and members of work group plays an essential role in reducing stress. Interpersonal relationship at work place comprises three important set of relationships i.e., relationship with superiors, relationship with subordinates and relationship with colleagues. Low interpersonal support at work has an adverse effect on individual work.

##### 2.6.2.11 Sex Difference

Women constantly report higher levels of job stress than men do. A study of 211 women labourers in the construction industry ( traditionally a type of employment restricted to men) found that the stressors of sexual harassment and gender discrimination correlated positively with physiological and psychological

symptoms of poor health (Goldenhar, Swanson, Hurrell, Roderand Deddens,

1998)40

A minority of women employees frequently experience the stress of discrimination in the workplace. A survey of 1301 black women employed in a variety of jobs ranging from day labour to upper level manager found that perceived race based discrimination was a major source of job stress. This stressors rated even higher among younger ages 24 to 29 and better educated black women (Mays,

Coleman and Jackson,1996)

Women workers were also found to experience high level of stress. The demands of family and the roles of wife and mother can lead to overwork, to dissatisfaction and a sense of loss of control and to conflict with the need to seek employment outside the home. Many women homemakers report feeling depressed, believing that more demands are placed on them than on women with

paying jobs.

##### 2.6.2.12 Organisational Structural Factors

Organisational structure defines the level of differentiation, degree of rules and regulations and where decisions are made. Excessive rules and lack of participation in decisions that affect employees are examples of structural variables that may be potential stressors.

##### 2.6.2.13 Organisational Leadership Factors

These factors represent the managerial style of organisation’s senior managers. Some managers create a culture characterised by tension, fear and anxiety. They establish unrealistic pressure to perform in the short run, impose excessively tight controls and routinely fire employees who fail to turn up.

##### 2.6.2.14 Organisation’s Life Cycle

Organisations go through a cycle. They are established, they grow, become mature and eventually decline. An organisational’s life cycle creates different problems and pressures for the employees. The first and last stages are stressful. The establishment involves a lot of excitement and uncertainty, while the decline typically requires cutback, layoffs and a different set of uncertainties. When the organisation is in the mature stage, stress tends to be the least because uncertainties are low at this point of time.

##### 2.6.3 Group Stressors

Another source of stress in organisation is the poor interpersonal relationships or conflicts. These conflicts can be among the members of the group or between the superiors and subordinates. Groups have a lot of influence on the employee’s behaviour, performance and job satisfaction. On the other hand, the group can also be a potential source of stress. Group stressors can be categorised into the following:

###### 2.6.3.1 Lack of Group Cohesiveness

Starting with the historically famous Hawthorne studies, it has become very clear that cohesiveness is very important to employees particularly at lower level of organisation. Lack of group cohesiveness can be very stress producing, especially for those persons who cannot thrive in isolation.

The other side of the picture is that too much cohesiveness can also lead to stress. Saying like “Too much familiarity breeds empty” is very valid because prolonged contact with other people can also cause stress. This stress becomes more intensified when the people we are close to or with whom we become

distressed when their friends, colleagues or pears are in distress. Due to this reason, people belonging to certain specific professions, which deal with the problems of other people have the highest level of stress.

###### 2.6.3.2 Interpersonal and Inter Group Conflict

Inter personal conflict arises because of differences in perception, temperament, personality, value system, social-control factors and role ambiguities. Similarly, inter group conflict occurs on account of task interdependence, task ambiguity, goal incompatibility, competitive reward system and the like. Whatever be the cause conflict if not resolved will lead to stress.

###### 2.6.3.3 Organisational Climate

Much of the group or interpersonal relationships depend upon the organisational climate. An overall organisational climate may have a relaxed style of working or it may be tense and crisis oriented. All the employees of such organisation will be continuously tense, if the climate in general is unfriendly, hostile or totally task oriented.

###### 2.6.3.4 Lack of Social Support

 Employees are greatly affected by the support of one or more members of a cohesive group. By sharing their problems and joys with others, they may be much better off. If this type of social support is lacking for an individual it can be very stressful.

###### 2.6.3.5 Individual Stressors

2.6.3.5.1 Career Changes

When an employee has to relocate geographically because of a transfer or

promotion, it disturbs the routine of his daily life causing concern and stress. The

location can lead the following problems:

1. The fear of working in a new location

1. Unpredictability about new work environment

1. Anxiety about creating new relationships

1. Uprooting of children from their schools and friends

1. If the employee has got a working spouse then the stress is greater Uncertainty about getting new job at the new location creates some degree of stress.

