

## **UNIT 4 : WORK STRESS**

- Stress affects both the mind and the body. A little bit of stress is good and can help us perform daily activities. Too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems. Learning how to cope with stress can help us feel less overwhelmed and support our mental and physical well-being
- Stress can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain. Stress is your body's response to anything that requires attention or action.
- Definition of stress was given by Lazarus and Folkman . They define stress as “a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his/ her resources and endangering his/ her wellbeing”
- Sometimes, the best way to manage your stress involves changing your situation. At other times, the best strategy involves changing the way you respond to the situation.
- Stress is the psychological, physiological and behavioural response by an individual when they perceive a lack of equilibrium between the demands placed upon them and their ability to meet those demands, which, over a period of time, leads to ill-health. S. Palmer
- Considered from an individual's point of view, stress is our body's physical, mental and chemical reactions to circumstances that frighten, confuse, endanger or irritate us. If controlled, stress is a friend that strengthens us for the next encounter. If handled poorly, it becomes an enemy which can cause diseases like high blood pressure, ulcer, asthma and overactive thyroid. As per the medical explanation of the term, “stress is the body's general response to environmental situations.

### **It can lead to:**

- (i) Physiological discomfort.
- (ii) Some kind of emotional unhappiness.
- (iii) Strained relationships with other people.

### **Example**

1. Nirav was a very studious boy. He pursued MBA and was a topper in his institute. He was also able to secure a good job as a manager in one of the leading multinational companies. Nirav was very excited about his new job. Though, as he started working, his parents and friends started noticing change in Nirav's behaviour. He was always irritated, angry, barely interacted with any one, was not eating and sleeping adequately. His colleagues also noticed the change in his behaviour as they felt that otherwise effective and jovial Nirav was becoming secluded and that was affecting his performance at work.
2. Samina was eldest child in her family and was a bright student. She wanted to become a doctor when she grew up. However, her mother fell very sick and Samina had to leave her studies and take care of her ailing mother and her three younger siblings. Subsequent to death of her mother, Samina was not same as before. She started falling sick often and doctors could find no physiological reasons for her sickness. She also lost interest in her studies and in fact did not even bother to appear for her examination.
3. Ravi was sure that he will be promoted to senior manager's post after this year's performance appraisal. He had worked very hard and felt that he deserved the promotion. However, as the news with regard to promotions in his department was announced, he was shocked to see that he was not promoted. Ravi felt very frustrated after this news as he felt that his work and sincerity were not appreciated by his superiors. He lost interest in his job and his productivity started declining. The frustration experienced by him also affected his

family relationship and he started having fights with his spouse. This led to further frustration and anger and Ravi ended up having a psychological breakdown.

Above are three different examples of individuals who experienced stress in one way or other in their lives.

- Nirav was stressed due to the job pressure that he experienced, with which he was not able to cope, and that had an impact on his wellbeing.
- A very negative and tragic life experience of losing a parent led Samina to experiencing stress that affected her physiological wellbeing.
- Stress as a result of frustration experienced by Ravi led him to become psychologically distressed and experiencing a psychological breakdown.

The three examples also imply that there are various reasons why a person may experience stress and the symptoms of stress as displayed by the individuals also vary. Though, one thing can be stated clearly, that is, if stress is not identified and managed in time or on regular basis it can have detrimental effects on the individual.

## **NATURE OF STRESS**

Stress as such is like salt and pepper and a life without stress would be without motivation, as stress often motivates us to work in certain direction. Thus, without any stress in life, any individual will not be motivated to perform or carry our varied activities.

### **1. Stress is a Neutral Word:**

Stress is not bad in itself. But when stress is created by undesirable outcomes, it becomes Distress. On the other hand, if it is created by desirable and successful effects it is called Eustress. Eustress is a healthy, positive and developmental stress response. It is primarily the Distress form of stress which requires examination and steps to cope with it; because distress is generally associated with heart disease, alcoholism, drug abuse, marital problems, absenteeism etc.

### **2. Stress is Associated with Constraints and Demand:**

Constraints prevent an individual from doing what he or she desires. If a person wants to buy something, but he does not have the necessary cash, it is a constraint. Demands refer to the loss of something desired. If a person wants to go and watch a movie, but he is unable to do so because of pressing official work, it amounts to a demand. Both Constraints and Demands can lead to potential stress.

### **3. Two Conditions are Necessary for Potential Stress to Become Actual Stress:**

There must be:

- Uncertainty over the outcome, and
- Outcome must be important.

Stress is usually very high when there is uncertainty over the outcome and the outcome is very significant. Both these conditions are necessary. If there is no uncertainty but the outcome is significant, there will not be any stress. On the other hand, if there is uncertainty, but the outcome is not significant, there will again be no stress.

### **4. Stress is not Simply Anxiety:**

Stress may be accompanied by anxiety, but the two are not synonymous. Anxiety is psychological and emotional whereas stress operates in the physiological sphere also along with psychological sphere.

### **5. The Term “Burnout” is also Closely Associated with Stress:**

Some researchers contend that burnout is a type of stress, but others treat it differently. Burnout is closely associated with helping professions like nursing, education and social work, it is characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishments. Even though technically, burnout is different from stress, these are generally used interchangeably.

### **LEVELS OF STRESS:**

- Stress is highly individualistic in nature. Some people have high tolerance for stress and thrive well in face of several stressors in the environment. In fact, some individuals will not perform well unless they experience a level of stress which activates and energizes them to put forth their best efforts. On the other hand, some people have very low level of tolerance for stress and they become paralyzed when they have to interface with routine everyday factors that appear undesirable to them.
- Generally, stress is viewed as something bad, having negative consequences. However, stress is not always bad. It is only the degree or the level of stress which produces positive or negative consequences.

From this point of view, stress can be categorized into two types:

- Eustress and
- Distress.

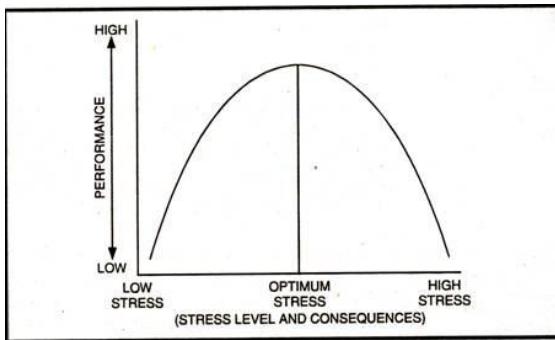
#### **1. Eustress:**

- Eustress is the healthy, positive and developmental stress response. This may lead employees to new and better ways of doing their work. It denotes the presence of optimum level of stress in an individual. Under optimum level of stress the employees will perform to his full capacity.
- If the stress experienced is below this level, then the individual gets bored, the motivational level to work reaches a low point and apathy sets in. If one operates in very low stress environment and constantly experiences boredom, the person is likely to be psychologically or physically withdrawn from work. Psychological withdrawal will result in careless mistakes being frequently made, forgetfulness and absentmindedness. Physical withdrawal will manifest itself in increased rate of tardiness and absenteeism which will ultimately lead to turnover.

#### **2. Distress:**

- Distress is the unhealthy and negative stress response. It denotes the presence of high level of stress in an individual which affects his performance and efficiency adversely.
- Errors will increase, bad decision will be made and the individual will experience insomnia, stomach problems and psychosomatic illnesses.
- Organisational performance and individual health are at their peak at optimum levels of experienced stress (Eustress).

