

Handbook on Stress Management Skills

Purpose of this Handbook

The handbooks on Soft Skills developed by Centre for Good Governance are intended primarily for the personnel in public administration. They offer an overview of some of the principal skills that are essential for effective performance.

They draw heavily upon existing literature from the academia and current practices in public and private organizations around the world and include numerous references and links to useful web resources.

They are not comprehensive 'guides' or 'how to' booklets. Rather, they incorporate the perspectives of experts in the specific domains whose knowledge, insights, advice and experiences prove handy in honing skills, essential for strengthening the capacity for effectiveness of public service delivery at all levels of government.

This handbook, *Stress Management Skills*, focuses on how the personnel in the public administration can develop approaches and strategies that will enable them to deal with stress in a variety of contexts.

1 Understanding Stress

“It’s not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it.”

- Hans Selye

Time Magazine (June, 1983) called stress “The Epidemic of the Eighties,” and regarded it as the leading health problem. There can be little doubt that the situation has progressively worsened since then. Contemporary stress tends to be even more pervasive, persistent and insidious. Recent statistics reveal that:

- Stress is now the number one reason behind sickness from work.” (Gee Publishing Survey)
- “More than two-thirds of people are suffering from work related stress.” (ICM Research)
- “Stress in the workplace is undermining performance and productivity in 9 out of 10 organizations.” (Industrial Society)

Stress is defined as the emotional and physical strain caused by a person’s response to pressure from the outside world. It occurs when there is a mismatch between what the people aspire to do what they are capable of doing. In other words, stress results when the pressure to perform a certain task is greater than the resources available to perform it.

$$S = P > R$$

[S - Stress; P-Pressure; R- Resource]

Stress is not altogether a modern phenomenon. Stress has been of concern in the medical profession since the days of Hippocrates. Walter Cannon, a physiologist at Harvard, however, formalized the modern notion of stress, at the beginning of the twentieth century. Cannon described the “flight or fight response”, a heightened arousal state that prepares an organism to deal with threats. When under threat, one’s body releases a rush of adrenaline in order to allow a ‘fight or flight’ response (i.e. to give

the push one needs to fight the threat or to run away from it).

Medical research suggests that some thirty hormones are released as part of the body's automatic and innate "fight or flight" stress response. These hormones provide quick energy to cope with emergencies and exigencies. Stress hormones often build and, without release, contribute to wear and tear. Excessive stress can inhibit the body's immune system functioning and directly impair the functioning of key body systems. This is the reason why stress can increase one's susceptibility to illness, exacerbate an illness, or protract recovery from an illness.

Unrelieved stress, over time, can take the form of:

- Tense muscles that lead to headache, neck-ache, jaw-ache, back-ache
- Stomach pain, indigestion, bowel upset, ulcers
- Feelings of anxiety, nervousness, tension, helplessness
- Increasing anger or irritability, chest pain
- Depression, exhaustion, lack of concentration, insomnia
- Restlessness, boredom, confusion, the impulse to run and hide

Persons who are stressed may "take out" their frustration on those around them. Others may keep their feelings to themselves and experience a sullen gloomy feeling or a sense of isolation.

The Physiology of Stress

Our bodies' reaction to stress is rooted in our ancestry. In earlier times, stress had a survival value. All animals have inherent in them an emergency reaction to get themselves out of danger quickly. This is what is often called the 'Fight or Flight' or 'Alarm' reaction. When the mind perceives a threat the 'Alarm Button' or hypothalamus in the brain is pressed.

The brain then sends out messages to different parts of the body, which is immediately prepared for action, system by system.

1. The muscles - become tense.
2. The adrenal glands - these are situated above our kidneys and release stress hormones to get the reaction going and sustain it.
3. The heart - beats faster. Blood pressure rises. The major blood vessels dilate and more blood is therefore sent to vital organs e.g. the muscles needed to run away or to fight.
4. The lungs - faster breathing increases the oxygen supply to produce energy, and eliminate the waste carbon dioxide.
5. The liver - releases glycogen (stored sugar) into the blood supply, raising blood glucose for energy
6. Stored fats - are released, again for use as energy by the muscles.
7. The skin - sweats to keep us cool.
8. The eyes - pupil dilates to improve our sideways vision to find a way of escape.
9. The digestive system - slows down and almost stops temporarily, as the blood is diverted to more important organs e.g. muscles. The food stays longer in the stomach, the bowel slows down and the bowel sphincters close.
10. The bladder sphincters close.

There are many other changes, but these are the most important. This reflex was a life-saver for our prehistoric ancestors who had to 'fight' or 'flee' regularly to save their lives. Occasionally, it is useful for us if we need to respond very rapidly on a physical level to a threat - for example, if we are charged by a bull whilst sitting in a field! A surge of energy will help us reach the gate in time. It is an emergency reaction for use in the short term only, followed by a time for 'winding down' after the chase or the fight, during which the affected

organs in the body can return to normal. Problems develop when the reaction is sustained for longer periods as happens too frequently in the present day and in war-torn regions. The perceived 'threats' in modern society are less likely to be physical attacks on us. Rather, they take the form of psychological pressures resulting from the many different and often conflicting demands made on us, as we attempt to fulfill expectations laid on us in our various roles as workers, parents, partners, colleagues, friends etc. When experiencing 'distress' the body systems are put out of balance and then remain in this state, resulting all too often in ill health. The irony is that what was intended as a life saving reflex is now one of the major causes of serious illness in our society.

A. Brown, Remedial Massage Therapist, L.C.S.P. (Assoc)

unresolved stress may also manifest itself through increased consumption of alcohol, drugs, food, caffeine or tobacco. These behaviours ordinarily mask your stressors rather than empower you to deal with them.

Symptoms of Stress

Below are some of the symptoms of stress listed out by Palmer, S. and Dryden, W. (Counselling for Stress Problems). It should be noted that these symptoms can also occur with a range of medical or psychological disorders.

Behavioural Symptoms

Restlessness

Loss of appetite/ overeating

Aggression/ irritability

Poor driving

Accident proneness

Sleep disturbances/ insomnia

Increased nicotine/ caffeine intake

Avoidance/ phobias

Impaired speech/ voice tremor Anorexia, bulimia

Poor time management

Behavioural Symptoms

- Appetite changes - too much or too little
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia
- Increased intake of alcohol & other drugs
- Increased smoking
- Restlessness
- Fidgeting
- Nail biting
- Hypochondria

Compulsive behaviour
Checking rituals
Tics, spasms
Nervous cough
Low productivity
Withdrawing form relationships
Clenched fists
Teeth grinding
Talking/walking/eating faster
Increased absenteeism
Decreased/ increased sexual activity
Sulking behavior
Frequent crying
Unkempt appearance
Poor eye contact
Alcohol/drug abuse

Emotional Symptoms

Anxiety
Depression
Anger
Guilt
Hurt
Morbid jealousy
Shame/ embarrassment
Suicidal feelings

Physical Symptoms

Tension
Headaches
Palpitations

MENTAL SYMPTOMS

- Lack of concentration
- Memory lapses
- Difficulty in making decisions
- Confusion
- Disorientation
- Panic attacks

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- Bouts of depression
- Impatience
- Fits of rage
- Tearfulness
- Deterioration of personal hygiene and appearance

Rapid heart beat

Nausea

Tremors/ inner tremors

Aches/ pains

Dizziness/ feeling faint

Indigestion

Butterflies in stomach

Spasms in stomach

Numbness

Dry mouth

Cold sweat

Clammy hands

Abdominal cramps

Sensory flashbacks

Pain

Imagery Symptoms

Helplessness

Isolation/being alone

Losing control

Accidents/injury

Failure

Humiliation/ shame/ embarrassment

Nightmares/ distressing recurring dreams

Visual flashbacks

Poor self-image

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Sleep pattern changes
- Fatigue
- Digestion changes
- Loss of sexual drive
- Headaches
- Aches and pains
- Infections
- Indigestion
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Sweating & trembling
- Tingling hands & feet
- Breathlessness
- Palpitations
- Missed heartbeats

Cognitive Symptoms

I must perform well

Life should not be unfair

Self/other-damning statements

Low frustration statements e.g. I can't stand it.

I must be in control

It's awful, terrible, horrible, unbearable etc.