Thus, when the person is geographically relocated, his stress will depend upon how many changes occur in his social relationship and family life. More the changes more will be the stress.

2.6.3.5.2 Economic Problems

Some people are very poor money managers or they have wants and

 desires that always seem to exceed their earning capacity. When the individuals

 overextend their financial resources, or in simple words, if they spend more than

their earning, it will always cause stress and distract the employee from their

work.

2.6.3.5.3 Changes in Life Structure

The life structure of a person changes as he grows older, his

responsibilities to himself as well as others change and increase. The higher the responsibility, greater is the stress.

2.6.3.5.4 The Pace of Life

As the responsibilities of a person increase, his capacity to execute them should also increase. A hectic pace of life when the person is always busy in business or otherwise can create more stress than a relaxed pace of life. Certain professions like teaching are less stressful than those of company executives,

bankers or businessman.

2.6.3.5.5 The Hardiness Factor

Another personality variable that may account for individual differences and invulnerability to stress is hardiness. People characterized as being high in hardiness have attitude that may make them more resistant to stress. Hardy people believe they may control the influence of events in their lives. They are deeply committed to their work and to other activities of interest and they view change as exciting and challenging rather than threatening. Hardiness can be assessed by a 20 item scale designed to measure three components: control,



commitment, and challenge (Kobasa, 1979, 1982)44 & 45. Research has shown that hardy persons develop fewer physical complaints under highly stressful conditions than do persons who are not hardy. Thus, hardiness may moderate the effect of stress through the way people evaluate and interpret the experiences and events in their lives.

2.6.3.5.6 Self Efficacy

Self- efficacy refers to the belief in one’s ability to accomplish the given task. Sense of how adequate, efficient, and competent we feel about coping with life’s demands. People who are high in self-efficacy are less bothered about

stress than are people who are low in self-efficacy.

A study conducted by Jex and Bliese (1999)46 on U.S Army soldiers subjected them to both physiological and physical stress associated with overly long work days and unusual physical demands. Two levels of efficacy were measured, as follows a. Traditional self-efficacy: the personal level of confidence being able to perform the job.

b. Collective efficacy: the person’s level of confidence that the group to which the person belongs is able to perform the job.

Both type of efficacy were found to be related to stress tolerance in the same way. Soldiers who scored high in both self-efficacy and collective efficacy reacted more positively to work stressors than did soldiers who scored low.

2.6.3.5.7 Self-Esteem

Self-Esteem, which is similar to self-efficacy, refers to how we feel about ourselves. In the work place this concept is referred to as Organization- Based Self-Esteem (OBSE). People high in OBSE have high sense of personal adequacy and see themselves as important, effective and worthwhile members of their organization.

Research shows that people low in OBSE are more affected by job stress than people high in OBSE. Workers low in OBSE are likely to be more

susceptible to the effect of role conflict and to poor support from their superiors.

Low OBSE workers also tend to be more passive in coping with stress.

2.6.3.5.8 Negative Affectivity

Another personality characteristic that may influence or vulnerability to stress is negative affectivity which is closely related to neuroticism. People who measure high in negative affectivity are likely to experience distress and dissatisfaction in all areas of life not just on the job. They focus on the negative

aspects of their experiences and dwell on their failures, weaknesses and shortcomings.

Although some research has found that people high in negative affectivity are likely to show high level of stress as measured by self report inventories, other studies have failed to confirm any such effect(Spector, Chen

&

O’Connell,2000).

2.6.3.5.9 Type A and Type B Behaviour Pattern

Type A behaviour pattern is a personality identified by two cardiologists Roseman and Friedmand who have observed that their coronary heart disease patients shared a characteristics of behaviour and emotional reaction which they labeled as type A behaviour pattern. This pattern is characterised by the presence of aggressiveness, impatience, restlessness, hyper-alertness, explosiveness of speech, tenseness of facial muscle, feeling of being under pressure of time and under challenges of responsibility, competitiveness and a sense of time urgency.



The type B behaviour pattern originally defined as the relative absence of the behaviours described above is increasingly perceived as an alternative style of responding or coping with environmental challenges. Type B personalities

feel less pressure, keep a steadier pace rather than working against clock. They are more likely to try and extend deadlines or accept a lower standard of work from themselves in the short run. However this does not mean that they are necessarily apathetic, lazy or lacking ambition.