It is explained with the help of the following figure:



STRESS LEVELS	LOW STRESS	OPTIMUM STRESS	HIGH STRESS
Reactions	Boredom/Apathy	High Energy	Exhaustion
Behaviours	Low motivation carelessness Psychological withdrawal Physical withdrawal Inactivity	High Motivation  Heightened perception High involvement	Anxiety  Nervousness Indecisiveness Bad Judgement
Performance	Low performance	High performance	Poor performance
Health effects	Dull health	Good health	Insomnia psychomatic illnesses

### Symptoms of Stress

Stress can have an impact on various aspects of life that include behaviour, cognition, emotions as well as physical health.

1. **Physical symptoms:** The physical symptoms of stress include low levels of energy, stomach upset, headaches and migraines, pain and aches, chest pain, rapid heartbeats, lack of sleep, dryness in mouth, experiencing tension in muscles, frequent infections and so on.
2. **Emotional symptoms:** The emotional symptoms include, displaying frustration, getting irritated or agitated easily, feelings of worthlessness, feeling lonely and even depressed.
3. **Psychological symptoms:** The cognitive symptoms related to stress include worrying constantly, experiencing racing thoughts, lack of organisation in thinking, forgetting, not able to focus, lack of judgement or poor judgement and also pessimism.
4. **Behavioural symptoms:** The behavioural symptoms of stress include deterioration in performance effectiveness, indulgence in substance use, prone to accidents, nervous mannerism, poor time management, displaying checking rituals, changes in appetite, procrastination, eating faster, even talking or walking faster, impaired speech and so on.

### SOURCES OF STRESS

#### **A. Extra Organisational Stressors:**

Job stress is not limited to things that happen inside the organisation, during the working hours. Extra organisational factors also contribute to job stress.

These stressors include the following factors:

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

- **Economic Factors:** Changes in business cycles create economic uncertainties. When the economy contracts, people get worried about their own security. A very important example is the great depression of 1930s. During this period, suicide rates touched the sky. Minor recessions also cause stress in the work force as downward swings in the economy are often accomplished by permanent reductions in the work force, temporary layoff or reduction in pay.
- **Technological Factors:** Technological uncertainty is the third type of environmental factor that can cause stress. In today's era of technological development new innovations make an employee's skills and experience obsolete in a very short span of time. Computers, automation are other forms of technological innovations, which are threat to many people and cause them stress.

## **B. Organisational Stressors:**

In organisations, there is no shortage of factors which can cause stress. Almost every aspect of work can be a stressor for someone.

### **1. Job Related Factors:**

Job related factors or task demands are related to the job performed by an individual. These factors include the following:

- If a job is too routine, dull and boring or happens to be too demanding in terms of frequent transfers or constant travelling, which limits the time he can spend with his family, the individual is likely to experience stress.
- Some jobs also be hazardous or morally conflicting to the individual who interfaces with it, for example, working in a explosives manufacturing factory for the individual who is a staunch believer in and advocate of peace. For lack of other job opportunities, he may be forced to work in this environment and this may be a constant source of severe stress and anguish to the person.
- Some duties and responsibilities have inbuilt stress such as those of the fire fighter or the police squad which defuses bombs.
- Jobs where temperatures, noise or other working conditions are dangerous or undesirable can increase anxiety. Similarly, working in an overcrowded room or invisible location where interruptions are constant, can also lead to stress.
- The more interdependence between a person's tasks and the tasks of others, the more potential stress there is. Autonomy, on the other hand tends to reduced stress.
- Security is another task demand that can cause stress. Someone in a relatively secure job is not likely to worry unduly about losing that position. On the other hand, if job security is threatened stress can increase dramatically.
- Another task demand stressor is workload. Overload occurs when a person has more work to do than he can handle. The overload can be either quantitative (the individual has too many tasks to perform or too little time in which to perform them) or qualitative (the person believes that he lacks the ability to do the job). On the other hand, the opposite of overload is also undesirable. It can result in boredom and apathy just as overload can cause tension and anxiety. Thus, a moderate degree of work related stress is optimal because it leads to high level of energy and motivation.

### **2. Role Related Factors:**

Role related factors relate to pressures placed on a person as a function of the particular role he or she plays in the organisation. Individuals can experience the following role related stresses:

#### **(i) Role Conflict:**

- Role conflict occurs when two or more persons have different and sometimes opposing expectations of a given individual. Thus, there are two or more sets of pressures on the individual so that it is not possible to satisfy all of them. Role conflict takes place when contradictory demands are placed upon an employee simultaneously. For example, an advertising manager may be asked to produce a creative ad campaign while on the other hand, time constraint is put upon him, both roles being in conflict with each other.
- Another type of role conflict is the inter-role conflict where an individual plays more than one role simultaneously in his life and the demands of these roles conflict with each other. For example, a police officer is invited to his friend's wedding party where the guests use drugs which are against the law. Here he faces a role conflict.

**(ii) Role Ambiguity:**

- Stresses from job ambiguity arise when an employee does not know what is expected of him or her or how to go about doing the job. For example, if an employee who joins an organisation is left to himself to figure out what he is supposed to be doing and nobody tells him what the expectations of him or his role are, the newcomer will face a high level of role ambiguity.
- Even an old employee can be given a responsibility without being given much information. For example, a production manager might tell a foreman that 500 units of steel rods are to be manufactured in next five days and leaves town immediately without specifying what kind of additional help will be provided, or what the purpose, cost, weight or design details are. The foreman is left with a lot of role ambiguity and does not know how he should go about doing the job.

**(iii) Role Overload:**

Role overload refers to the situation when an individual is expected to do too many things within a limited time as part of the daily routine. For example, if Mrs. X is expected to perform the duties of a supervisor, receptionist, public relations officer and an accountant, she is likely to experience a lot of stress from the several roles she has to play during the day. She may be able to manage the various roles for a short period of time, but if expected to continue in this fashion on a long term basis, she is likely to fall sick or quit.

**3. Inter Personal and Group Related Factors:**

- Interpersonal demands are pressures created by other employees. Group related stressors include factors like conflicts, poor communication, unpleasant relationship and fear of being ostracized from the group as a valued member.
- Working with superior, peers or subordinates with whom one does not get along can be a constant source of stress. Some people can deal with conflicts and misunderstandings in an open way and resolve issues as they arise. Many, however, find it difficult to do this and build internal stresses for themselves.
- Moreover, lack of social support from colleagues and poor interpersonal relationships can cause considerable stress, especially among employees with a high social need. Sometimes, the individuals try to avoid these stresses by remaining absent as frequently as possible and even start looking for new jobs.

**4. Organisational Structural Factors:**

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

## **5. Organisational Leadership Factors:**

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

## **6. Organization's Life Cycle:**

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

## **C. Group Stressors:**

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

### **1. Group Cohesiveness:**

- The famous Hawthorne studies had proved that group cohesiveness is very important to the employees, particularly at the lower levels of the organisation. Lack of cohesiveness can be very stress producing, especially for those persons who cannot thrive in isolation.
- The other side of the picture is that too much cohesiveness can also lead to stress. Sayings like "Too much familiarity breeds contempt" are very valid because prolonged contact with other people can also cause stress. This stress becomes more intensified when the people we are close to or with whom we come in contact with are in distress themselves. For example, people tend to become distressed when their friends, colleagues or peers are in distress. Due to this reason people belonging to certain specific professions, which deal with the problems of other people have the highest level of stress.

### **2. Lack of Social Support:**

Satisfaction, though, a state of mind is primarily influenced by the positive external factors. These factors include friendliness, respect from other members and self respect, support, opportunity to interact, achievement, protection against threats and a feeling of security. In this type of social support is lacking for an individual, it can be very stressful.

### **3. Conflicts:**

People who are working in the organisations are prone to interpersonal and intergroup conflicts. Conflict has both functional and dysfunctional aspects. Whenever conflict has dysfunctional consequences, it will lead to stress in all the concerned parties.