I must have what I want

I must obey 'my' moral code and rules

Others must approve of me

Cognitive distortions e.g. all or nothing thinking

Interpersonal Symptoms

Passive/ aggressive in relationships

Timid/ unassertive

Loner

No friends

Competitive

Put other's needs before own

Sycophantic behaviour

Withdrawn

Makes friends easily/ with difficulty

Suspicious/ secretive

Manipulative tendencies

Gossiping

Biological Symptoms

Flu/common cold

Lowered immune system

Poor nutrition, exercise and recreation

Organic problems

Diarrhoea/ constipation/flatulence

Frequent urination

Allergies/skin rash

High blood pressure/ coronary heart disease(angina/heart attack)

Dry skin

Chronic fatigue/ exhaustion/ burn-out

Cancer

Diabetes

Rheumatoid arthritis

Asthma

Biologically based mental disorders

Epilepsy

Use of: drugs, stimulants, alcohol, tranquillizer, hallucinogens

Eustress and Distress

Not all stress is detrimental. Indeed, a certain amount of stress in life is desirable. It relieves monotony, spurs people toward worthwhile goals, and is an integral part of many pleasurable activities: the joy experienced with successful accomplishments, for example. Selye coined the word “eustress” (good stress) to refer to stress of this kind, and to distinguish it from distress, which is prejudicial to health and well-being.

Eustress or positive stress occurs when the level of stress is high enough to motivate a person to move into action to get things accomplished. Eustress provides a sense of urgency and alertness needed for survival when confronting threatening situations.

Distress or negative stress occurs when the level of stress is either too high or too low and the body and/or mind begin to respond negatively to the stressors. It is a contributory factor to ill-health, such as headaches, digestive problems, skin complaints, insomnia and ulcers. Excessive, prolonged and unrelieved stress can have a harmful effect on mental, physical and spiritual health.

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF STRESS?

This self-assessment test is developed by two American psychologists Holmes and Rahe ('the social readjustment rating scale' Psychosomatic Medicine), which lists 43 life events and helps you learn how much obvious stress you have in your life.

Examine yourself whether you are experiencing any of the below symptoms of stress. Next, look for your score at the end of this self-test and you will discover your personal stress rating.

Physical symptoms	Emotional symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tightness in chest chest pain and/or palpitations indigestion breathlessness nausea muscle twitches aches and pains headaches skin conditions recurrence of previous illnesses/ allergies constipation/ diarrhea weight loss or weight gain change in menstrual cycle for women sleep problems/tiredness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mood swings feeling anxious feeling tense feelings of anger feeling guilty feelings of shame having no enthusiasm becoming more cynical feeling out of control feeling helpless decrease in confidence/self-esteem poor concentration
Behavioral symptoms	Psychological symptoms and negative thoughts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> drop in work performance more inclined to become accident-prone drinking and smoking more overeating/ loss of appetite change in sleeping patterns poor time management too busy to relax withdrawing from family and friends loss of interest in sex poor judgment inability to express feelings over-reacting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'I am a failure' 'I should be able to cope' Why is everyone getting at me?' 'no one understands' 'I don't know what to do' 'I can't cope' 'What's the point?' 'I don't seem to be able to get on top of things' 'I keep forgetting where I put things' loss of judgment

Stress Self Test

Add up your score to check how stressed you are.

0 – 4 symptoms: You are unlikely to be stressed.

5 – 8 symptoms: You are experiencing a mild form of stress and are not coping as well as you can. You need to make some changes.

9 – 12 symptoms: You are experiencing a moderate degree of stress. You need to make major changes to your life.

13 or more symptoms: You need to take urgent action to reduce your stress levels. The higher your score the more urgent is the need for action.

2 Different Kinds of Stress

American Physiological Association classifies stress into three categories - acute stress, episodic acute stress, and chronic stress — each with its own characteristics, symptoms, duration, and treatment approaches.

1. Acute Stress

Acute stress is the most common form of stress. It comes from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future. Acute stress is thrilling and exciting in small doses, but too much is exhausting. A fast run down a challenging ski slope, for example, is exhilarating early in the day. That same ski run late in the day is taxing and wearing. Skiing beyond limits can lead to falls and broken bones. By the same token, overdoing on short-term stress can lead to psychological distress, tension headaches, upset stomach, and other symptoms.

Because it is short term, acute stress doesn't have enough time to do the extensive damage associated with long-term stress. The most common symptoms are:

- emotional distress: some combination of anger or irritability, anxiety, and depression, the three stress emotions;
- muscular problems including tension, headache, back pain, jaw pain, and the muscular tensions that lead to pulled muscles and tendon and ligament problems;
- stomach, gut and bowel problems such as heartburn, acidity, flatulence, diarrhea, constipation, and irritable bowel syndrome;
- elevation in blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, heart palpitations, dizziness, migraine headaches, cold hands or feet, shortness of breath, and chest pain.

Acute stress can crop up in anyone's life, and it is highly treatable and manageable.

2. Episodic Acute Stress

The symptoms of episodic acute stress are the symptoms of extended over arousal: persistent tension headaches, migraines, hypertension, chest pain, and heart disease.

Treating episodic acute stress requires intervention on a number of levels, generally requiring professional help, which may take many months.

Often, lifestyle and personality issues are so ingrained and habitual with those suffering episodic acute stress that they see nothing wrong with the way they conduct their lives. They blame their woes on other people and external events. Frequently, they see their lifestyle, their patterns of interacting with others, and their ways of perceiving the world as part and parcel of who and what they are.

Sufferers can be fiercely resistant to change. Only the promise of relief from pain and discomfort of their symptoms can keep them in treatment and on track in their recovery program.

3. Chronic Stress

Chronic stress comes when a person never sees a way out of a miserable situation. It's the stress of unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable period. With no hope, the individual gives up searching for solutions.

Some chronic stresses stem from traumatic, early childhood experiences; get internalized and remain forever painful and present. Some experiences profoundly affect personality. A view of the world, or a belief system, is created that causes unending stress for the individual. When personality or deep-seated convictions and beliefs must be reformulated, recovery requires active self-examination, often with professional help.

The worst aspect of chronic stress is that people get used to it. They forget it is there. People are immediately aware of acute stress because it is new; they ignore chronic stress because it is old, familiar, and sometimes, almost comfortable.

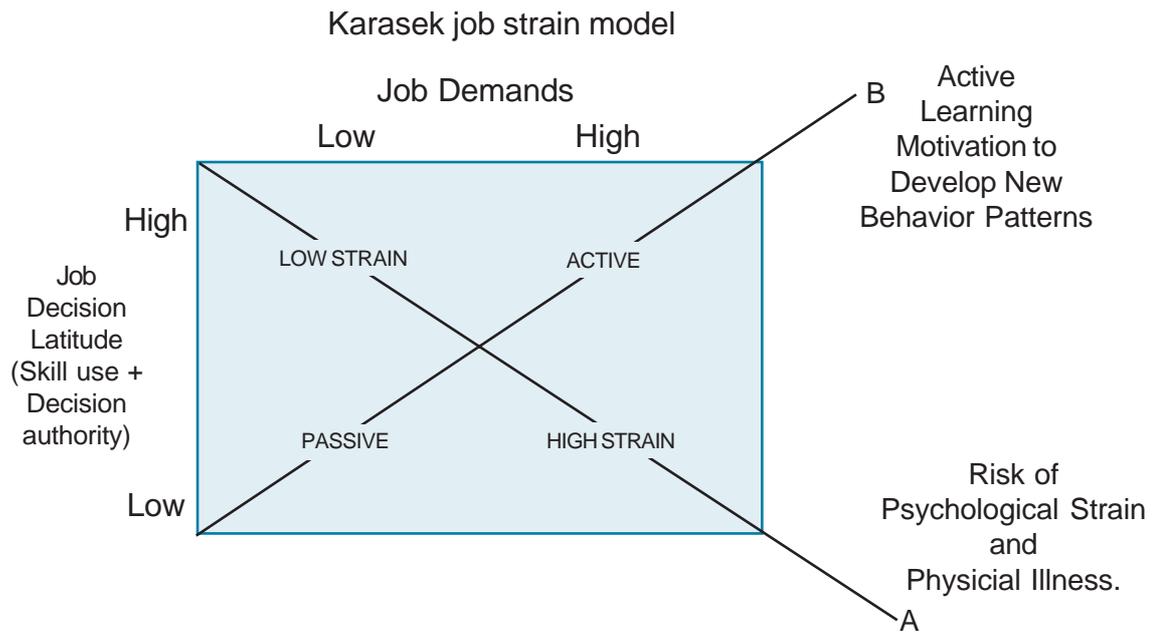
Chronic stress kills through suicide, violence, heart attack, stroke, and, perhaps, even cancer. People wear down to a final, fatal breakdown. Because physical and mental resources are depleted through long-term attrition, the symptoms of chronic stress are difficult to treat and may require extended medical as well as behavioral treatment and stress management.

