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Skills for Stress Management

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ABSTRACT *: We since as human beings need to live and communicate with one another on a constant and day-to-day basis, the quality of our lives are much dependent on our Health and relationship with other people. Without good health, we will find it quite challenging to have peace and harmony. Health is the harmony between body and mind. If we want a healthy body we have to make our mind healthy and free from stress. Stress is not what happens to us it's our response to what happens. Now days human for the sake of getting a living forget to live……An Interesting phenomenon of health problem is the rise in diseases caused by stressors and tensions for which medical treatment is inadequate, as the medical science deals mostly on physical plane. This has also leads to consumption of medicines on large scale causing side effects. This has being realized by so many studies that good health and peace of mind can be achieved by adopting a stress management techniques and Yoga.*

When we face challenge, our body exhibit biological, psychological and behavioural change to respond and to adapt with them accordingly. Most of the advance cities around the world are facing drastic changes in their economy and working style.

Occupational stress is now a common problem worldwide. However, we should not treat it as normal or even neglect it. This physical and psychological health of each and every individual associated with the organization can also be affected. Effective stress management in work place is the worldwide need, urgently expressed in medical, government and business media. The most important factor in acquiring stress is the fact that individual vary in personality and life style. That is why stressful for one may not be stressful for another. These individual differences

should be scrutinized in order to create measures to prevent stress from affecting an individual. The benefits of stress management is improved physical and mental health and enhanced efficiency, effectiveness, moral and over all attitude of individual. Most people thing of stressors as negative but stressors can also be positive experiences .It is the wear and tear that our bodies experience as we adjust to our changing environment .We can not totally eliminate stress from our lives but we can learn how to manage stress and it effects.

Key Words: Harmony, Effective, Moral, Stressors, Psychological, Efficiency.

INTRODUCTION

The word stress has been derived from the middle French word '*destresse'* (distress) which in turn derives from Latin '*strictus'* meaning compressed. Stress may be considered as any physical, chemical or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental unrest and that may be a factor in disease causation. It is a phenomenon which occurs because of a conflict between our external environment and us and gives rise to physical and behavioural changes. It is a natural human response and we all live under stress upto some extent.

With the advent of urbanization and globalization, the stress levels have also increased. In this era of cut-throat competition, all the organizations are pushing their manpower to prove their efficiencies on a continuous basis. This is converting organizations from a simple work place into a volatile stress factory. Stress can be chronic or episodic, positive or negative, or a problem or a challenge. It is not a disease however chronic levels of stress can be a factor in triggering clinical anxiety and depression.

Fontana (1989) defines stress as those challenges which excite us and keeps us on our toes, and without which life for many people would become dull and ultimately not worth living. Greenhaus et al (1989) suggested that personality characteristics could be influenced by the ability of individuals to interact and react to a situation and also help to proactively shape the environment. Jeffrey (2006) defined stress as a state of cognitive, emotional and physical arousal. Hicks & Caroline (2007) point out that stress is a human response to various aspects in his/her environment that comes naturally.

Stress at nominal level acts as a motivator but as the level increases, it shows negative impact and interferes with

productivity. Continuous workplace stress can make an employee resentful towards his/her employer apart from distracting employee engagement (Cooper and Payne, 2008). Workplace stress arises when poor match between job demands, and the capabilities, resources and the needs of the worker. It initially leads to lack of performance followed by severe physical and emotional problems. There are factors both within and outside the organization which leads to workplace stress. Out of which, some of the factors are controllable at organizational level.

French, Kast, and Rosenzweig (1985) also emphasized the idea that stress itself is not necessarily bad. "The term *stress* can be considered neutral with the words *distress* and *eustress* used for designating bad and good effects." Stress levels that exceed an optimum level result in decreased performance and eventual burnout. Stress levels below a minimum level result in decreased performance and "rust-out".

Eustress is a good or positive stress and arises in any situation or circumstance that a person finds motivating or inspiring (Seaward, 2004). He also stated that situations classified under eustress are also very enjoyable and for this reason, they are not considered as threat.

Generally, stress and distress are been thought as interchangeable terms. (Rice, 1999) Distress is the damaging or unpleasant stress.

Intensive stress declines professional enthusiasm. Therefore, taking measures in organizations for reducing stress is the need of the hour. Awareness about the symptoms of stress helps in proper assessment and removing it. The symptoms generally fall under four categories;

a. hysical symptoms- They are caused by the hormones secreted by our body in a challenging situation. The hormones namely, cortisone and adrenaline raise blood pressure and the body get prepared to react in that situation. If the problem is not overcome, then these hormones and chemicals remain unreleased into the blood stream for a long period and results in psychosomatic illness and weaker immune system of the body.

b. motional symptoms- The emotional symptoms indicating stress are- feeling low, fear of losing control,

intense apprehension, increased irritation and tearfulness etc.

c. ognitive symptoms- The cognitive symptoms of stress are as follows- reduced interest, decreased concentration, defective linking of content, difficulty in decision making etc.

d. ehavioural symptoms- Restlessness, withdrawal from interpersonal interaction, extensive smoking, loss of hunger, losing touch with friends, obsessions etc.

As being a developing economy, India workforce is facing fierce competition, due to liberalization, privatization and globalization, hence, the workforce of India are always under pressure. The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has added complexities. The current situation in India demands organizing of work-life balance programs so that employees are able to balance their professional and personal life.

in Indian context, Madipelli, Sarma and Chinnappaiah (2005) investigating on factors influencing work life imbalance among female teachers at home and at work place observed that, organizations having ineffective work arrangements, poor working conditions, long working hours, lower income, pressurized work environment etc, may be responsible for monotony, frustration and stress towards work and home among employees, which leads to work life imbalance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

An important goal for those under stress is the management of life stresses. The paper focuses on the various factors that cause stress. The objective is to emphasize on various aspects of life in which stress shows adverse effects and the skills needed for proper stress management.