### **4. Organisational Climate:**

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

## **D. Individual Stressors:**

Following are the main factors which can cause stress to individuals:

### **1. Job Concerns:**

One of the major job concerns is lack of job security which can lead to concern, anxiety or frustration to the individual. The prospect of losing a job especially when you have a family and social obligations is always very stressful. Career progress is another reason of anxiety. This is particularly true for middle aged people, because middle age is a period of soul searching and self doubt. If these people were not given promotions when due or they feel that the jobs which were given to them were beneath their qualifications, they may become very anxious. This anxiety will lead to stress.

### **2. Career Changes:**

When an employee has to relocate geographically because of a transfer or promotion, it disrupts the routine of his daily life causing concern and stress. The relocation can lead to the following problems:

- The fear of working in a new location.
- Unpredictability about new work environment.
- Anxiety about creating new relationships.
- Uprooting of children from their schools and friends.
- If the employee has got a working spouse then the stress is greater.

Uncertainty about getting a new job at the new location creates some degree of stress. Thus, when a person is geographically relocated, his stress will depend upon how many changes occur in his social relationships and family life. More the changes, more will be the stress.

### **3. Economic Problems:**

Some people are very poor money managers or they have wants and desires that always seem to exceed their earning capacity. When individuals overextend their financial resources, or in simple words, if they spend more than they earn, it will always cause stress and distract the employees from their Work.

### **4. Changes in Life Structure:**

The life structure of a person changes as he grows older. As a person grows older, his responsibilities to himself as well as others change and increase. The higher the responsibility, the greater the stress.

### **5. The Pace of Life:**

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

### **6. Life Change and Life Traumas:**

- Life change and life traumas are both stress producing. Life changes may be slow (like getting older) or sudden (like the death of a spouse). Sudden changes are highly stressful. Life traumas can be highly stressful. A life trauma is any upheaval in an individual's life that alters his or her attitudes, emotions or behaviours. Life change and life trauma look alike but there is difference between the two.



- To illustrate, according to the life change view, the death of a spouse adds to a person's potential for health problems in the following year. At the same time, the person will also experience an emotional turmoil, which will constitute life trauma and life trauma will spill over to the work place.
- Thomas Holmes and Richard Roke developed "Social Adjustment Rating Schedule" to assess the degree of stress created by certain events in life.
- In order to develop the scale of impact, they asked people to rate as to how long it would take them to adjust to certain stress producing events in life. After considering the responses of the people, they developed a ranking and weighing schedule for each of these stress producing events.

## 7. Personality of a Person:

The extent of stress is also determined by the personality of a person. In respect of personality the distinction between 'TYPE A' and 'TYPE B' behaviour patterns become relevant. TYPE A personalities may create stress in their work circumstances due to their achievement orientation, impatience and perfectionism. TYPE A people, thus, encounter more stress. TYPE B personality; on the other hand, is less stress prone.

## 8. Ability to Cope:

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

A useful way to conceptualize stress is to view it as a process whereby an individual perceives and responds to events that he appraises as overwhelming or threatening to his well-being . A critical element of this definition is that it emphasizes the importance of how we appraise—that is, judge—demanding or threatening events (often referred to as **stressors**); these appraisals, in turn, influence our reactions to such events.

**Two kinds of appraisals of a stressor are especially important in this regard: primary and secondary appraisals.**

### Primary appraisal

- Involves judgment about the degree of potential harm or threat to well-being that a stressor might entail. A stressor would likely be appraised as a threat if one anticipates that it could lead to some kind of harm, loss, or other negative consequence; conversely, a stressor would likely be appraised as a challenge if one believes that it carries the potential for gain or personal growth.
- For example, an employee who is promoted to a leadership position would likely perceive the promotion as a much greater threat if she believed the promotion would lead to excessive work demands than if she viewed it as an opportunity to gain new skills and grow professionally. Similarly, a college student on the cusp of graduation may face the change as a threat or a challenge

### Secondary appraisal

- The perception of a threat triggers a **secondary appraisal**: judgment of the options available to cope with a stressor, as well as perceptions of how effective such options will be (Lyon, 2012) (Figure 2). As you may recall from what you learned about self-efficacy, an individual's belief in his ability to complete a task is important (Bandura, 1994).
- A threat tends to be viewed as less catastrophic if one believes something can be done about it (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Imagine that two middle-aged women, Robin and Maria, perform breast

self-examinations one morning and each woman notices a lump on the lower region of her left breast. Although both women view the breast lump as a potential threat (primary appraisal), their secondary appraisals differ considerably. In considering the breast lump, some of the thoughts racing through Robin's mind are, "Oh my God, I could have breast cancer! What if the cancer has spread to the rest of my body and I cannot recover? What if I have to go through chemotherapy? I've heard that experience is awful! What if I have to quit my job?"

- My husband and I won't have enough money to pay the mortgage. Oh, this is just horrible...I can't deal with it!" On the other hand, Maria thinks, "Hmm, this may not be good. Although most times these things turn out to be benign, I need to have it checked out. If it turns out to be breast cancer, there are doctors who can take care of it because the medical technology today is quite advanced. I'll have a lot of different options, and I'll be just fine." Clearly, Robin and Maria have different outlooks on what might turn out to be a very serious situation: Robin seems to think that little could be done about it, whereas Maria believes that, worst case scenario, a number of options that are likely to be effective would be available. As such, Robin would clearly experience greater stress than would Maria.

To be sure, some stressors are inherently more stressful than others in that they are more threatening and leave less potential for variation in cognitive appraisals (e.g., objective threats to one's health or safety).

Nevertheless, appraisal will still play a role in augmenting or diminishing our reactions to such events

If a person appraises an event as harmful and believes that the demands imposed by the event exceed the available resources to manage or adapt to it, the person will subjectively experience a state of stress. In contrast, if one does not appraise the same event as harmful or threatening, she is unlikely to experience stress. According to this definition, environmental events trigger stress reactions by the way they are interpreted and the meanings they are assigned. In short, stress is largely in the eye of the beholder: it's not so much what happens to you as it is how you respond

## **CAUSES OF STRESS IN ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR**

Stress can be caused by a variety of factors. Knowing these factors well will allow you to manage them and build a better working environment for your employees. The following are the main causes of stress in organizational behaviour and tips on how to manage them.

### **1. Concern Regarding Career**

Employees might feel concerned about not growing in their careers due to fewer growth opportunities or feel stuck in the same position for too long.

How to Resolve?

Reward your employees for their efforts. Offer promotions and salary appraisals when deserved. If your employees feel appreciated, it will reduce their stress levels and make them feel they are achieving a positive outcome working in the organization. Give them opportunities to learn and grow in skills. Provide them exposure. You can sponsor learning courses for them as well.

### **2. Uncertainty of Roles/Responsibilities**

If employees feel uncertain or unsure about what is expected of them, and what is exactly their daily responsibilities, they might feel confused and gain stressed.

How to Resolve?

Develop clear communication with your employees. Talk to them more often. Map out their responsibilities clearly and regularly have a meeting regarding them. Let them know what you are expecting and how much time you are expecting it. Just having an open discussion and letting them know you are available for questions can fix this problem.

### **3. Rotating & Extra Long Shifts**

Extra long shifts leave no room for personal time and may even tire the employee to exhaustion.

How to Resolve?

Have balanced shifts. If there is a requirement for your employee to work extra shifts, offer them smaller shifts or paid half-day leaves for later. Make sure they get their rest so they can come back stronger. Rotating shifts should be avoided if the employee isn't comfortable with them. If rotating shifts cannot be avoided offer them a chance to work from home during some of them. Once again communication is the key. Let them convey to you what brings the most productivity in them.