3 Stress & Illness – A ‘Job-Strain’ Model

Medical research in recent times has focused on the workplace as a potential source of stressors that might contribute to the development of hypertension and coronary diseases. The Job-Strain Model developed by Robert Karasek based on a study provides evidence for the hypothesis. Karasek argues that work stress and the resulting physical and mental health effects of work stress result “not from a single aspect of the work environment, but from the joint effects of the demands of a work situation and the range of decision-making freedom (discretion) available to the worker facing those demands. Job strain occurs when job demands are high and job decision latitude is low”.

Decision latitude is an operationalization of the concept of control and has often been defined as the combination of job decision-making authority and the opportunity to use and develop skills on the job. The “job strain” model states that the combination of high job demands and low job decision latitude will lead to negative physical health outcomes such as hypertension and cardiovascular disease (CVD). In addition, the model contains important predictions regarding the socialization of personality traits and behavior patterns which occur at work.

Chronic adaptation to low control-low demand situations (“passive” jobs) can result in reduced ability to solve problems or tackle challenges, and feelings of depression, or “learned helplessness”. Conversely, when high job demands are matched with greater authority and skill use (controllable stressors, or “active” jobs), more active learning and greater internal locus of control (or belief that one is very much in control of the situation) develop. This can enable individuals to develop a broader range of coping strategies.



As depicted in the diagram, the “job strain” model has two components - increasing risk of heart disease following arrow A, but increasing activity, participation, self esteem, motivation to learn, and sense of accomplishment following arrow B. Thus, this model provides a justification for greater work autonomy as well as increased workplace democracy.

Peter Schnall (“A Brief Introduction to Job Strain”) asserts that “considerable evidence exists linking ‘job strain’ to hypertension and coronary heart disease. Over the last decade more than 40 studies on “job strain” and heart disease and 20 studies on “job strain” and heart disease risk factors have been published throughout the world providing strong evidence that “job strain” is a risk factor for heart disease. Of the eight studies where an ambulatory (portable) blood pressure monitor was worn during a work day, five showed strong positive associations between “job strain” and blood pressure, while three others provided mixed results. Since ambulatory blood pressure is both more reliable (since there is no observer bias and the number of readings is greatly increased) and more valid (since blood pressure is measured during a person’s normal daily activities including work) than casual measures of blood pressure, we feel confident in placing more emphasis on the ambulatory blood pressure results.”

4 Stressors and Stress Factors

In recent times, there has been increasing interest in distinguishing the effects of physical and psychosocial workplace stressors on the aetiology of work-related health disorders. Generally, people are prone to either internal or external stressors, and both types have physical or psychological origins. Physical external stressors include unpleasant environmental conditions such as pain or hot and cold temperatures. Physical internal stressors include things like infections or inflammation.

External psychological stressors are such things as poor working conditions or conflicting relationships. External psychological stressors include:

- **Physical Environment**
 - Noise
 - Poor Lighting
 - Heat
 - Confined Spaces

- **Social Interaction**
 - Rudeness
 - Bossiness
 - Aggressiveness
 - Bullying

- **Organisational**
 - Rules
 - Regulations
 - Deadlines

- **Major Life Events**
 - Birth
 - Death
 - Transfer
 - Promotion

- Marital problems
- **Daily Hassles**
 - Commuting
 - Mechanical breakdowns

Internal psychological stress can often be the most harmful because there is frequently no resolution to the stressful situation. These stressors are anxieties about events that may or may not happen, and the stress response continues to be active as long as one is worrying about it. The internal psychological stressors include:

- **Lifestyle choices**
 - Caffeine
 - Lack of sleep
 - Overloaded schedule
- **Negative self – talk**
 - Pessimistic thinking
 - Self criticism
 - Over analysing
- **Mind traps**
 - Unrealistic expectations
 - Taking things personally
 - All or nothing thinking
 - Exaggeration
 - Rigid thinking
- **Personality traits**
 - Perfectionists
 - Workaholics

Stress can affect the overall performance of a manager and for some could result in serious ill health - both mental and physical. Such ailments as hypertension, coronary thrombosis,

migraine and peptic ulcers are only a few of the illnesses recognized as having a stress-related background. In the workplace it has been seen, through on-going research, to have a very detrimental effect. Common causes of stress within the workplace include:

- **The Drive for Success:** Modern society is driven by 'work'. Personal adequacy equates with professional success and people crave for status and abhor failure. The demand for monetary success / professional status is simply overwhelming.
- **Working Conditions:** Physical and mental health is adversely affected by unpleasant working conditions, such as high noise levels, lighting, temperature and unsocial or excessive hours.
- **Overwork:** Stress may occur through inability to cope with the technical or intellectual demands of a particular task. Circumstances such as long hours, unrealistic deadlines and frequent interruptions will compound this.
- **Underwork:** This may arise from boredom because there is not enough to do, or because a job is dull and repetitive.
- **Uncertainty:** About the work - role objectives, responsibilities, and expectations, and a lack of communication and feedback can result in confusion, helplessness, and stress.
- **Conflict:** Stress can arise from work which the individual does not want to do or that conflicts with their personal, social and family values.
- **Responsibility:** The greater the level of responsibility the greater the potential level of stress
- **Relationships at work:** Good relationships with colleagues are crucial. Open discussion is essential to encourage positive relationships.
- **Changes at work:** Changes that alter psychological, physiological and behavioural routines such as promotion, retirement and redundancy are particularly stressful.

Through timely identification and conscious intervention, managers must try to deal with the stressors. They should speak to themselves and seek answers to questions

such as:

- What are the sources and levels of stress?
- How is stress affecting their health?
- How is stress affecting performance in the workplace?
- How knowledgeable are they about managing stress?
- What additional support they need for mitigating the stress?

5 Responses to Stress

Medical professionals call the body's reaction to stress as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). Originally described by Hans De Solye in the 1920s, the general adaptation syndrome describes a three stage reaction to stress. Stressors in humans include physical stressors - emotional or mental stressors.

Stage 1: Alarm reaction

The first stage of the general adaptation stage, the alarm reaction, is the immediate reaction to a stressor. This is the "Fight or Flight" response that prepares the body for immediate action. The physical and emotional "fight or flight" response to stress ensues automatically, as a natural defense mechanism, whether or not the threat is real. Its major characteristics are:

- Adrenaline starts pumping
- Breathing quickens
- Heart starts pounding (beats quicker, too)
- Blood pressure increases
- Blood vessels constrict
- Blood rushes from the internal organs to the muscles These reactions are a part of human inheritance, giving one the added strength one needs in emergencies. If a real threat were to materialize, one would be prepared to meet it head on. If, on the other hand, the threat is imagined, or is one that does not require a physical reaction, the pent-up energy is released.

Stage 2: Adaptation Reaction

If the stress persists, the body prepares for long-term protection, secreting hormones to increase blood sugar levels. For example, if the stressor is starvation (possibly due to anorexia), the person might experience a reduced desire for physical activity to

conserve energy, and the absorption of nutrients from food might be maximized.

Behavior indicators include lack of enthusiasm for family, school, work or life in general, withdrawal, change in eating habits, insomnia, hypersomnia, anger, fatigue. Cognitive indicators include poor problem-solving, confusion, nightmares, hyper-vigilance.

This phase is common and not necessarily harmful, but must include periods of relaxation and rest to counterbalance the stress response. Fatigue, concentration lapses, irritability and lethargy result as the stress turns negative.

Stage 3: Exhaustion Reaction

In chronic stress situations, sufferers enter the exhaustion phase: emotional, physical and mental resources suffer heavily, the body experiences 'adrenal exhaustion' leading to decreased stress tolerance, progressive mental and physical exhaustion, illness and collapse. It means the immune system and the body's ability to resist disease, may be almost totally eliminated. People who experience long-term stress may succumb to 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.

Although stress can cause ill-health or disease, Huethner G ("The central adaptation syndrome: Psychosocial stress as a trigger for adaptive modifications of brain structure and brain function") suggests that long-term stress may cause humans to better adapt to their environment. He argues that severe, long-term stress can cause persons to reject long-held assumptions or behaviors, and that stress can actually help the brain make physical changes that reflect these mental or emotional changes. In short, stress might allow persons to change the way they think and act for the better.

6 Coping with Stress – A 5-Step Framework

Each stress-provoking situation or event is different, as is each individual. Therefore, each situation or event that precipitates stress requires a unique approach. Owen Moran, a health educator at Concordia University (Canada), recommends the following 5-step framework can be used to help individuals design their own stress management plan.

Step 1: Identify if the person is stressed.

