



Literature Review on Stress Management with Specific Reference to Organisational Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Severe stress that is sustained over a long period of time can take a major toll on caregivers' well-being. If steps are not taken to periodically relieve these pressures, caregivers face a high risk of burnout and may suffer from a host of physical and emotional problems. Prolonged stress is known to contribute to depression, a weakened immune system, high blood pressure, heart disease, and other negative health outcomes.

KEYWORDS :

Introduction: Causes of Stress

The most frequent reasons for "stressing out" fall into three main categories:

1. The unsettling effects of change
2. The feeling that an outside force is challenging or threatening you
3. The feeling that you have lost personal control.

Life events such as marriage, changing jobs, divorce, or the death of a relative or friend are the most common causes of stress. Although life-threatening events are less common, they can be the most physiologically and psychologically acute. They are usually associated with public service career fields in which people experience intense stress levels because of imminent danger and a high degree of uncertainty—police officer, fire and rescue worker, emergency relief worker, and the military.

You may not plan to enter a high-stress career, but as a college student, you may find that the demands of college life can create stressful situations. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) notes some of the more common stressors for college students:

- Increased academic demands
- Being on your own in a new environment
- Changes in family relations
- Financial responsibilities
- Changes in your social life
- Exposure to new people, ideas, and temptations
- Awareness of your sexual identity and orientation
- Preparing for life after graduation.

Symptoms of Distress

Symptoms of stress fall into three general, but interrelated, categories—physical, mental, and emotional. Review this list carefully. If you find yourself frequently experiencing these symptoms, you are likely feeling *distressed*:

- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Heart problems, such as palpitations
- Inability to focus/lack of concentration
- Sleep disturbances, whether it's sleeping too much or an inability to sleep
- Sweating palms/shaking hands
- Anxiety
- Sexual problems.

Even when you don't realize it, stress can cause or contribute to serious physical disorders. It increases hormones such as adrenaline and corticosterone, which affect your metabolism, immune reactions, and other stress responses. That can lead to increases in your heart rate, respiration, blood pressure, and physical demands on your internal organs. Behavioral changes are also expressions of stress. They can include:

- Irritability
- Disruptive eating patterns (overeating or under eating)
- Harsh treatment of others
- Increased smoking or alcohol consumption

Stress is your body's normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way. These reactions can have positive and negative effects.

Stress has positive effects when it makes us deal constructively with daily problems and challenges. It can help you stay focused, energetic, and alert. But if it becomes continuous, stress stops being helpful and starts causing negative effects on your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships, and your quality of life. If not managed, stress can lead to high blood pressures, heart disease, drug and alcohol abuse, or depression.

Stress may be considered as any physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental unrest and that may be a factor in causing disease. Physical and chemical factors that can cause stress include trauma, infections, toxins, illnesses, and injuries of any sort. Emotional causes of stress and tension are numerous and varied. While many people associate the term *stress* with psychological stress, scientists and physicians use this term to denote any force that impairs the stability and balance of bodily functions.

If stress disrupts body balance and function, then is all stress bad? Not necessarily. A mild degree of stress and tension can sometimes be beneficial. For example, feeling mildly stressed when carrying out a project or assignment often compels us to do a good job, focus better, and work energetically.

Likewise, exercising can produce a temporary stress on some body functions, but its health benefits are indisputable. It is only when stress is overwhelming, or poorly managed, that its negative effects appear.

An important goal for those under stress is the *management* of life stresses. *Elimination* of stress is unrealistic, since stress is a part of normal life. It's impossible to completely eliminate stress, and it would not be advisable to do so. Instead, we can learn relaxation techniques and other methods to manage stress so that we have control over our stress and its effects on our physical and mental health.

Objectives:

1. Manage workload.

Set priority levels for tasks with a realistic work plan.
Delegate existing workloads so workers are not attempting disaster response in addition to their usual jobs.

2. Balance lifestyle.

Get physical exercise and stretch muscles when possible.
Eat nutritiously and avoid excessive junk food, caffeine, alcohol, or tobacco.
Get adequate sleep and rest, especially on longer assignments.
Maintain contact and connection with primary social supports.

What causes stress?

Stress is often caused by some type of change. Even positive changes, like marriage or a job promotion, can be stressful. Stress can be short-term or long-term.

Common Causes of...	
short-term stress	long-term stress
Too much to do and not much time Lots of little problems in the same day Getting lost Having an argument	Illness Divorce or problems in a marriage Death of a loved one Problems at work Money problems Caring for someone who is sick

What are the signs of stress?

Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms	
Cognitive Symptoms	Emotional Symptoms
Memory problems Inability to concentrate Poor judgment Seeing only the negative Anxious or racing thoughts Constant worrying	Moodiness Irritability or short temper Agitation, inability to relax Feeling overwhelmed Sense of loneliness and isolation Depression or general unhappiness
Physical Symptoms	Behavioral Symptoms
Aches and pains Diarrhea or constipation Nausea, dizziness Chest pain, rapid heartbeat Loss of sex drive Frequent colds	Eating more or less Sleeping too much or too little Isolating yourself from others Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

What are the health effects of stress?

The long-term activation of the stress-response system—and the subsequent overexposure to cortisol and other stress hormones—can disrupt almost all your body's processes. This puts you at increased risk of numerous health problems, including:

- Heart disease
- Sleep problems
- Digestive problems
- Depression
- Obesity
- Memory impairment
- Worsening of skin conditions, such as eczema

That's why it's so important to find healthy ways to manage the stress in your life.

What are the benefits of managing stress?

Managing stress can help you:

- Sleep better
- Control your weight
- Lessen neck and back pain
- Get along better with family and friends
- Concentrate

It's important to stay positive. Being prepared and in control of your situation will help you feel less stress.

Take action at work

Follow these tips for preventing and managing stress at work.

Plan your time. Think ahead about how you are going to use your time. Write a to-do list and decide which tasks are the most important. Be realistic about how long each task will take. Read more **time management tips**.

Prepare yourself. Giving a presentation or having a difficult conversation with a co-worker can be quite stressful. Explore the many **Professional and Organizational Development** courses designed to help you prepare for such events.

Relax with deep breathing. Excessive stress often causes us to hold our breath or take shallow breaths. Try these **5-minute relaxation techniques**.

Relax your muscles. Stress causes tension in your muscles. Stretching can help you relax.

Exercise daily. Physical activity can reduce the effects of stress, relax your muscles, and improve your overall mood. Read more about **fitness**.

Good nutrition. Stress and poor eating habits often go together. Give your body plenty of energy by eating fruits, vegetables, and protein throughout the day. Read more about **nutrition**.

Get help if you need it. The UW has many resources available to help you through stress. See **Counseling and Support**

According to NIMH, the following symptoms are signs of major depression:

- Sadness, anxiety, or "empty" feelings
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia, oversleeping, or waking much earlier than usual)
- Appetite and weight changes (either loss or gain)
- Feelings of hopelessness, guilt, and worthlessness
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
- Difficulty concentrating, making decisions, or remembering
- Irritability or excessive crying
- Chronic aches and pains not explained by another physical condition.

It's normal to have some signs of depression some of the time. But the NIMH says that if someone has five or more symptoms for two weeks or longer, or suffers noticeable changes in normal functioning, that person should go to a mental health professional for evaluation. Depressed people often may not be thinking clearly and may therefore not seek help on their own. They frequently require encouragement from others—they "need help to get help." Mental health professionals say depression among college students is a serious problem. A recent UCLA survey of college freshmen indicates that today's students are feeling more overwhelmed and stressed than students did 15 years ago. The National Mental Health Association reports that more than 30 percent of college freshmen report feeling overwhelmed a great deal of the time. If you think you might be depressed, you should talk with a qualified health-care or mental-health professional. The resident adviser in your dorm, the student health centre, your family health-care provider, or a clergy member can help steer you to treatment resources. Several effective treatments for depression are available, and—depending on the severity of the symptoms—can provide relief in just a few weeks. But individuals respond differently to treatment. If you don't start feeling better after a few weeks, talk to your treatment provider about other treatments, or seek a second opinion.

Medical Plan Provider Resources:

Group Health offers tips on how to relax your mind and body. Many of these techniques can be used both at work and at home.

- **Breathing exercises for relaxation**
- **Using guided imagery to relax**
- **Learning to meditate**
- **Progressive muscle relaxation**
- **Practicing yoga to relax**

External Resources:

Managing Stress tutorial (Patient Education Institute) This interactive tutorial provides an overview of stress and strategies to prevent and manage it.

Medline Plus (U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health) This site provides links to a variety of stress reduction and management related resources.

Stress Management Health Center (WebMD) Learn about stress management and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), its effects on the body, and how to manage stress.

How to Reduce, prevent, and Cope with Stress

It may seem that there’s nothing you can do about stress. The bills won’t stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your career and family responsibilities will always be demanding. But you have more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you’re in control of your life is the foundation of stress management. Managing stress is all about taking charge: of your thoughts, emotions, schedule, and the way you deal with problems

Identify the sources of stress in your life

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life. This isn’t as easy as it sounds. Your true sources of stress aren’t always obvious, and it’s all too easy to overlook your own stress-inducing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Sure, you may know that you’re constantly worried about work deadlines. But maybe it’s your procrastination, rather than the actual job demands, that leads to deadline stress.