### **4. Unexpected Sudden Changes**

Too many changes that happen quite often leave an employee feeling unstable and adjusting most of the time.

How to Resolve?

Follow a smooth transitioning process when it comes to changes. For example, if you are changing your employee's roles maybe because he or she got a promotion, offer them as much help as possible and also give less workload in the beginning. If you are bringing a new team manager or client to work with, have them introduced, talk and get to know each other. If you are making new policies, give prior notice to employees and give them time to adjust. Before making any changes in the offices and cubicles, talk to the employees first.

### **5. Workload**

No one can handle over workload well. Burdening your employee with extra work, making them work extra hours or providing unjustifiable deadlines are some of the obvious reasons for stress.

How to Resolve?

Keep an organized record of your team members' tasks in one place. You can regularly check which member has how many tasks and delegate further work according. Keep a record of which tasks are getting completed. This way you will always have a clear picture of everyone's workload. Give employee of the month awards to your team members by evaluating these records and you'll see so much motivation in them. Give tasks one by one and let them know the focus is quality, not quantity.

### **6. Role Conflict**

Role conflict refers to when an employee has to perform tasks incompatible with their behaviour, interests, capabilities or moral values.

How to Resolve?

The best thing to do here is to know your employees. Understand which employee is good at which tasks and provide them with work related to that only. Understand the requirements of the tasks and delegate them to someone whose abilities match the best with it. For example, a good communicator can handle client meetings. Someone who talks less can be given work that requires more focus and concentration.

## 7. Conflicts With Colleagues

Having some kind of conflict such as feeling disrespected or discriminated by your fellow colleagues can cause a lot of stress at the workplace.

How to Resolve?

Stand up for your employees. If you see any disrespect occurring in the office, take action to resolve it as smoothly as possible. Let your employees know they can communicate such problems with HR anytime. Organize small events from time to time or take employees to celebration lunch or dinner so they can socialize. Have small cafeterias and lunch rooms where they can talk. Employees can be a great support to each other when it comes to managing stress.

## 8. Poor leadership

If leaders at the organization are rude, regularly point out mistakes, and take little to no time to appreciate the employee, It is another reason for stress!

How to Resolve?

Don't promote a harsh working environment where leaders often scold their employees. Being strict and rude is only going to make the employee dislike the job and leave in the future. Let them know their mistakes nicely and motivate them to work better. Communicate don't order. Appreciate the work whenever they deserve it.

## **STRESS, ANXIETY AND TENSION**

- Stress is a mentally or emotionally disruptive or upsetting condition occurring in response to adverse external influences and capable of affecting physical health. It is usually characterised by increased heart rate, a rise in blood pressure, muscular tension, irritability, and depression.
- Stress is an unavoidable effect of living and is an especially complex phenomenon in modern technological society. It has been linked to coronary heart disease, psychosomatic disorders, and various other mental and physical problems.
- Treatment usually consists of a combination of counselling or psychotherapy and medication. Stress can come from any situation or thought that makes a person feel frustrated, angry, or anxious. What is stressful to one person is not necessarily stressful to another.
- Tension on the other hand is a mental, emotional, or nervous strain. To give an example in our normal day to day conversation we say that some one is working under great tension to make a deadline. It is a state of mental or emotional strain or suspense. This may lead to fatigue and exhaustion leading to a certain degree of reduction in efficiency level.
- Anxiety is a feeling of apprehension or fear. The source of this uneasiness is not always known or recognised, which can add to the distress one may feel. From psychology point of view, anxiety is a feeling of dread, fear, or apprehension, often with no clear justification. Anxiety is distinguished from fear because the latter arises in response to a clear and actual danger, such as one affecting a person's physical safety.

## **4 MAIN CATEGORIES OF STRESS**

1. **Eustress:** This is a positive form of stress, which prepares your mind and body for the imminent challenges that it has perceived. Eustress is a natural physical reaction by your body which increases blood flow to your muscles, resulting in a higher heart rate. Athletes before a competition or perhaps a

manager before a major presentation would do well with eustress, allowing them to derive the inspiration and strength that is needed.

2. **Distress:** We are familiar with this word, and know that it is a negative form of stress. This occurs when the mind and body is unable to cope with changes, and usually occurs when there are deviations from the norm. They can be categorized into acute stress and chronic stress. Acute stress is intense, but does not last for long. On the other hand, chronic stress persists over a long period of time. Trigger events for distress can be a change in job scope or routine that the person is unable to handle or cope with.
3. **Hyper stress:** This is another form of negative stress that occurs when the individual is unable to cope with the workload. Examples include highly stressful jobs, which require longer working hours than the individual can handle. If you suspect that you are suffering from hyper stress, you are likely to have sudden emotional breakdowns over insignificant issues, the proverbial straws that broke the camel's back. It is important for you to recognize that your body needs a break, or you may end up with severe and chronic physical and psychological reactions.
4. **Hypo Stress:** Lastly, hypo stress occurs when a person has nothing to do with his time and feels constantly bored and unmotivated. This is due to an insufficient amount of stress; hence some stress is inevitable and helpful to us. Companies should avoid having workers who experience hypo stress as this will cause productivity and mindfulness to fall. If the job scope is boring and repetitive, it would be a good idea to implement some form of job rotation so that there is always something new to learn.

### **Types of Occupational Stress**

**Workload stress:** This type of stress occurs when employees feel overwhelmed by the volume or complexity of their workload. Tight deadlines, unrealistic expectations, and a lack of resources can contribute to work-related stress, leading to feelings of pressure, exhaustion, and burnout.

**Role stress:** Role stress arises when employees are unclear about their roles, responsibilities, or performance expectations within the organization. This ambiguity can lead to feelings of confusion, anxiety, and inefficiency as individuals struggle to understand and fulfill their job requirements.

**Interpersonal stress:** Interpersonal stress stems from conflicts, tensions, or negative interactions with colleagues, supervisors, or other stakeholders in the workplace. Poor communication, personality clashes, and unresolved conflicts can exacerbate interpersonal stress, undermining teamwork, morale, and organizational cohesion.

**Organizational change stress:** Organizational changes such as restructuring, mergers, or downsizing can trigger stress among employees due to uncertainty, fear of job loss, or disruptions to routines and relationships. Resistance to change, feelings of insecurity, and a loss of control can all contribute to the stress associated with organizational transitions.

**Work-life balance stress:** Work-life balance stress occurs when employees struggle to juggle the demands of their professional responsibilities with their personal lives and commitments. Long hours, inflexible schedules, and a lack of support for family or leisure activities can compromise employees' well-being and lead to feelings of stress and dissatisfaction.

**Job insecurity stress:** Job insecurity stress arises when employees feel uncertain about the stability or longevity of their employment within the organization. Concerns about layoffs, restructuring, or downsizing can trigger anxiety, undermine job satisfaction, and diminish employees' confidence in their future prospects.

**Environmental stress:** Environmental stress refers to stressors stemming from the physical or psychosocial characteristics of the work environment. Factors such as noise, temperature, air quality, and ergonomic conditions can impact employees' comfort, health, and overall well-being, contributing to stress and decreased productivity.

**Role Ambiguity:** When employees need more clarity regarding their roles, responsibilities, or what is expected of them, it can lead to job stress. It often arises in organizations with poor communication and unclear job descriptions, impacting job control and perceived stress levels.

**Mental Stress:** Roles that demand high levels of cognitive engagement, constant decision-making, or problem-solving can lead to mental stress. Mental stress is pervasive in positions such as management, healthcare, and emergency services, highlighting the need for job stress management strategies.

**Emotional Stress:** Occupations that require the management of emotions, dealing with demanding clients or customers, or witnessing traumatic events can lead to emotional health stress. Healthcare workers, first responders, and customer service representatives are often at risk and may benefit from job stress prevention measures.