This can be difficult, as some signs and symptoms of stress are also those of medical problems. One can identify his/her own response to stress, which tends to be stable over time. When he/she experiences this group of signs and symptoms, he/she should consider that stress might be an issue. One can also identify if there have been recent changes that may create a demand or threat. Others close to the individual may help to identify if he/she is stressed.

Step 2: Identify the stressor(s).

Stress is usually related to change. So looking at recent changes in one's life is a good place to start. One can narrow down the stress-related changes by looking back at when the symptoms started. Again, close friends and family members might be able to shed some light on what is causing the stress.

Step 3: Determine the reason for this stressor.

For an event or situation to be stress provoking, it must be perceived as demanding or threatening. A person must assess that he/she does not have the resources needed to effectively address a situation or event. This step requires honesty and self-reflection. Some people may not be able to immediately identify why an event or situation leads to stress. This is particularly true if the reason for the stressor is a personal characteristic or way of thinking.

Examining beliefs, values, and attitudes as well as stress-promoting ways of thinking may help narrow down the reason for the stressor. Looking for patterns in previous stressful situations may also help. Again, people close to the individual may help provide answers.

Step 4: Select and apply an appropriate stress management strategy or skill.

There are potentially thousands of stress management strategies. Here is a 3-level approach:

Level 1: If something can be done about the stressor... it should be done! This is perhaps the best and most effective way to reduce stress. The aim is to address the cause of stress and preferably eliminate it or at least reduce it to make it manageable. This can be done in several ways:

- Avoid or eliminate the event or situation that is stressful (e.g., avoiding visitors if one is overwhelmed with work).
- Reduce the intensity of the stressor (e.g., providing information to clarify a situation or event).
- Reduce exposure to the stressor (e.g., run errands away from peak hours).

Level 2: Short-term stress management strategies and skills: If the stressor can not be eliminated or reduced to manageable levels within a short period of time, the stress management approach will likely be long-term. While one is taking measures to reduce stress in the long term (see Level 3), one will need to deal with the symptoms of stress as they surface. The goal here is to reverse the stimulating effects of the “fight or flight” response through activities that relax. Some common relaxation techniques that a person can use are breathing exercises, meditation, visualization, massage, exercise, humor, hot bath or a hobby.

Level 3: Long-term stress management strategies: The third level of stress management strategies are called long-term strategies, because they are things that cannot be changed overnight. Many of these strategies aim to modify ways of thinking (perceptions) that contribute to stress:

- Modify stress producing beliefs, attitudes, and values (cognitive restructuring).
- Dispute irrational beliefs (a belief is a principle accepted as true, especially without proof).

- Modify stress-provoking attitudes, for example a way a person views something or tends to behave towards it, often in an evaluative way.
- Examine values — an assessment or estimation of the worth, merit, or desirability of something.
- Become a positive thinker. Keeping a positive attitude and looking for the best in people and in situations is an excellent stress management strategy.
- Re-label emotions, which can shift the perception of a situation or an event.
- Talk things out with someone.
- Cultivate healthy relationships.
- Build skills, such as time management, problem-solving, conflict resolution/negotiation, and communication.

Step 5: Evaluate.

To do this, one has go back to step one and see if he/she is stressed. Are they still experiencing the symptoms of stress? If the answer is “no”, they can pat themselves on the back. But they should be prepared, because this certainly won’t be the last time that they will experience stress. If the answer to the “Am I still stressed?” question is “yes,” they should go through the stress management steps again. Perhaps they didn’t accurately identify the stressor or the reason it was a stressor. Perhaps they selected an ineffective stress management strategy.

Know Yourself**What is BMR?**

BMR stands for **Basal Metabolic Rate**, the minimum calorific requirement needed to sustain life in your body when you are resting. It is also called Resting Metabolic Rate (RMR).

Even if you are in bed asleep all day, your body still needs energy to pump blood around the body, maintain body temperature, etc.

Does BMR formula include my activity level?

No, it does not. Basal Metabolic Rate is estimated using your weight, height and age (see BMR formulas below). BMR is gender specific. BMR Calculator prompts you to enter your activity level in order to calculate the number of calories you need daily to maintain your current weight.

What is BMR formula?**English BMR Formula:**

Women: $BMR = 655 + (4.35 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (4.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years})$

Men: $BMR = 66 + (6.23 \times \text{weight in pounds}) + (12.7 \times \text{height in inches}) - (6.8 \times \text{age in years})$

Metric BMR Formula:

Women: $BMR = 655 + (9.6 \times \text{weight in kilos}) + (1.8 \times \text{height in cm}) - (4.7 \times \text{age in years})$

Men: $BMR = 66 + (13.7 \times \text{weight in kilos}) + (5 \times \text{height in cm}) - (6.8 \times \text{age in years})$

Calculating your BMR:

	<u>Age (years)</u>	<u>Equation</u>
Men:	18-30	$6.95 \times \text{body weight (lbs)} + 679$
	30-60	$5.27 \times \text{body weight (lbs)} + 879$
Women:	18-30	$6.68 \times \text{body weight (lbs)} + 496$
	30-60	$3.95 \times \text{body weight (lbs)} + 829$

Your BMR is _____ kcal/day.

Estimate your Activity Factor:

	<u>Level of activity</u>	<u>Activity Factor</u>
Very light	Seated and standing activities, driving, playing cards, computer work	1.2
Light	Walking, sailing, bowling, light stretching, golf, woodworking, playing pool	1.4
Moderate	Jogging, aerobic dance, light swimming, biking, calisthenics, carrying a load	1.6
Strenuous	Stairmaster, ski machine, racquet sports, running, soccer, basketball, obstacle course, digging, carrying a load uphill, rowing	1.9
Exceptional	running or swimming races, cycling uphill, hard rowing, carrying heavy loads	2.3

Your Activity Factor is _____

Calculate you Estimated Energy Requirement (EER):

Energy needs = _____ X _____
 BMR Activity Factor

Your EER = _____ kcal/day.

Measure Yourself

Calculate your BMI:

Your BMI = _____ X 705 = (_____)² = _____.

body weight(lbs) height (in) ratio

<u>Ratio</u>	<u>Classification</u>
<20	Underweight
20-25	Normal
25-30	Overweight
>30	Obese

Website options: <http://www.caloriecontrol.org/bmi.html>

Calculate your Waist-to-Hip Ratio:

Your WHR = _____ + _____ = _____.

waist circumference (in) hip circumference (in) ratio

Standards for Waist-to-Hip Ratios

Men:	<0.95
Women:	<0.80

7 Coping with Stress – Physical Techniques

In the past, daily work was largely physical. Now that physical exertion is no longer a requirement for earning a living, people do not get rid of stress so easily. It accumulates very quickly. People need to develop a regular exercise program to reduce the effects of stress before it becomes distress. Regular physical activity improves health in the following ways:

- Reduces the risk of dying prematurely
- Reduces the risk of dying from heart disease
- Reduces the risk of developing diabetes
- Reduces the risk of developing high blood pressure
- Helps reduce blood pressure in people who already have high blood pressure.
- Reduces the risk of developing colon cancer
- Reduces feelings of depression and anxiety
- Helps control weight.
- Helps build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- Helps older adults become stronger and better able to move about without falling.
- Promotes psychological well-being

Some of the physical stress-busters are explained below:

1. Stretching Exercise: Regular physical exertion of any intensity helps discharge muscle tension and builds strength, resilience and energy. Here is a simple stretching exercise managers can practice sitting right at the desk. Try to do 3-4 exercises at least once every hour of continuous work, breaking for 5-10 minutes. Try to do exercise 1 more frequently. Adopt a good posture with shoulders and arms relaxed. Perform each stretch smoothly and SLOWLY, avoid jerky and bouncy movements. (Source: www.bbk.ac.uk – Stretching Exercises at Your Desk)

1. Neck Stretch – Sit tall. Keep face forward; try to touch your left shoulder with your left ear. Hold for 6 seconds. Return head upright. Repeat on the right. Do not tense or hunch your shoulders. Repeat 6 times on both sides.

2. Diagonal Neck Stretch – Turn your head slightly towards the right and then look down as if you are looking in your pocket. Stay like this for 15 seconds and then relax. Now do the same on your left side. Do this exercise for three times on each side.
3. Cable Stretch – While sitting with chin in, shoulders relaxed, hands relaxed in lap, and feet flat on the floor, imagine a cable pulling the head upward. Hold for 3 seconds and relax. Repeat 3 times.
4. Shoulder Shrug – Slowly bring shoulders up to the ears and hold for approximately 3 seconds. Rotate shoulders back and down. Repeat 10 times.
5. Executive Stretch – While sitting, lock hands behind head, bring elbows back as far as possible. Inhale deeply while leaning back and stretching. Hold for 20 seconds. Exhale and relax. Repeat 1 time.
6. Foot Rotation – while sitting, slowly rotate each from the ankle. Rotate each foot 3 times in one direction, then 3 times in the opposite direction. Relax. Repeat 1 time.
7. Hand Shake – While sitting, drop arms to the side; shake hands downward gently. Repeat frequently.
8. Wrist Stretch – Hold arm straight in front of you. Pull the hand backwards with the other hand, then pull downward. Hold for 20 seconds. Relax. Repeat 3 times each.