The clearest finding of research on type A personalities is that they are much prone to heart diseases. The western collaborative group study (Roseman

et

al., 1975)49 has found that 77 % of those who suffer heart attacks are closely identified as type A personalities in the earlier test scores. Further type A personality has twice the rate of coronary disease, are five times as likely to die from heart disease as compared to those classified as type B personality in short,

type A people put themselves in highly stressful situations and to push

themselves hardest in those situations.

2.6.3.5.10 Life Change and Life Traumas

Life change and life trauma are both stress producing. Life changes may also be slow (like getting older) or sudden( like death of a spouse). Sudden changes are highly stressful. Life traumas can be highly stressful. A life trauma is any upheaval in an individual’s life that alter his or her attitudes, emotions or behaviours. Life change and life trauma look alike, yet there is difference between the two. To illustrate, according to the life change view, the death of a spouse adds to a person’s potential for health problems in the following years. At the same time, the person will also experience an emotional turmoil, which will constitute life trauma and life trauma will spill over to the work place.

2.6.3.5.11 Ability to Cope

How a person is able to cope with the stress and the sources a person seeks to deal with stress are also very important. For example, people who have strong faith in god and His will find it easier to deal with stressful situations like the loss of a loved one. Similarly, family, relations and friends are a source of great comfort at such times of crisis. Thus if we have to apprise the total amount of stress of an individual we have to sum up his or her extra organisational group and personal stressors.

2.6.3.5.11 Workholism

Employees who are addicted to their work are described as workaholics. However, not all workaholics strive to perform well because they are driven by anxiety and insecurity.

Some workaholics genuinely like their work and derive satisfaction from it.

To them work is not an unhealthy compulsion that gradually wears them down.

 

Rather, work provides a healthy, enriching, and stimulating focus for their lives. These workaholics are happy, well adjusted people who enjoy their jobs. They rarely take vacations because they feel no need to escape from their work. However, because of their intense sense of commitment, they can be a source of stress to others.

Psychologists estimate that 5% of all employees are workaholic and that the majority of these are happy. These healthy workaholics are likely to have supportive families, autonomy and variety of on the job and tasks that match their level of knowledge, skills and abilities. Workaholics who lack these qualities tend to be unhappy and dissatisfied. They are susceptible to burnout and to the negative effects of stress.

Healthy workaholics are highly committed to their and involved with their work and derive great enjoyment from it, whereas unhealthy workaholics are also highly involved with their work, but derive little satisfaction from it. Unhealthy workaholics have been found to be compulsive and driven to perform their job tasks.

Unhealthy workaholics may have an undesirable effect on their company and their co-workers. Their compulsive addiction to work can lead to negative situations such as rigidity in thinking and analyzing problems, setting unrealistically high working hours and performance standards for colleagues and subordinates and attempting to maintain total control over the work procedures. As a result, these workaholics find it difficult to delegate authority, request help or function as team players. For all their effort and hard work, true workaholics may

do more harm than good for their organization.

#### 2.7 Consequences of Stress

Distress experienced by the individuals has negative consequences on them, their family and for the organisations they serve. The consequences of stress can be studied under three general categories

##### 2.7.1 Consequence for the Individual

Stress shows itself in a number of ways. An individual who is experiencing stress may develop the following symptoms

#### i) Physiological Symptoms

In the initial stage, the major concern of stress is directed at physiological symptoms. According to the researchers, high degree of stress is typically accompanied by severe anxiety, frustration and depression. Some of



the physiological symptoms of stress as given by business week are as follows: **a) Stress**

Irritability, insomnia, alcohol, and food abuse, physical changes including rapid breathing and heart beat, tensed muscles, prolonged stress can cause muscle twitches, skin problems, baldness, and sexual problems such as impotence.

#### b) Anxiety

Anxiety causes excessive worry, irritability, anger, nervousness, as well as inability to concentrate or sleep. Physical changes include palpitation, chest pain and dizziness.

#### c) Depression

This results in a feeling of sadness, hopelessness, guilty and worthlessness, loss of interest in activities, change in appetite or weight, difficulty in concentrating and suicidal thoughts.

#### ii) Psychological Symptoms

While considerable attention has been given to the relationship between stress and physiological symptoms, especially within the medical community not as much importance has been given to the impact of stress on mental health. But psychological problems resulting from stress is very important for day to day job performance. The psychological impact of stress may be:

1. Stress can cause dissatisfaction. Job related stress can cause job related dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction “is the simplest and most visible

psychological aspect of stress”.