Workplace stress may lead to poor work performance or even injury. Cannon and Selye used animal studies to establish the earliest scientific basis for the study of stress. They measured the physiological response of animals to external pressures, such as heat and cold, prolonged restraint, and surgical procedures. Then they extrapolated from these studies to human beings.

Early studies of stress in humans by Richard Rahe and others established the view that stress is caused by distinct, measurable life stressors. Earlier it was believed that stress is caused because of

external factors but with time the fact got established that individual's perceptions, capacities and understanding of any situation is responsible for causing stress.

Stressors are of two types- external and internal. External stressors can be some major life events. Research by Psychiatrists Drs Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe revealed a list of common causes of stress that most people would find stressful. They called this scale the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Scale**.** Another external stressor was indicated by Lazarus and Folkman (1984), at the University of California, that our daily hassles rather than major life events affected us the most. Life events do not happen every day, but daily hassles do. Work related stressors are overload, perceptions of extent of control, job security, work-life balance and work relationships.

Work-life balance is an expression used to describe the balance between an individual's work and personal life. It intends to provide satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home.

Dayo Akintayo (2012) found that working environment is significantly related to workers' morale and also working environment is significantly correlated with perceived workers' productivity.

Stress and stress management are directly related to personal well-being and specifically to workplace well- being. There are strong economic and financial reasons for organizations to take initiatives in order to manage stress. First of all, it is important to identify the stressors.

Then only one can try to get away from them or remove them. There are various simple stress reduction techniques. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) interpretation of stress focus on the transaction between people and their external environment. This Transactional model potentially empowers the individual on which stressors act by conceptualizing stress as a result of how the stressor is appraised initially and how the individual appraises his/her resources to cope with the potential stressor.

Sedgeman, 2005 focuses on Innate health model or the Health realization model which focuses on the nature of thought, arguing that it is ultimately people's thinking that determines how they respond to potentially stressful circumstances. This model proposes that helping stressed individuals understand the nature of thought- especially providing them with

the ability to recognize when they are in the grip of insecure thinking, disengage from it, and access their natural positive feelings-will reduce their stress. (Mills, 1995).

In personal life, humour, music, outing with people whom we are close to or crying helps us reduce our stress levels. Leading a well-disciplined life and proper time management practice helps cope with stressful situations in a better way. In our college life, generally we get stressed because of study factor, social acceptability, economic factors and career related factors. Rawson and other scholars agree that mental stress sources of college students mainly include study factors, social factors, life and economic factors, and career factors. (Rawson, Harwe E, Bloomer, Kimberley, Kendall, Amanda, 1994). If students give some time to their hobbies and form interest groups, then their stress levels get reduced.

In organizations, now days, there are some measures which are practiced and help employees cope with stressful situations. Maintaining effective communication can help in resolving issues, eliminates role ambiguity and ensures smooth flow of ideas and information. One of the best antidotes for stress is social support: the psychological and physical resources that others provide to help an individual cope with adversity. Research shows that people who encounter major life stresses, such as the loss of a spouse or job, come through the ordeal more easily if they have an effective network of friends or family for social support.

Employees who have self-confidence and self-awareness, have peers who are trustworthy do not fall in the hands of stress related problems. Participative decision making and some extent of autonomy in work also reduces stress. Encouraging decentralization, granting independence and timely feedback inculcates a sense of ownership in employees and makes them satisfied.

The HR practices should be justified and transparent. The methods used for appraisals and evaluation should be made clear to the employees so that no employee should feel that the organization is biased.

There are individual as well as organizational approaches towards stress management.

At individual level, person must be able to think seriously about the factors which are acting as stressors in his/her life. He/ She should take good care of his/her physical health by following a good balanced diet

and exercising. The intake of toxic elements such as tobacco, alcohol etc. should be reduced. If a person develops skills for adaptability and stops oneself from practicing 'control' over the situations, then stress can be managed successfully. Theorists from many schools of personality and psychotherapy have discussed the importance of observant, open awareness and attention in the optimization of self-regulation and well-being (Brazier, 1995; Martin, 1997). In organizations, improved personnel selection and proper job placement, justified goal setting, training and development activities can help reduce stress. According to Kamala Basu (2002), most stress management programmes focus attention on the individual either assisting employees or help them to cope with job-related stressors. This is more concern in organizations with coping with the consequences of stress rather than eliminating or reducing the actual stressors themselves.

If organizations channelize their resources towards certain interventions which change the nature of work instead of organizing stress reduction programmes, then it can improve the situation. Organizations must work towards redesigning work, making changes in the physical work environment, train employees to adapt to the changes etc. to reduce their stress levels.

The Super stress solution, a book by Dr. Roberta Lee, has devoted a section to the topic of spirituality and prayer. Dr. Lee noted, 'Research shows that people who are more religious and spiritual use their spirituality to cope with life'. People who are spiritual and devote some time to prayers and meditation are better able to cope with stress.

The topic *Skills for stress management* emphasises on the increasing levels of stress in different walks of life. It is very important to identify the factors that act as stressors and find out means to reduce or eliminate them. There are two different approaches towards stress management; individual approach and organizational approach. At individual level, if a person practices time management, exercises, expands social support, maintains good health and hygiene etc., then stress can be eliminated from life. Organizations must try to remove the factors causing stress by redesigning the job, changing the physical environment of work and other intervention techniques. But, in the present time most of the stress management programmes; focus is on the eradication of consequences of stress, which can't be said

to be highly effective. If a person develops certain skills, starts dealing practically with problems after analysing situations, then that person can achieve solutions without getting stressed. Research also found that people who are spiritual generally are less prone to diseases caused by stress.

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