Other Exercises

1. Deep Breathing – While standing or in an otherwise relaxed position, place one hand on the abdomen and the other on the chest, inhale slowly through the nose. Hold for four seconds. Exhale slowly through the mouth. Repeat.
2. Eye Comfort Exercises – Blinking and yawning (produces tears to help moisten and lubricate the eyes). Expose eyes to natural light.
3. Palming – While seated, brace elbows on the desk and close to the desk edge. Let weight fall forward, cup hands over eyes, close eyes. Inhale slowly through nose and hold for 4 seconds. Continue deep breathing for 15-30 seconds.

4. Eye Movements – Close eyes. Slowly and gently move eyes up to the ceiling, then slowly down to the floor. Repeat 3 times. Close eyes. Slowly and gently move eyes to the left, then slowly to the right. Repeat 3 times.
5. Focus Change – Hold one finger a few inches away from the eye and focus on the finger. Slowly move the finger away. Focus far into the distance and then back to the finger. Slowly bring the finger to within few inches away from the nose. Focus on something more than 2,5km away. Repeat 3 times.
6. Hand Massage – Massage the inside and outside of the hand using the thumb and fingers. Repeat frequently (including before beginning work)
7. Finger Massage (Perform very gently) – Massage fingers of each hand individually, slowly and gently. Move towards nail gently massaging space between fingers. Perform daily.

2. Breathing Stretching Exercise: Conventional yogic breathing exercises help managers overcome anxiety and stress. Besides, it also –

- steadies the mind in concentration
- improves digestion
- increases appetite
- reduces the risk of coronary diseases.

The way to perform a breathing exercise is as follows: Sit cross-legged. Close the right nostril with the right thumb and inhale very, very slowly through the left nostril. Then with the little and ring fingers of the right hands close the left nostril. Retain breath as long as you can. Then exhale very slowly after removing the thumb. This stage constitutes one process. Again inhale through the right nostril, retain the breath and exhale through the left nostril. This ends the process. One can do 20 in the morning and 20 in the evening.

The Egyptian Breath Exercise

This relaxation technique will help you deal with high levels of stress. This exercise can be done anywhere - even at your desk.

- Sit on a chair (armless is preferable) with your right hand hanging by your side and your left hand resting on your left thigh.
- Sit upright, with a straight spine. Imagine that you have a piece of string attached to the crown of your head that is pulling you gently up, and extending your spine.
- Close your eyes and slowly breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth. Breathe using your diaphragm (letting your stomach out on the in breath). Do this for a minute or so until you are happy that your breathing is deep and regular.
- Next, concentrate on your heart. The blood in the heart is pumped first toward the upper right of the body. Follow, in your mind, the image of the blood flowing from the heart, towards the shoulder, down the right arm to the fingertips. When it gets to the fingertips it turns, goes back up the arm and continues its journey around the body.
- Focus on the fingertips. You should feel a gentle tingling sensation. This is not magic; it is just that your concentration is now on your fingers - not your problems. The more relaxed the muscles are, then the quicker the tingling sensation and the stronger it is. When you have repeated this exercise several times you can put yourself in a focused and relaxed state very quickly.
- Once you have reached a satisfactory level of relaxation and clarity of thought, count down slowly from ten to zero. At zero take a final full breath in and out, open your eyes, and do what you need to do.

You can stay in this state for as long as you want or need to. As a preparation for action, clearing the mind and stepping away from the speed and confusion of our daily lives, this exercise is ideal.

3. Meditation: Meditation is something which gets easier, more enjoyable and more intense with practice. Meditating (one of several activities that produce the relaxation response) for 20-30 minutes a day, over time, can lead to a generalized feeling of relaxation in many areas of one's life. Some of the benefits of deep relaxation are:

1. reduction of generalized anxiety
2. preventing stress from building up
3. increased energy and productivity
4. improved concentration and memory
5. reduction of insomnia and fatigue
6. prevention and/or reduction of psychosomatic disorders such as hypertension, migraines, headaches, asthma, ulcers
7. increased self-confidence and reduced self-blame
8. increased availability of feelings

Meditation is meant to bring about awareness, nothing else. It's a time to connect to your inner "source" and let go of the issues, responsibilities and situations that bind your life. The benefits of mediation are uniquely individual, but both physiological and psychological balancing is common. To get you started, here is an explanation of how to practice classic and simple meditation:

1. Find some time out of your daily schedule.
2. Find a quiet place and sit down.
3. Be comfortable. Relax.
4. Keep the face serene. Chin up.
5. Close your eyes slowly to experience a void darkness. (Remember to keep your eyelids closed throughout the following steps)
6. Look into your eyelids as if seeing with your eyelids open.
7. Keep your mind empty of people, place, things, color or any form.
8. Try and concentrate on the center of your forehead.
9. If thoughts arise, bypass them and keep looking with your eyelids closed, going deeper and deeper, leaving form, name, color, and activities far behind you.

10. Experience the motion of going, as if driving in a car, and you'll be going deeper and deeper - beyond the body and senses.
11. As you go deeper and deeper with your eyes closed in this dark place, you may see the swirling of smoke-like colours flickering in the darkness and silvery flashes of light.
12. Look straight in front with your eyelids closed and keep going further and further.
13. To keep you alert in meditation, take slow deep breaths. Colors will swirl and change pattern, rising with each breath.
14. Keep breathing steady. Let thoughts come and go. You're on a journey going beyond the body and form.
15. After you feel totally calm and relaxed, gradually open your eyes and spring back to life with renewed energy.

4. Visual Imagery: Visual imagery is the technique by which one creates a scenario in the mind and uses it as a means for relaxation or self-improvement. The use of this technique requires quietitude and concentration. The process of visualization is as follows:

Make yourself comfortable. Relax in your chair and close your eyes.

Count slowly from 1 to 10.

- You feel yourself relaxing.
- Your tension starts melting away like soft ice cream.
- You become very quiet, very relaxed.
- Every muscle in your body starts to go slack.
- You are now in a state of deep relaxation.
- Your tension is completely gone.
- You are totally relaxed.
- You sense this room is starting to fade away...

Now picture yourself walking slowly and quietly down a path by a mountain meadow to a quiet, still lake.

- It is early morning, the sun is shining and the air is cool and sweet.
- You can smell the sweet pines and the grass. Occasionally, a fish leaps in the water. Otherwise, the lake is very still and deep, deep blue.
- You slowly sit down on the soft grass at the edge of the lake and drink in the sight. You breathe in slowly and deeply.
- A gentle breeze moves the tall grass around you and you look up at the blue sky and see white, fluffy clouds. Suddenly, without effort, you begin to float up to these clouds.
- You can walk around in them. You lean over and scoop the clouds up with your hands. You kick at them, you go sliding on your stomach—it's all so effortless—and such fun!
- Up here, you spread your arms and slowly stretch. It is warm, the air is clean and fresh, and the sky is blue without end.
- You feel your whole body fill with fresh, clean air, and you are very peaceful.
- After a short while you decide to float gently back to the meadow. You lie back on the soft, cool grass and slowly begin to wake up. Here you are, seated comfortably. You feel wonderfully relaxed and energized. [Pause for a few seconds.]
- Now slowly open your eyes. Take your time. Enjoy the experience.