1. High level of stress may be accompanied by anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritability, tension and boredom. One study finds that stress has the strongest impact on aggressive actions such as sabotage, interpersonal aggression, hostility and complaints.

1. The psychological problems from stress may lead to poor job performance, lowered self esteem, resentment of supervision, inability to concentrate, make decision and job dissatisfaction.

1. Research indicates that when people are placed in jobs that demand multiple and conflicting demands or in which there is a lack of clarity as to the individual’s duties, authority and responsibilities both stress and dissatisfaction are increased.

1. Lesser the control people have over the pace of their work, greater the stress and dissatisfaction.

1. Some evidence suggests that jobs that provide a low level of variety, significance, autonomy, feedback, and identity create stress and reduce satisfaction and involvement in the job.

####  Behavioural Symptoms

Any behaviour which indicates that one is not acting one’s usual self may

be a sign of adverse reaction to stress. Direct behaviour that may accompany high

level of stress include

 Under eating or over eating

 Sleeplessness

 Increased smoking and drinking

 Drug abuse

 Nodding off during meeting or social gathering

 Losing your sense of humor

 Moving in a tense and jerking way

 Reacting nervously or irritably to every day sounds

 Absenteeism and turnover

 Reduction in productivity

Consistently acting and feeling out of character is a serious warning that

one is losing one’s ability to cope with tension. Inability to feel or express any

emotions or a sense of being indicates loss of contact with our surrounding and

ourselves. The above indicators can help us in overcoming the tensions in our day

to day life.

##### 2.7.2 Consequences for the Family

Distress which is handled by individuals in dysfunctional ways such as

 resorting to drinking or withdrawal behaviours, will have an adverse effect on

 their family life. The effects of this will be spouse abuse, child abuse, isolation

from family members and even divorce. The stressors which generally affect the

 family life are:

 In the dual career families where both the spouses are pursuing careers, a lot of personal commitments varied in nature are demanded from them (both by their jobs and families). The stresses experienced by the couples stem from role overload, since both partners have to manage their careers as well as help the family.

 Additional stresses are experienced while handling the personal, social and cultural dilemmas of balancing, work and family, discharging parenting responsibilities, handling competition at the work place and within the family and being an involved member of the extended family.

##### 2.7.3 Consequences for the Organisations

The effects of employee’s stress on organizations are many and varied.

These include

 Low performance and productivity

 High rate of absenteeism and turnover

 Loss of customers due to poor attitudes of workers

 Increased alienation of workers from the job

 Destructive and aggressive behaviour resulting in strikes and sabotage.

The stresses experienced by employees who take on critical roles and are responsible for public safety can sometimes be detrimental to the wellbeing of the constituents served. For example, the stress experienced by the airline pilot, train driver, can result in the loss of many lives. Therefore the cost of employee’s stress to the organisation in terms of lost profits, declining assets, bad image projection, poor reputation and loss of future business are enormous.

### 2.8 COPING STRATEGIES FOR STRESS

**2.8.1 Individual Approaches**

#### a) Knowledge about Stress

In the first stage, an individual should become knowledgeable about stress. He should know about the process and effects of stress. He must find out the major sources of his stress. He must anticipate stressful periods and plan accordingly in advance. He must be honest with himself and decide what he can cope with and what he can not.

#### b) Physical Fitness

Exercise in any form can help the people in coping with stress. Noncompetitive physical exercise such as aerobics, walking, jogging, swimming, riding cycle, playing softball or tennis have been recommended by physicians as a way of dealing with excessive stress levels. There is evidence to suggest that individuals who exercise are much less likely to suffer from certain type of stress related problems. With diet control and non smoking habits, blood pressure and cholesterol become controlled and body become more resistant to pressures. People are more likely to get physically sick or emotionally depressed if they are overweight or poorly nourished.

#### c) Time Management

Most of the people are very poor in managing their time. They do not know what must be done and when it would be desirable to do so. The result of poor time management is feeling of work overload, skipped schedules and tensions. A well organised person can often accomplish twice as much as the person who is poorly organised. Therefore, an individual must understand how to manage his time so that he can cope with tensions created by jobs demands.

A few of the well known time management principles are

 Preparing a daily list of activities to be attended to

 Prioritising activities by importance and urgency.

 Scheduling activities according to the priorities set

 Knowing your daily schedule and handling the most demanding parts of a job when you are most alert and productive.