**Financial Stress:** Low pay, financial instability, or excessive debt can significantly contribute to job stress and affect an employee's overall quality of life. Employers can address this by promoting financial wellness programs and stress prevention initiatives.

**Shift Work Stress:** To mitigate shift work stress, occupational health and occupational safety and health measures are essential due to irregular work hours, including night or rotating shifts, which can disrupt sleep patterns and lead to mental and physical health issues. Occupational health and safety measures are essential to mitigate this stress.

**Manager/Superior Stress :** The goals of any organization should be realistic, reasonable, and obtainable. Moving the goalposts or setting the bars too high creates stress in employees that can turn inward. Failure fuels even more dissatisfaction. The quality of the work deteriorates and impacts productivity. It becomes worse when the expectations change without explanation, mounting pressure to work quicker and harder. Stress can also occur with conflicting goals if the management team isn't on the same page. Employees feel like pawns, unable to enjoy the satisfaction of a job well done because the expectations keep changing

**Social Support Stress :** An organization's success depends upon the culture it creates among its team members. It fosters cooperation and support among its employees at all levels. An unhealthy workplace environment lacks these basic elements. Instead of working toward a common goal, it foments unhealthy competition that pits employees against one another. It creates winners and losers and the inevitable cutthroat ethics. Employees come to work thinking of it as a race or competition. It becomes a me-against-them mentality that can have deep-rooted effects on the overall employee morale.

### **3 ORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS**

Stress in the workplace can have several organizational consequences, affecting the health problems of both the employees and the overall company. Here are three significant organizational consequences of stress:

#### **1. Reduced productivity**

Stress can significantly hamper organizational behavior and employee productivity. Stressed employees often struggle to concentrate, make decisions, and complete tasks efficiently. This reduced productivity can lead to missed deadlines, errors, and a decline in the quality of work. Ultimately, it affects the company's overall performance and profitability.

## **2. Increased absenteeism**

High-stress levels are a leading cause of absenteeism in the workplace. Employees experiencing chronic or stress symptoms may take more sick days or mental health days to cope with their symptoms. This increased absenteeism disrupts workflow, puts additional pressure on colleagues, and can lead to decreased team morale.

## **3. Higher turnover rates**

Stress can drive employees to seek employment elsewhere. When the workplace is a major source of stress, employees may start looking for other opportunities that offer a healthier work environment. High turnover rates result in recruitment and training costs, the loss of valuable talent, and a negative impact on team cohesion.

To mitigate these organizational consequences, it's crucial for companies to proactively address workplace stress. Implementing stress management programs, creating a supportive work culture, and offering resources like Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) can help employees cope with stress effectively. By prioritizing employee well-being, organizations can enhance productivity, reduce absenteeism, and retain top talent.

## **How to Reduce Occupational Stress**

### **FOR INDIVIDUALS:**

1. **Time Management:** Efficiently managing your time is crucial to stress prevention. Prioritizing tasks and setting realistic goals can keep you organized and reduce the pressure of looming deadlines. Consider using tools like to-do lists or time management apps to assist this endeavor.
2. **Learn to Say No:** Recognize your limits and avoid overcommitting yourself. Politely declining additional tasks or projects when your workload is overwhelming is essential for maintaining a healthy work-life balance.
3. **Seek Support:** Don't hesitate to contact colleagues, friends, or a mental health professional if you're experiencing work-related stress. Sharing feelings can provide valuable insights and emotional support, ultimately contributing to disease control and mental well-being.
4. **Learn Stress Management Skills:** Equip yourself with stress management techniques like problem-solving, assertiveness, and coping strategies. These skills can empower you to navigate challenging situations more effectively, improving job performance and reducing the risk of occupational health issues.
5. **Healthy Lifestyle Choices:** Make conscious choices to support your well-being. Eating a balanced diet, limiting alcohol and caffeine consumption, and avoiding smoking enhance personal health and build resilience to stress.

### **FOR EMPLOYERS:**

1. **Promote Work-Life Balance:** Encourage employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Offer flexible schedules, remote work options, and paid time off to help alleviate work stress and reduce the strain that spills over into personal life.

2. **Manage Workloads:** Ensure that workloads are manageable and realistic. Overloading employees with excessive tasks and tight deadlines can increase job stress and negatively impact job performance.
3. **Training and Development:** Invest in the professional development of your employees. Provide training in stress management, time management, and resilience-building to enhance their skills and well-being. Equipping your workforce with these skills can help prevent stress-related issues and boost overall job satisfaction.
4. **Create a Supportive Environment:** Foster a workplace culture that values and supports employees' well-being. Rewarding and recognizing employees for their efforts can help morale and reduce job stress.
5. **Wellness Programs:** Offer comprehensive wellness programs encompassing gym access, mindfulness sessions, or nutritionist access. Focusing on mental and physical health can reduce work stress and promote occupational health.

## **THE FOUR COMMON TYPES OF STRESS**

### **1. Time Stress**

- You experience time stress when you worry about not doing things at the right time, or running out of time to complete all your tasks. Time stress can quickly make you feel unhappy, trapped, or even hopeless.
- Common examples of time stress include worrying about key deadlines, rushing to avoid being late for a meeting, or looking at a list of jobs that's unmanageable in the time you've got.

### **Managing Time Stress**

- First, learn good time-management skills. This can include using to-do lists or, if you have to manage many simultaneous projects, action programs.
- Next, make sure that you're devoting enough time to your top priorities. It's easy to get caught up in seemingly urgent tasks that actually have little impact on your overall objectives. This can leave you exhausted, or with the feeling that you've worked a full day without accomplishing anything meaningful.
- Also, make sure that you're polite but assertive about saying "no" to tasks that you don't have the capacity to do.

### **2. Anticipatory Stress**

- Anticipatory stress describes stress that you experience concerning the future. Sometimes this stress can be focused on a specific event, such as an upcoming presentation. However, anticipatory stress can also be vague and undefined, such as an overall sense of dread about the future, or a worry that "something will go wrong."

### **Managing Anticipatory Stress**

- Because anticipatory stress is future based, start by recognizing that the event you're dreading doesn't have to play out as you imagine. Use positive visualization techniques to imagine the situation going right.
- Research shows that repeatedly visualizing an event can have a similar impact on your brain as experiencing it for real.



- Other techniques – like meditation – will help you to concentrate on what's happening right now, rather than on an imagined future. Consider setting aside time daily – even if it's only five minutes – to meditate.
- Anticipatory stress can stem from a lack of confidence. For example, you might be stressing over a presentation that you're giving next week, because you're afraid that you'll falter under pressure. Often, addressing these personal fears directly will lower your stress. In this example, if you practiced more, and prepared for tough questions, you'd likely feel better prepared for the event.
- Last, learn how to overcome a fear of failure. By making contingency plans, and analyzing all of the possible outcomes, you'll get a clearer idea of what could happen in the future. This can diminish your fear of failure and give you a greater sense of control.

### 3. Situational Stress

- You experience situational stress when you're in a difficult situation that you have no control over. This could be an emergency. However, it's more commonly a situation that involves conflict, or a loss of status or acceptance in the eyes of your group. Getting laid off or making a major mistake in front of your team are examples of events that can cause situational stress.