5. Diet: Healthy food habits, such as eating right, avoiding excess sugar, surfeit of fat, and avoiding alcohol and tobacco will help one handle stressful situations more effectively. A well balanced diet is crucial in preserving health and helping to reduce stress. Certain foods and drinks act as powerful stimulants to the body and hence are a direct cause of stress. This stimulation, although quite pleasurable in the short term, may be quite harmful in the long run. One will have more energy and self-confidence, and be less likely to experience the physical side-effects of stress when one eats a balanced diet, gets enough sleep, drinks enough water and exercises regularly. Indiadiets.com prescribes the following eight point plan for health diet:

1. Eat plenty of fiber, pulses, whole grains, foods made with wholegrain flour (such as wholegrain bread), and fruit and vegetables give you the benefit of fiber as well as its associated essential fatty acids, minerals, and vitamins. Grains are better only coarsely ground.
2. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, especially green leafy ones. These give you the vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids and fiber you need. Peel the fruit as little as possible (peel and pith are nutrient rich). Cook vegetables lightly by steaming or stir-frying and eat some raw everyday to benefit from their hormones and enzymes.
3. Cut down your fat intake (especially saturated fat). Choose fish, offal (organ meat), game, poultry, whole grains, pulses, nuts and seeds, or sprouted seeds, rather than red meat and cheese.
4. Cut down your sugar intake. Use sugar as flavoring rather than as a food. Avoid cakes, sweets, chocolates, biscuits, puddings, ice-creams, jam, fruits canned in syrup, soft drinks, sugar in tea and coffee, and milk shakes.
5. Cut down your salt intake. Instead of adding salt to your food use herbs, spices, fresh ginger, horseradish, lemon juice, tomato puree, vinegar, soy sauce, vegetable stock, yeast extract, chutney, and other flavorings.
6. Cut down your consumption of processed food to avoid the “ empty calories” of saturated fats, added sugar, refined cereal grains, and additives.
7. Drink only moderate amounts of alcohol.
8. If you are overweight, exercise more and consume the amount of food and drink that will enable you to reach and keep to your optimal body weight

6. Rest: Taking some quiet time can also help reduce stress. One can find a place at home and at work where one can get away from everyone and take a few minutes for oneself. One can practice any relaxation technique or simply spend the time thinking through a problematic situation. One can use the time to do whatever will help one to relax.

7. Laughter: Besides relieving muscular tension, improving breathing and pumping endorphins into the bloodstream which are body's natural painkillers, a good hearty laugh can help:

- reduce stress,
- lower blood pressure,
- elevate mood,
- boost immune system ,
- improve brain functioning,
- protect the heart,
- connect well to others,
- foster instant relaxation, and
- make you feel good.

Enda Junkins (www.laughtertherapy.com) offers the following tips for filling more laughter in ones life:

1. Practice laughing 5 min/day. Fake it till you make it.
2. Look for humor around you - on signs, in people's behavior, on TV, in the newspaper, the things others say, the crazy things that happen to you.Keep a journal.
3. Share your embarrassing moments with other people.
4. Learn to play with things that are serious like work, social issues, money, etc. For example, use word play, silly songs, or develop a comical view of the issue to help you laugh and cope.
5. Laugh with other people when they laugh.
6. Wear a smile. It puts you closer to laughing.
7. Seek out entertainment which makes you laugh.
8. Amuse yourself with your own sense of humor.
9. Buy and listen daily to a tape of laughter, a laugh box, or a laughing toy.

10. Buy mindless toys that make you laugh.
11. Wear hats that make you laugh.
12. Cultivate your innate playfulness.
13. Be creative with fun.
14. Make sure you have fun.
16. Give yourself permission to laugh at anything you need to.
17. Do at least one silly, non-conforming thing a day.

Pleasurable Everyday Experiences That Can Help You Relax

- A warm bath
- Listen to favorite music
- A hike in the woods
- Watch a funny movie
- Phone a friend
- Eat out
- Take a nap
- Play with your children
- Enjoy a sunset
- Write in your diary
- Walk/play with your pet
- Meditate
- Pray
- Trim the roses
- Read a good book
- Enjoy a hobby
- Sit in the sunshine
- Get a massage

8 Coping with Stress – Behavioral Techniques

Along with physical techniques, managers may also choose to use various behavioural techniques to cope more effectively with stress, which include -time management, positive thinking, reframing, ventilation and problem-solving.

1. Time Management: One of the principal sources of stress is over-commitment or poor time management. Trying to take care of everything at once can seem overwhelming, and, as a result, one may not accomplish anything. Identifying the potential causes of poor time management and addressing them in time helps a great deal in reducing stress. The following chart can be handy for managers.

Poor Time-Management: Causes & Solutions

Time Waster	Possible Causes	Solutions
Lack of planning	Failure to see the benefit of planning	Recognize that planning may take time but it saves time and effort in the long run.
Lack of planning	Action-oriented	Emphasize results, not activity.
Lack of planning	Success without it	Recognize that success is often in spite of, not because of, methods.
Lack of priorities	Lack of goals and objectives	Write down goals and objectives. Discuss priorities with co-workers and family members.
Over-commitment	Broad interests	Learn to say no.
Over-commitment	Confusion in priorities	Re-assesses your goals and priorities
Over-commitment	Failure to set priorities	Develop a personal philosophy regarding time. Relate priorities to a schedule of events
Management by crisis	Lack of planning	Apply the same solutions as for lack of planning.
Management by crisis	Unrealistic time estimates	Allow more time. Allow for interruptions.
Management by crisis	Problem oriented	Be opportunity oriented

Management by crisis	Reluctance of others to break bad news	Encourage fast transmission of information as essential for timely corrective action
Telephone	Lack of self-discipline	Screen and group calls. Be brief.
Telephone	Desire to be informed and involved	Stay uninvolved with all but essentials. Manage by exception.
Meetings	Fear of responsibility for decisions.	Make decisions without meetings.
Meetings	Indecision	Make decisions even when some facts are missing.
Meetings	Over-communication	Discourage unnecessary meetings. Convene only those needed.
Meetings	Poor leadership	Use agendas. Stick to the subject. Prepare concise minutes as soon as possible.
Meetings	Indecision	Lack of confidence in the facts. Improve fact finding and validating procedures.
Meetings	Insistence on all the facts; <i>paralysis by analysis</i>	Accept risks as inevitable. Decide without all facts.
Meetings	Fear of consequences of a mistake	Delegate the right to be wrong. Use mistakes as a learning process.
Meetings	Lack of a rational decision making process.	Get facts, set goals, investigate alternatives and negative consequences, make the decision, then implement it.
Lack of delegation	Fear of subordinates' inadequacy.	Train. Allow mistakes. Replace if necessary.
Lack of delegation	Fear of subordinates' competence	Delegate fully. Give credit. Insure corporate growth to
Lack of delegation	Work overload on subordinates	maintain challenge. Balance the workload. Reorder priorities.
Haste	Impatience with detail	Take time to get it right. Save the time of doing it over.

Haste	Responding to the urgent	Distinguish between the urgent and the important.
Haste	Lack of planning ahead	Take time to plan. It repays itself many times over.
Haste	Attempting too much in too little time.	Attempt less, delegate much more.
Paperwork & reading	Knowledge explosion	Read selectively. Learn speed reading.
Paperwork & reading	“Computeritis”	Manage computer data by exception.
Paperwork & reading	Failure to screen	Delegate reading to subordinates. Ask for summaries.
Routine & trivia	Lack of priorities	Set and concentrate on priority goals. Delegate non-essentials.
Routine & trivia	Over-surveillance of subordinates	Delegate; then give subordinates their right to do it their way. Look to results, not details or methods.
Routine & trivia	Refusal to delegate; feeling of greater security dealing with operating detail	Recognize that without delegation, it is impossible to grow. Forget perfectionism.
Visitors	Enjoyment in socializing	Do it elsewhere. Meet visitors outside work setting. Suggest lunch, if necessary or hold stand up conferences.
Visitors	Inability to say “no.”	Screen. Say no. Be unavailable. Modify the open door policy.

2. Positive Thinking: Shakespeare said: “The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.” All the feelings, beliefs and knowledge are based on one’s internal thoughts - both conscious and subconscious. One’s control over his/her internal thoughts determines whether s/he is positive or negative, enthusiastic or dull, active or passive. Medical researchers continue to explore the effects of positive thinking on health. The health benefits that positive thinking provides are:

- Decreased stress
- Greater resistance to catching the common cold
- A sense of well-being and improved health
- Reduced risk of coronary artery disease
- Breathing easier if you have chronic obstructive lung disease, such as emphysema
- Improved coping ability for women with high-risk pregnancies
- Living longer
- Better coping skills

The Positive Thinking Assessment Worksheet - Assessing Yourself

Do I take credit for positive events, or chalk them up to chance? _____

Do I expect more good things to follow, or do I view positive happenings as a fluke? _____

What do I feel about negative events? Do I blame myself, or look at extenuating circumstances? _____

Do I look at one negative event as evidence of more to come (like an omen)? _____

Do I tend to encourage myself mentally, or do I berate myself inside? _____

Would I talk to a friend or a precious child the way I talk to myself? _____

Do I tend to 'catastrophize', or see and expect the worst? _____

Once you become aware of areas where your thinking patterns could use some 'sprucing up', now's the time to make changes. Below is a list of some typical negative thoughts you may have. Create a positive thought that you would like to replace it with. For example, "I just can't do my job well enough", could be changed to "I do my best, and my best is good enough", or even "I am fantastic at what I do!" Then repeat these positive thoughts in your head several times any time you catch yourself in negative thought patterns. Keep this worksheet handy, and make modifications as necessary.