####  Readjust Life Goals

Every individual must know that what he really want to do. This should relate to not only the major decisions of the life but to all activities in our life. He must know what is important for him. Because of the severe competition in life to get ahead of others, most individuals set very high standards and goals for themselves. These high expectations and limited resources to reach such expectations result in stress. Accordingly, every person must readjust his goals and make sure he has the ability and resources to reach such goals. Perhaps the goals should be established after the resources have been analysed.

#### e) Plan your Life in Advance

So many people create situations which may induce stress because they either did not plan or did a bad job of planning. The traditional Indian attitude of

“whatever will be, will be” a way of accepting the unexpected difficulties in life. This attitude may be relevant in those situations over which we do not have any control like death in the family, but for other events in life, it is better to plan in

advance, so that we can confront them with confidence when they occur.

#### f) Social Support Network

Every person should have people to turn to, talk to and rely upon. Good ~~friends become highly sup~~portive during times of stress and crisis. Social network includes family or relatives, friends, colleagues and it suggest that expanding one’s social support system can be a means for tension reduction because friends

are there when needed and provide support to get the person through stressful situations.

#### g) Meditation

Meditation involves concentration of mind away from stress producing areas, sitting in a comfortable position, closing eyes and clearing the mind from all disturbing thoughts. Any form of concentration that redirects one’s thoughts process from daily concerns can be considered meditation. Primarily, it involves silently repeating mantras 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

from any outside force such as telephone, children or visitors.

##### 2.8.2 Organisational Approaches

Individuals may design their own strategies to reduce stress, but it is a must for the organizations to develop programmes that will help the employees in reducing their stress. This will lead to less employee turnover, absenteeism



and as a result productivity will improve. Some of the measures which organisations can take are;

#### a) Selection and Placement

Individuals differ in their response to stress situations. We know that type A individuals are more prone to stress. On the other hand, in organisations there are certain jobs which are more stressful as compared to other jobs. While doing the selection and placement of the employees, these factors must be kept in mind. The individuals who are more prone to stress should not be put on jobs which are stressful. The individuals who are less prone to stress may be adapt better to high stress jobs and perform those jobs more effectively.

#### b) Goal Setting

Based on extensive amount of research, it has been concluded that individuals perform better when they have specific and challenging goals and they receive feedback on how well they are progressing towards those goals. Goal setting can reduce stress as well as provide motivation. It will result in less employee frustration, role ambiguity and stress.

#### c) Improved Communication

Sometimes due to lack of effective communication from the superiors, the employees do not know what they have to do and how they have to do it. This results in role ambiguity. Similarly, when two or more persons have contradicting role demands from an employee, it leads to role conflict if there is lack of propercommunication. Effective communication with employees reduces the uncertainty by lessening role ambiguity and role conflict.

#### d) Redesigning the Jobs

Organisations should redesign the jobs in such a way as to give employees more responsibility, more meaningful work, more autonomy and increased feedback. This will help reduce the stress caused by monotony, routine work, work overload or underload and role ambiguity. Job redesigning enhances “Quality of work life”.

#### e) Participative in Decision Making

If the organisations allow employees participation in those decisions which directly affect them and their job performance, it can increase employee control and reduce the role stress. The main reason of role stress is that employees feel uncertain about their goals, expectations and how they will be evaluated. These uncertainties can be reduced by the management by giving the employees a right to participate in the decision making.

#### f) Personal Wellness Programmes

These personal wellness programmes focus on the employees total physical and mental condition. Organisations can provide facilities at their premises for physical fitness such as gyms, swimming pools, tennis courts etc, as well as psychological counselling. They should hold seminars or workshops to make the employees understand nature and sources of stress and possible ways to reduce it. These workshops should help those individuals who are already under stress. Moreover, a superior can impact personal wellness of his subordinates through positive example, encouragement and by practicing the basic concepts of human resource management.

#### g) Building Team Work

The management must create a work environment in which the members of the work group consider themselves as members of the same family. There should be no provision for interpersonal conflict within the group or for conflict between an individual and the group. Such conflicts are causes of stress and should be prevented from building or eliminated if they develop. Accordingly, such groups should be developed that are more productive and mutually supportive. Members of the group would seek each other for social support, which is necessary

ingredient for diluting stress.

#### h) 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, individual then tries 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.

### 2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter gives an indepth knowledge about stress, it provides a brief explanation of meaning and definition of stress, various Kinds of stress, symptoms of stress, Theories and models of stress. Further it discusses the various sources of stress and coping strategies adopted to reduce the stress.