#### Managing Situational Stress

- You can learn to be more self-aware. This starts with recognizing the "automatic" physical and emotional signals that your body sends out when you're under pressure.
- For example, imagine that the meeting you're in suddenly dissolves into a shouting match between team members. Your automatic response may be to feel a surge of anxiety. Your stomach knots and feels bloated. You withdraw into yourself and, if someone asks for your input, you have a difficult time knowing what to say.
- By noticing your natural responses, you can take steps to manage them. See our article on physical relaxation techniques for ways to regain some calmness and control in stressful moments.
- Conflict is a major source of situational stress. Learn effective conflict resolution skills, so that you're well prepared to handle the stress of conflict when it arises. It's also important to learn how to manage conflict in meetings, since resolving group conflict can be different from resolving individual issues.
- Everyone reacts to situational stress differently. It's essential that you understand both the physical and emotional symptoms of this stress – and how they tend to affect you personally – so that you can manage them appropriately.
- For instance, if your natural tendency is to withdraw emotionally, learn how to think on your feet and communicate better during these situations. Or if your natural response is to get angry and shout, then learn how to manage your emotions.

### 4. Encounter Stress

- Encounter stress revolves around people. You experience encounter stress when you worry about interacting with a certain person or group of people. You may not like them, find them difficult to communicate with, or worry that they're unpredictable.
- Encounter stress can also occur if your role involves a lot of personal interactions with customers or clients, especially if those groups are in distress. For instance, physicians and

social workers are particularly likely to experience encounter stress, because the people they work with routinely don't feel well, or are deeply upset.

- This type of stress also occurs from "contact overload": when you feel overwhelmed or drained from interacting with too many people.

### **Managing Encounter Stress**

- Because encounter stress is focused entirely on people, you'll manage this type of stress better by working on your people skills.
- To find out how good your people skills are right now, take our [quiz](#). This will also show you any areas that you need to develop.
- A good place to start is to develop greater [emotional intelligence](#). This is the ability to know your own emotions, wants and needs, and to understand those of others. It's a crucial skill for working in teams, and for building good relationships in all areas of your life.
- [Empathy](#) is a particularly valuable attribute here. It allows you to view situations from other people's perspectives, helping you to communicate and deal with them appropriately.
- You also need to know when you're about to reach your limit for interactions on a given day. Common symptoms of this include withdrawing psychologically from others, working mechanically, or simply becoming cranky. When these occur, do whatever you can to take a break. Go for a walk, drink water, and practice [deep breathing exercises](#).

### **WHAT TRIGGERS ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS**

Organizational stress, often referred to as workplace stress, arises from various factors within an organization that can lead to physical and emotional strain on employees. Here are the key triggers of organizational stress:

**Excessive workload:** One of the primary stressors is an overwhelming workload. When employees are consistently expected to work long hours, meet tight deadlines, or manage heavy workloads, it can lead to burnout and stress.

**Lack of control:** Employees who feel they have little control over their work, decisions, or schedules are more likely to experience stress. Micromanagement and excessive bureaucracy can contribute to this feeling of powerlessness.

**Poor work-life balance:** Organizations that do not support work-life balance can significantly contribute to stress. When employees are unable to disconnect from work, it can harm their personal lives and overall well-being.

**Unclear expectations:** Unclear job expectations or roles can lead to stress-related problems, as employees may not know what is expected of them. This can result in anxiety and reduced job satisfaction.

**Inadequate resources:** When employees lack the necessary tools, technology, or resources to perform their jobs effectively, it can cause frustration and stress. This includes issues such as outdated equipment and inadequate training.

**Job insecurity:** Fear of job loss, unstable employment, stressful working conditions, or frequent layoffs can create a sense of job insecurity and increased stress among employees.

**Lack of recognition:** Not receiving recognition or appreciation for one's work can be a demotivating factor. Employees who feel undervalued are more likely to experience stress.

**Poor leadership:** Ineffective or unsupportive leadership can contribute to workplace stress. Managers who do not provide clear communication, constructive feedback, or support to their teams can negatively impact employee well-being.

**Discrimination and harassment:** Experiencing discrimination, harassment, or a hostile work environment can cause immense stress. These issues should be addressed promptly to ensure a healthy workplace.

**Organizational changes:** Frequent changes, such as restructuring, mergers, or downsizing, can create uncertainty and stress among employees. Uncertainty about job security and future roles can be particularly distressing.

**Lack of growth opportunities:** When some employees feel or perceive limited opportunities for career advancement or professional growth within the organization, it can lead to feelings of stagnation and stress.

**Work-related travel:** For jobs that require extensive travel, the constant movement and time away from home can be a source of stress.

**Inadequate health and well-being support:** Organizations that do not offer adequate health and well-being support programs, and available resources such as access to mental health services or wellness initiatives, may contribute to employee stress.

**Resistance to change:** Employees who are resistant to organizational changes may experience heightened stress levels. This resistance can stem from various factors such as fear of the unknown, skepticism about the benefits of change, or concerns about how changes will impact their roles and responsibilities.

**Poor communication channels:** Inadequate communication channels within the organization can lead to misunderstandings, rumors, and confusion, all of which contribute to stress. When employees feel uninformed or left out of important discussions, it can erode trust and increase anxiety.

**Conflict within teams:** Interpersonal conflicts among team members or between different departments can create a tense work environment and elevate stress levels. Unresolved conflicts can fester over time, disrupting workflow and diminishing morale.

**Toxic organizational culture:** A toxic workplace culture characterized by gossip, backstabbing, or a lack of cooperation can significantly increase stress levels among employees. When negativity pervades the work environment, it can undermine productivity and employee well-being.

### **How to approach organizational stress management for your company**

**Laughter yoga sessions:** Laughter is a natural stress reliever. Consider hosting regular laughter yoga sessions in the workplace. Laughter yoga combines laughter exercises with deep breathing, promoting relaxation and reducing stress. It's a fun and unconventional way to help employees unwind.

**Desk plant decorating contests:** Encourage employees to bring small plants to their desks and organize a "Desk Plant Decorating Contest." Engaging with nature and personalizing their workspace can help reduce stress. Offer prizes for the most creative plant displays.

**Stress-relief pet breaks:** Bring therapy animals, such as dogs or cats, to the office for stress-relief breaks. Allowing employees to interact with these animals can provide emotional support and help reduce tension.

**Mystery puzzle challenges:** Provide stress-relief puzzles, like jigsaw puzzles, but with a twist. Create puzzles that reveal a fun mystery or office trivia when completed. Solving puzzles can be a calming and engaging way to take a mental break.

**Inclusive stress-relief art sessions:** Organize art sessions where employees can freely express themselves through various art forms. These sessions promote creativity and can be a unique way for employees to channel stress into art.

These unconventional approaches to stress management can not only alleviate workplace stress but also foster a sense of camaraderie and creativity among your team.

### **Examples of organizational stress that impact productivity**

By acknowledging these stressors and implementing unconventional solutions, companies can create a more conducive and less stressful work environment, ultimately enhancing productivity and well-being.

Here are unique examples of organizational stressors that can significantly impact organizational change and productivity:

**"Email Avalanche" stress:** In the age of digital communication, the constant influx of emails can be overwhelming. Employees may experience stress due to the never-ending stream of messages. To mitigate this, some companies have implemented "email-free Fridays" or encouraged employees to use other communication tools like instant messaging, which can reduce email stress and increase productivity.

**"Meeting Mayhem" stress:** Meetings are essential for collaboration, but excessive or poorly organized meetings can create stress. Some organizations have adopted a "stand-up meeting" culture, where attendees remain standing to keep meetings short and to the point. Others have introduced "meeting-free days" to give employees uninterrupted time for focused work.

**"Noise Pollution" stress:** Open office layouts can lead to "noise pollution" stress. To combat this, some companies have designated "quiet zones" or introduced noise-canceling headphones. Unique solutions include soundscaping with soothing ambient noises like ocean waves or birdsong to create a more relaxed work environment.