Source Elizabeth Scott - Your Guide to Stress Management

Remez Sasson, (SuccessConsciousness.com) offers the following tips for cultivating the habit of positive thinking:

- Always use only positive words in your inner dialogues. Use words such as, I can, I am able, it is possible, it can be done, etc.
- Accompany your inner dialogues with feelings of happiness, strength and success.
- Do not heed negative thoughts. Calmly refuse to think these thoughts, and substitute them with constructive happy thoughts.
- In your conversations with other people use words that evoke scenes of strength, happiness and success in their minds.
- Before starting with any plan or action, visualize clearly in your mind its successful outcome. If you visualize with concentration and faith, you will be amazed at the results.
- Read at least one page of inspiring literature every day.
- Watch movies that make you happy.

- Listen to the news and read the papers, but do that sparingly and with detachment.
- Associate yourself with people who think positively.
- Always sit and walk with your back straight. This will strengthen your confidence and inner strength.
- Walk, swim or engage in some other physical activity. This helps to develop a more positive attitude.

3. Reframing: Re-framing is a technique to change the way one looks at things in order to feel better about them. There are many ways to interpret the same situation. So pick the one you like. Re-framing does not change the external reality, but helps you view things in a different light and less stressfully. The sense, significance or substance of any situation is found in the frame within which we view it. “When something happens, is it good, or is it bad?” The following story (“Quality Performance in Human Services Leadership”, ed. F.Gardner and Sylvia Nudler) explains how the concept of framing or reframing depends on the mental perspective of a person.

A Russian farmer in the 1800s was out ploughing his fields one spring day and, as he unhooked the plough from his horse, his horse leaped and galloped out of his fields and into the forest. The man walked back to the village that evening and told of the event. His friends and neighbours gathered around him and exclaimed about his misfortune, saying what an unlucky day this was for him. The man said only, “You never know.”

Not more than two weeks later, the man and his son were out slowly ploughing the spring fields by themselves, when the farmer’s horse trotted back into the field along with another horse, a wild horse. When the farmer and his son arrived in the village at the end of the day, riding one horse and leading the second horse, all of their friends and neighbours gathered around them and talked about how fortunate it was that their horse went into the wild, because now they had two horses on the farm. Once again, the thoughtful farmer said only, “You never know.”

Several days later, the farmer's son broke his leg when he was thrown from the wild horse while trying to break it in and train it for farm work. That night, the villagers cursed the unfortunate day that the wild horse came to the farm. The farmer said, "You never know."

Not long after, the entire village shook when the Cossacks came roaring across the plain, going from house to house, and conscripting every man of fighting age into service until they came to the farmer's home, where they left his son with his family because of his broken leg. That night, a mourning village came together to console themselves and each other and to tell the farmer how lucky he was that the wild horse had broken his son's leg. The farmer looked at all of his neighbours and said only, "You never know."

The villagers in the story were very quick to place meaning on every event, to interpret it, and place it in the scheme of things past and future. The "frame" of meaning through which they gazed let them know how they were to feel, what was to be done next, and what to watch out for in the future. The farmer in the story saw life and circumstances through a very different lens. He extracted no meaning from events and went from event to event, from moment to moment, giving what was called for and taking what was given.

Managers must learn to get rid of negative thoughts or feeling that can result in stresses. Reframing requires that they -

1. Focus more on the positive things in life
2. Eliminate negative thinking
3. Enjoy each task and enjoy each moment

Examples of Initial Frame and Reframe

Initial frame	Reframe
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am in a tunnel and I can't see a way out. • I am <i>too</i> anxious to study. • I know I will never be confident. • When he/she looks at me like that he/she hates me. • Beggars are criminals and might kill me. • He/she is out at night and that means that he/she does not love me any more. • He/she is so boring, stays in all the time and does not have a mind of his/her own. • He doesn't want to work. He is no good - a typical waster - a drain on us all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every tunnel has an entrance and exit. • You need to be anxious enough to concentrate. • Being confident starts with having insights about our limits. • People cover up their hurt by putting a scowl on their faces. • No one deliberately wants to fall on hard times. • Private time away can help you to appreciate each other much more. • Thoughtful people put others first and are a great port in a storm — a great source of security. • Lack of jobs has forced good and honest people into unemployment. This takes away their hope and breaks their spirit and belief in work.

Adapted from the Gower Stress Management Toolkit

4. Ventilation: Often stress occurs out of frustration and lack of communication. Bottling up feelings would only accentuate stress. 'A problem shared is a problem halved'. Managers should develop a support network through friends or colleagues to talk with when they are upset or worried. Many times the simple act of 'getting it off the chest' in an appropriate manner will reduce ones stress level. They should learn positive ways to express their feelings and desires. Writing a diary or notes may help release feelings but they should not re-read what has been written.

5. Problem-Solving: Positive orientation to problem-solving helps managers to decrease their distress, enhance their sense of control, and improve their quality of life. They should strive to eliminate negative orientation to problem solving which could have a telling effect on their health and lead to conflict relationships with colleagues at workplace. They should try to -

- improve their rational problem-solving skills;
 - avoid the tendency to be impulsive or careless; and
 - avoid the tendency to shy away from problems when they crop up.
-

EXERCISE - IDENTIFYING ENERGISERS

A conscious thinking can help managers identify the potential energizers which help them successfully cope with stress and the resulting deleterious effects of it. Spare a few moments and give a quiet thought to the following questions.

What can I do to make my life more stimulating?

What can I do to make my life more fun?

What can I do to make what I do less frustrating?

What can I do to make my life less stressful?

What can I do to get more creativity into my life?

What can I do to make my life more challenging?

What can I do to make my life less routine?

9 Coping with Stress – Diversion Techniques

Diversion activities include such activities as engaging in a hobby, taking a nap, watching T.V., listening to music, going out to a movie, etc. It is important to realize that these activities don't address the stress directly but divert your attention for a while.

1. Music: Medical research reveals that music can affect a person's physiological state, inducing excitement or relaxation. Listening to favourite music relieves stress by:

- Providing a predictable, and "secure" environment
- Inducing feelings of well being
- Decreasing physical responses, such as heart rate and respiration
- Inducing and maintaining relaxation, once it occurs
- Bringing order to chaotic situations
- Providing a break from frenetic activity.

2. Hobbies: Hobbies constitute another diversion technique for an individual or overcome pent-up frustrations, stress, boredom or monotony. One can engage oneself in varied hobbies depending on one's interests. Reading, writing and collecting objects such as coins, stamps etc. help a person relax and get de-stressed. According to Harris Interactive the list of the most popular hobbies and leisure activities in descending order are as follows (**Source: Harris Interactive Inc: The Harris Poll**):

- TV watching
- Spending time with family/kids
- Fishing
- Gardening
- Swimming
- Computer activities
- Going to movies
- Walking
- Golf

Soft Skills for Public Managers

- Exercise (aerobics, weights)
- Playing team sports
- Socializing with friends/neighbors
- Renting movies
- Traveling
- Listening to music
- Shopping
- Crafts (unspecified)
- Camping
- Church/church activities
- Boating
- Hunting
- Relaxing
- Sewing/crocheting
- Bicycling
- Watching sporting events
- Playing music
- Sleeping
- Beach/Sun tanning
- Bowling
- Cooking
- Entertaining
- Working on cars
- Animals/pets/dogs
- Eating out
- Painting
- Running
- Woodworking
- Hiking

3. Vacation: Taking a ‘stress vacation’ (a vacation properly plan to reduce work-related stress) is not an indulgence but rather the route to sustained productivity while maintaining your energy and health. However, taking a vacation trip could be itself a source of stress if not properly conceived and organized. Folkman (Strategies To Make Your Vacation a Stress-Buster, Not Stress-Enhancer) suggests the following tips for reducing vacation stress:

- Stay in fewer places longer.
- Don’t pack the schedule. Leave time open for relaxing.
- Make the vacation affordable and stay within your budget. Nothing is more stressful than spending more than you can afford.
- When vacationing with family, find ways to satisfy a little bit of everyone’s needs. Help children realize that they have to make some tradeoffs too.
- Take time to genuinely appreciate where you are, what you do and those who are with you and also tell them what you appreciate.
- Have fun along the way. Make your time in a car or on a plane special. Listen to a book on tape. When everyone is interested in the story, they can’t wait to get back in the car.
- Plan group as well as “alone” activities, like, an early morning walk on the beach can be the best part of a vacation.
- Balance flexibility (“We’re having fun; let’s do this longer.”) with timeliness (“We have to be up and packed by 6 a.m. to catch the plane”).
- Decide to have fun. After all, you’re on a vacation!