**"Deadline Overload" stress:** Constantly shifting priorities and tight deadlines can be overwhelming. To address this, some organizations have adopted the "Two-Week Rule," which means no new projects can be assigned with deadlines less than two weeks away. This provides employees with more reasonable time frames and reduces deadline-related stress.

### **Strategies for preventing workplace stress for your employees for small and big teams**

1. **Flexi-stress hours:** Allow employees to set their work hours within a certain range. This empowers them to work when they're most productive, reducing the stress of adhering to strict schedules.
2. **Nap nooks:** Create dedicated spaces for power naps. A short nap can recharge employees and alleviate stress. Small teams can use a cozy corner, while large companies can designate quiet rooms.
3. **Mystery lunches:** Organize surprise team lunches, where employees from different departments or teams are randomly selected to dine together. It fosters new connections, reduces isolation, and breaks routine stress.

4. **No-meeting days:** Dedicate one day a week where no meetings are allowed. This gives employees uninterrupted time to focus on their tasks, reducing stress caused by constant interruptions.
5. **Stress-relief pets:** Allow employees to bring their well-behaved pets to work occasionally. Interacting with animals can provide stress relief and create a positive work environment.
6. **In-house massages:** Offer occasional on-site massages to employees. A quick massage can relax muscles, reduce tension, and enhance overall well-being.
7. **Creative corner:** Set up a space where employees can unleash their creativity through art, crafts, or writing. It's a great stress reliever and allows for self-expression.
8. **Mental health days:** Implement a policy where employees can take a few mental health days each year without providing a specific reason. This recognizes the importance of mental well-being.
9. **Wellness challenges:** Organize friendly wellness challenges, like step-count competitions or healthy recipe contests, to encourage a healthier lifestyle, which can reduce stress in the long run.
10. **Coping With Stress :** Although stress is inevitable, it can be manageable. When you understand the toll it takes on you and the steps to combat stress, you can take charge of your health and reduce the impact stress has on your life.
11. **Learn to recognize the signs of burnout:** High levels of stress may place you at a high risk of burnout. Burnout can leave you feeling exhausted and apathetic about your job.<sup>7</sup> When you start to feel symptoms of emotional exhaustion, it's a sign that you need to find a way to get a handle on your stress.
12. **Try to get regular exercise:** Physical activity has a big impact on your brain and your body. Whether you enjoy Tai Chi or you want to begin jogging, exercise reduces stress and improves many symptoms associated with mental illness.<sup>8</sup>
13. **Take care of yourself :** Incorporating regular self-care activities into your daily life is essential to stress management. Learn how to take care of your mind, body, and spirit and discover how to equip yourself to live your best life.<sup>9</sup>
14. **Practice mindfulness in your life:** Mindfulness isn't just something you practice for 10 minutes each day. It can also be a way of life. Discover how to live more mindfully throughout your day so you can become more awake and conscious throughout your life.<sup>10</sup>

## **MEASUREMENT OF STRESS**

### **1) Physiological measures:**

- Physiological measures could serve great purpose in identifying and understanding stress experienced by an individual. While discussing the models of stress in the next unit, we will discuss at length the physiological changes that take place as the individuals experience stressful situations.
- The physiological responses in terms of increase in blood pressure, rapid pulse rate, breathing rate and so on can be measured to understand the stress experience by the individual. This can be done by using various instruments and machines, for instance a Polygraph.
- Further, stress can also be measured with the help of biochemical measures, as hormones, like epinephrine, norepinephrine, cortisol and so on, are released as stress is experienced. Though, physiological measures seem to be effective in detecting stress, there are a number of limitations.
- Firstly, the physiological changes may occur due to some other reasons and not stress. Secondly, the whole process of taking the physiological measure could create stress in the individual, as either blood test is taken or the individual is plugged to a machine. Further, the tests could also be costly and time consuming.

## 2) Psychological tests:

- A psychological test can be explained as a measure of sample of behaviour that is objective and systematic in nature. Various psychological tests that are standardised, reliable and valid can be used to measure stress. Such psychological tests could be self-report inventories. In self report inventories, the individual is expected to provide responses to certain statements and based on the responses interpretations can be made.
- One main advantage of self-report inventory is that the individual will answer them on his/ her own and as he/ she is in a better position to understand the stress experienced, he/ she will be able to report adequately. They are simple, less costly and easy to administer.
- Though, there could be issues related to social desirability and language. Individual may not understand the language in which the test is available or he/ she may not comprehend certain statements or words

## 3) Checklist:

- A checklist can also be used to measure stress. For instance, a checklist can be used for major life events. The individual is asked to check the major life events from a list that the individual has undergone in a given period of time. The list of major events is carefully prepared and includes representation of major life events that may occur in any individual's life.
- The major life events could include, death of a near or dear one, divorce, transfer and so on. Any major event in one's life can put pressure on the individual's coping resources as he/ she is trying to adapt to the situation. Also, if an individual is undergoing number of major life events at the same time, the stress that he/ she will experience is much more.

**4) Interview:** Yet another method for measurement of stress is interview, where in-depth information is collected from the individual face to face.

**Role Space:** Each individual occupies and plays several roles. A person 'X' is a son, a father, an executive, a member of a club and so on. All these roles constitute role space. In the centre of the role space is the self. Role space, thus, can be defined as "the dynamic interrelationship both between the self and the various roles an individual occupies, and amongst these roles."

**Role Set:** The individual's role in the organization is defined by the expectations of other significant roles, and those of the individual himself/herself. The role set is "the pattern of relationship between the role being considered and other roles. Pareek (1983) pioneered work on the role stress by identifying as many as ten different types of organisational role stresses. They are described here briefly.

- 1. Inter-Role Distance (IRD):** It is experienced when there is a conflict between organisational and non-organizational roles. For example, the role of an executive versus the role of a husband / wife
- 2. Role Stagnation (RS):** This kind of stress is the result of the gap between the demand to outgrow a previous role and to occupy a new role effectively. It is the feeling of being stuck in the same role. Such a type of stress results in perception that there is no opportunity for one's career progression.
- 3. Role Expectation Conflict (REC):** This type of stress is generated by different expectations by different significant persons about the same' role; and the role occupant's ambivalence as to whom to please
- 4. Role Erosion (RE):** This kind of role stress is the function of the role occupant's feeling that some functions which should properly belong to his / her role are transferred to / or performed by some other role. This can also happen when the functions are performed by the role occupant but the credit for them goes to someone else. Another manifestation is in the form of underutilisation in the role.

5. **Role Overload (RO):** When the role occupant feels that there are too many expectations from the significant roles in his/her role set, he/she experiences role overload. There are two aspects of this stress: quantitative and qualitative. The former refers to having too much to do, while latter refers to things being too difficult and the accountability in the role.
6. **Role Isolation (RI):** This type of role stress refers to the psychological distance between the occupant's role and other roles in the same role set. It is also defined as role distance which is different from inter-role distance (IRD), in the sense that while IRD refers to the distance among various occupied by the same individual, role isolation (RI) is characterized by the feelings that others do not reach out easily, indicative of the absence of strong linkages of one's role with other roles. This can be geographic or systematic.
7. **Personal Inadequacy (PI):** This type of stress arises when the role occupant feels that he/she does not have the necessary skills and training for effectively performing the functions expected from his/her role. This is bound to happen when the organizations do not impart periodic training to enable the employees to cope with the fast changes both within and outside the organization.
8. **Self-Role Distance (SRD):** When the role a person occupies goes against his/her self-concept, then he/she feels self-role distance type of stress. This is essentially a conflict arising out of mismatch between the person and his/her job.

**9. Role Ambiguity (RA):** It refers to the lack of clarity about the expectations of the role which may arise out of lack of information or understanding. It may exist in relation to activities, responsibilities, personal styles, and norms and may operate at three stages:

- When the role sender holds his expectations about the role,
- When he/she sends it, and
- When the occupant receives those expectations

**10. Resource Inadequacy (Rin):** This type of stress is evident when the role occupant feels that he/she is not provided with adequate resources for performing the functions expected from his/her role.

## **JOB BURNOUT**

- job burnout is a type of stress linked to work. It includes being worn out physically or emotionally. Job burnout also may involve feeling useless, powerless and empty.
- Burnout isn't a medical diagnosis. Some experts think that other conditions, such as depression, are behind burnout. Burnout can raise the risk of depression. But depression and burnout are different, and they need different treatments.
- Certain personality traits may affect the risk of burnout. Other factors, such as past work experiences, also can affect burnout risk. That helps explain why if two people are dealing with the same job issues, one might have job burnout while the other does not.
- Whatever the cause, job burnout can affect your physical and mental health. Here are some tips on how to know if you have job burnout and what you can do about it.
- Burnout can be difficult to describe. However, it's not a medical condition. According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, burnout is defined as "physical, emotional or mental exhaustion, accompanied by decreased motivation, lowered performance and negative attitudes towards oneself and others."
- You may not realize you've hit burnout until it's too late when you've crossed the line between "really tired" and "too exhausted to function." Alternatively, you might be the type of personality who likes to stay busy, and might not recognize when you're doing too much.

- “If you’re used to going 100 miles an hour, and then suddenly take your foot off the accelerator, you’re now still going at 85,” says Dr. Borland. “However, you may feel that that’s somehow not good enough because you’re so used to going at 100 miles an hour. There will be times where you have to go a little faster, but we can’t sustain that 100 miles an hour all the time.”
- Burnout also happens when your work-life balance gets out of sync. This has been a common occurrence in the last few years, with the rise in remote work and technology permeating our daily lives.

### **Job burnout symptoms**

To find out if you might have job burnout, answer these questions:

- Do you question the value of your work?
- Do you drag yourself to work and have trouble getting started?
- Do you feel removed from your work and the people you work with?
- Have you lost patience with co-workers, customers or clients?
- Do you lack the energy to do your job well?
- Is it hard to focus on your job?
- Do you feel little satisfaction from what you get done?
- Do you feel let down by your job?
- Do you doubt your skills and abilities?
- Are you using food, drugs or alcohol to feel better or to numb how you feel?
- Have your sleep habits changed?
- Do you have headaches, stomach or bowel problems, or other physical complaints with no known cause?

### **Possible causes of job burnout**

There are different causes of job burnout. They include:

1. **Lack of control.** Not having a say in how you do your job, such as your schedule, assignments or workload, can lead to job burnout. Not having what you need to do your work also can add to burnout.
2. **Lack of clarity about what's expected of you.** If you're not sure what your boss or others want from you, you're not likely to feel like you're doing a good job.
3. **Conflicts with others.** Maybe you work with an office bully. Or you feel that co-workers are against you. Or your boss is too involved with your work. These conflicts can add to job stress.
4. **Too much or too little to do.** Maybe your job is boring. Or it's so busy you can't keep up with the demands. In these situations, you need a lot of energy to stay focused. This can lead to fatigue and job burnout.
5. **Lack of support.** If you feel alone at work and in your personal life, you might feel more stressed.
6. **Problems with work-life balance.** Problems with work-life balance. Maybe your work takes up so much of your time and energy that you have nothing left for family and friends. This lack of balance can lead to job burnout.

### **Types of Burnout**

These are four types of burnout:



**Overload burnout:** This happens when you work harder and harder, becoming frantic in your pursuit of success. If you experience this, you may be willing to risk your health and personal life to feel successful.

**Under-challenged burnout:** This happens when you feel underappreciated and bored. Maybe your job doesn't provide learning opportunities or have room for professional growth. If you feel under-challenged, you may distance yourself, become cynical, and avoid responsibilities.

**Neglect burnout:** This happens when you feel helpless. If things aren't going right, you may believe you're incompetent or unable to keep up with your responsibilities. Such burnout can be closely connected to imposter syndrome, a psychological pattern in which you doubt your abilities, talents, or accomplishments.

**Habitual burnout:** The most serious phase of burnout, habitual burnout happens when your physical and mental fatigue is chronic. You feel sad and your behavior changes. Sometimes, you can cross over into depression and suicidal thoughts. It's crucial to seek help at this stage

### **Stages of Burnout**

Burnout develops over time, and it's hard to realize at first. Two psychologists, Gail North and Herbert Freudenberger, came up with 12 stages of burnout.

**An urgent need to prove yourself.** In this earliest phase of burnout, you want to do well to the point of perfectionism for fear of not fulfilling demands.

**Working harder.** You feel the need to do everything yourself and complete tasks as soon as possible.

**Neglecting your needs.** You think the stress of work or activities, such as caregiving, is normal. You neglect your social life and look down on others who pursue one. You begin to make small mistakes.

**More interpersonal conflicts.** You have conflicts with co-workers, friends, or your partner. You don't sleep well, have other physical complaints, or become forgetful.

**Revision of values.** You see things differently and begin to seem insensitive to others around you. Friends and family become secondary to your goals.

**Denial.** Bitterness and cynicism creep in, and you begin to cut yourself off from others, becoming impatient, intolerant, and angry. Your performance suffers, and you feel physical discomfort.

**Withdrawal.** Dealing with others feels like a burden. You get angry if someone criticizes you, and you may feel disoriented or helpless. You may try to self-medicate with alcohol or illegal substances.

**Behavioral changes.** Apathy sets in and nothing matters. You avoid additional responsibilities.

**Depersonalization.** You lose your sense of identity, seeing yourself only as the vessel through which work and responsibilities are completed. Your life feels meaningless, and you begin to neglect your health.

**Feeling empty.** Exhaustion, anxiety, and panic set in.

**Despair.** You may have feelings of self-hatred or depression coupled with suicidal thoughts.

**Total burnout.** This last phase of mental and emotional collapse requires immediate care.

## **Costs of job burnout**

Doing nothing about job burnout can make the problems worse. As a result, you might:

- Feel drained.
- Not feel able to cope.
- Not be able to sleep.
- Be sad, angry, irritable or not care.
- Use more alcohol or other substances.
- Get heart disease, high blood pressure or type 2 diabetes.
- Be more likely to get sick.

## **Handling job burnout**

Burnout often involves things in the workplace that you can't control. But there are ways to control how you cope with the stress. To get started:

**Look at your options.** Talk to your boss about your concerns. Maybe you can work together to make changes or solve problems. Set realistic goals for what must get done. Find out what can wait. If things at work are not likely to change, you might look for a job that would be a better fit for you.

**Seek support.** Ask co-workers, friends or loved ones for support. Talking to others might help you cope. Feeling like you belong protects against burnout. If your job offers an employee assistance program, look at the services offered.

**Try a relaxing activity.** Look for activities that can help with stress. Examples are yoga, meditation or tai chi. Something as simple as taking some deep breaths a few times a day can help relieve tension.

**Get some exercise.** Regular physical activity can help you cope with stress. It also can take your mind off work.

**Get some sleep.** Sleep restores well-being and helps protect your health.

**Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness is being aware of what's going on inside you and around you without judging or reacting. This practice can help you deal with what's happening on the job.

**Learn to say no** Set clear boundaries and recognize your limitations to avoid overextending yourself. Learning to say no to one thing allows you to say yes to something you want to do.

**Start a gratitude list.** Shift your focus to what is positive in your work life, a practice that can lower stress and improve health. Each day, list two or three things you are grateful for

**Be the example.** Set the office example by elevating your engagement with key individuals, avoiding negative influences, asking for what you need and accepting your limitations.