4. Sleep: “If you can’t cope with it, sleep on it,” advises Sadeh. Sometimes sleep can help one regulate ones nervousness and offers an escape from stress, particularly when there is nothing one can do about it. But, why do some people lose sleep during periods of stress, while others slip into sleep quietly? Research suggests that the difference may be explained by the ways people cope. At Tel Aviv University, Dr. Avi Sadeh conducted a study of students. He found that those “who tended to focus on their emotions and anxiety during the high-stress period were more likely to shorten their sleep, while those who tended

to ignore emotions and focus on tasks extended their sleep and shut themselves off from stress.”

Want a better night’s sleep? Try the following tips by National Sleep Foundation.:

- Consume less or no caffeine and avoid alcohol.
- Drink less fluids before going to sleep.
- Avoid heavy meals close to bedtime.
- Avoid nicotine.
- Exercise regularly, but do so in the daytime, preferably after noon.
- Try a relaxing routine, like soaking in hot water (a hot tub or bath) before bedtime.
- Establish a regular bedtime and waketime schedule.
- Keep a sleep diary before and after you try these tips. If the quality of your sleep does not improve, share this diary with your doctor.

10 Coping with Stress - Workplace Techniques

Stress-busters specific to workplace include – Getting Organized, Delegating, Being Assertive and Balancing Work and Personal Time.

1. Getting Organized: Poor organisation is one of the most common causes of stress. Structured approaches offer security against ‘out of the blue’ problems. Prioritising objectives, duties and activities makes them manageable and achievable. Managers should not overload their mind. Organisation will help avoid personal and professional chaos. The following tips by Janet Taylor (“Totally Organized”) are worth considering:

- Clean out each desk drawer, to free up even more valuable storage space.
- Keep essential items on your desktop (computer, phone, fax, card file).
- Have a master to-do list for each day at your desk.
- Pre-Sort the mail. To-File, To-Read, To-Contact (write or call).
- Create a separate drawer for personal paperwork, items, etc.
- Create a file for magazine articles or scan them into your computer.
- Filing system should be simple, easy and manageable.
- Colour-coding your files make it faster to find information.
- Return calls in batches. Leave specific messages and the time you called if the person you’re trying to reach isn’t available.
- Empty workspace of everything but the project you are working on to cut down on distractions.
- Keep an assortment of all-occasion cards and stamps in your desk.
- At the end of each project or event, organize paperwork and file.

2. Delegating: Delegation is the downward flow of formal authority - from superior to subordinate. Why are some managers not in favour of delegating responsibility? Because:

- They feel that employees can never do anything as well as they can.
- They fear that something will go wrong if someone else takes over a job.
- They lack time for long-range planning because they are bogged down in day-to-day operations.

- They sense they will be in the dark about emerging trends in the society.

The hazards of doing everything by oneself can include burnout and missed deadlines. Managers should, however, realize that effective delegation of responsibility and authority not only reduce stress on the manager's part but also improve the quality and acceptance of decisions, increase employee motivation, create sense of belonging and improve interpersonal relations with employees. Besides, delegating also teaches a manager to communicate persuasively, supervise and expand his /her sphere of influence.

Here are a few of the keys to effective delegation

1. Delegate it if someone else can do it, wants to do it, needs to do it or likes to do it.
2. When you delegate responsibility also delegate the authority to use the resources to get it done.
3. Delegate results, not necessarily the methods.
4. When you delegate something don't take it back.
5. Ensure the person understands what and why you have delegated to them.
6. Set benchmarks or checkpoints and then leave them alone.
7. Reinforce positive results and give feedback on negative results.
8. Communicate clear instructions, expectations and guidelines.
9. Recognize and accept that it won't be done the way you would do it.
10. Use delegation as an employee development tool.
11. Resist the tendency to over inspect.
12. Put it in writing if necessary.
13. Ask for regular written or verbal reports.
14. Remember what you delegated and to whom.
15. See failure not as a negative but necessary, if people are to be willing to stretch, learn and grow.

3. Being Assertive: Being assertive involves standing up for ones personal rights and expressing ones thoughts, feelings and beliefs directly, honestly and spontaneously in ways that do not infringe the rights of others. Assertive behaviour on the part of managers means

- Starting, changing, or ending conversations
- Sharing feelings, opinions, and experiences with others
- Making requests and asking for favors
- Refusing others' requests if they are too demanding
- Questioning rules or traditions that don't make sense or don't seem fair
- Addressing problems or things that bother you
- Being firm so that your rights are respected
- Expressing positive emotions
- Expressing negative emotions

If managers want to be assertive but are concerned that others may find them too aggressive, here are some recommendations for turning aggressive behavior into assertive behavior.

- Give others a chance to speak
- Establish eye-contact with the other person
- Respect other's opinions
- Use appropriate body language
- Talk in a firm, steady voice
- Use assertive and not aggressive language
- Be clear, concise and to the point

4. Balancing work and personal time: Balancing between work and personal time is indeed a tight-rope walk. Any skew will only result in problems, like time pressures, family/work conflicts, guilt, etc. Lynne Knobloch-Fedders and Ben Gorvine, ("Achieving a Balance between Work and Personal Life") suggest the following strategies that can help managers maintain a good balance between work and personal life:

Learn how to set limits - and stick to them! Setting limits (for how you will respond to demands from both your work and your personal life) will prevent you from over-committing yourself. But limits are only effective if you stick to them, so make sure you follow through on the decisions you have made about what to cut back on. As you are setting limits for yourself, it may be helpful to imagine situations in which you would be tempted to disregard your limits - and decide how you will handle these situations. That way, you won't be caught unaware into situations in which you might over-commit yourself.

Take advantage of your workplace's family-friendly policies and supports. If your workplace offers discretion over the methods, timing, or location of your work, use this flexibility to improve your situation.

Prioritize your multiple roles. When you become clearer about your priorities and values, it becomes easier to make decisions and set limits between the demands of work and personal life.

Reduce the psychological conflicts you experience between work and personal life. Surprisingly, time is not necessarily the main conflict we experience between work and personal life. Instead, the psychological conflicts (guilt, difficulty "turning off" work behaviors at home, pressure and anxiety) create the most problems. Clarifying your values, setting priorities, and actively reducing the psychological importance of one or more of your roles may be required to reduce the conflicts, and the negative emotions that arise from them.

Protect each role from interference by the others. When you are at home, turn off your cell phone, laptop, beeper, or email, so that you can be fully "present" during this time. Similarly, when you are at work, try to limit personal life intrusions - this will help you be more efficient and effective during your workday.

Develop stress-management skills. The ability to take care of yourself by doing things you enjoy - like reading, exercising, or indulging in a favorite hobby - is essential to maintaining a proper work / personal life balance. Caring for yourself in these ways will allow you to reduce your stress and reward yourself for a job well done!

• Balance

- work with recreation
- weariness with rest
- disappointments with hope
- sadness with humor
- worry with trust
- stress with relaxation
- doubts with optimism
- excitement with quiet times
- loneliness with friendship
- rush with serenity
- clutter with order
- unsightly with beauty
- fear with peace

Stress is a part of every aspect of life. Through regular practice of stress reduction techniques, symptoms of stress decrease, managers must figure out an effective way to cope with stress. They should remember that stress need not result in distress and a burn-out. If managers take cognizance of the stressors in life and workplace and strive to deal with them by stimulating the energizers – both internal and external – stress transforms into eustress for improved health and performance.

Stress Management – A Story

A lecturer was giving a lecture to his students on stress management. He raised a glass of water and asked the audience, “How heavy do you think this glass of water is?” The students’ answers ranged from 20g to 500gm.”It does not matter on the absolute weight. It depends on how long you hold it. If I hold it for a minute, it is O.K. I hold it for an hour, I will have an ache in my right arm. If I hold it for a day, you will have to call an ambulance. It is the exact same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes.” If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, we will not be able to carry on, the burden becoming increasingly heavier.” What you have to do is to put the glass down, rest for a while before holding it up again.” We have to put down the burden periodically, so that we can be refreshed and are able to carry on. So before you return home from work tonight, put down the burden of work. Don’t carry it back home. You can pick it up tomorrow. Whatever burdens you are having now on your shoulders let it down for a moment if you can. Pick it up again later when you have rested...Rest and relax!

Suggested Readings

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