To identify your true sources of stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses:

- Do you explain away stress as temporary (“I just have a million things going on right now”) even though you can’t remember the last time you took a breather?
- Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life (“Things are always crazy around here”) or as a part of your personality (“I have a lot of nervous energy, that’s all”).
- Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?

Until you accept responsibility for the role you play in creating or maintaining it, your stress level will remain outside your control.

Start a stress journal

A stress journal can help you identify the regular stressors in your life and the way you deal with them. Each time you feel stressed, keep track of it in your journal. As you keep a daily log, you will begin to see patterns and common themes. Write down:

- What caused your stress (make a guess if you’re unsure).
- How you felt, both physically and emotionally.
- How you acted in response.
- What you did to make yourself feel better.

Look at how you currently cope with stress

Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. Your stress journal can help you identify them. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy, helpful or unproductive? Unfortunately, many people cope with stress in ways that compound the problem.

Unhealthy ways of coping with stress

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

Smoking Drinking too much Overeating or under eating Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities	Using pills or drugs to relax Sleeping too much Procrastinating Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)
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Learning healthier ways to manage stress

If your methods of coping with stress aren’t contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it’s time to find healthier ones. There are many healthy ways to manage and cope with stress, but they all require change. You can either change the situation or change your reaction. When deciding which option to choose, it’s helpful to think of the four As: avoid, alter, adapt, or accept.

Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no “one size fits all” solution to managing it. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

Dealing with Stressful Situations: The Four A’s

Change the situation: Avoid the stressor. Alter the stressor.	Change your reaction: Adapt to the stressor. Accept the stressor.
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Stress management strategy #1: Avoid unnecessary stress

Not all stress can be avoided, and it’s not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed. You may be surprised, however, by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

Learn how to say “no” – Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, refuse to accept added responsibilities when you’re close to reaching them. Taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.

Avoid people who stress you out – If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can’t turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.

Take control of your environment – If the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic’s got you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.

Avoid hot-button topics – If you get upset over religion or politics, cross them off your conversation list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it’s the topic of discussion.

Pare down your to-do list – Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you’ve got too much on your plate, distinguish between the “shoulds” and the “musts.” Drop tasks that aren’t truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

Stress management strategy #2: Alter the situation

If you can’t avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Figure out what you can do to change things so the problem doesn’t present itself in the future. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

Express your feelings instead of bottling them up. If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don’t voice your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will likely remain the same.

Be willing to compromise. When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you’ll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.

Be more assertive. Don’t take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them. If you’ve got an exam to study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk.

Manage your time better. Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you’re stretched too thin and running behind, it’s hard to stay calm and focused. But if you plan ahead and make sure you don’t overextend yourself, you can alter the amount of stress you’re under.

Stress management strategy #3: Adapt to the stressor

If you can’t change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

Reframe problems. Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favourite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.

Look at the big picture. Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is

no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.

Adjust your standards. Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with “good enough.”

Focus on the positive. When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

Adjusting Your Attitude

How you think can have a profound effect on your emotional and physical well-being. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation. If you see good things about yourself, you are more likely to feel good; the reverse is also true. Eliminate words such as “always,” “never,” “should,” and “must.” These are telltale marks of self-defeating thoughts.

Stress management strategy #4: Accept the things you can't change

Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.

Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond our control— particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.

Look for the upside. As the saying goes, “What doesn't kill us makes us stronger.” When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.

Share your feelings. Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.

Learn to forgive. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

Stress management strategy #5: Make time for fun and relaxation

Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you'll be in a better place to handle life's stressors when they inevitably come.

Healthy ways to relax and recharge

Go for a walk. Spend time in nature. Call a good friend. Sweat out tension with a good workout. Write in your journal. Take a long bath. Light scented candles.	Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea. Play with a pet. Work in your garden. Curl up with a good book. Listen to music. Watch a comedy.
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Don't get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.

Set aside relaxation time. Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.

Connect with others. Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.

Do something you enjoy every day. Make time for leisure activities

that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.

Keep your sense of humor. This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

Stress management strategy #6: Adopt a healthy lifestyle

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.

Exercise regularly. Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.

Eat a healthy diet. Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.

Reduce caffeine and sugar. The temporary “highs” caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and you'll sleep better.

Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs. Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don't avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.

Get enough sleep. Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally

How Can I Eliminate Stress from My Life?

As we have seen, positive stress adds anticipation and excitement to life, and we all thrive under a certain amount of stress. Deadlines, competitions, confrontations, and even our frustrations and sorrows add depth and enrichment to our lives. Our goal is not to eliminate stress but to learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us. Insufficient stress acts as a depressant and may leave us feeling bored or dejected; on the other hand, excessive stress may leave us feeling “tied up in knots.” What we need to do is find the optimal level of stress which will individually motivate but not overwhelm each of us.

How Can I Tell What is Optimal Stress for Me?

There is no single level of stress that is optimal for all people. We are all individual creatures with unique requirements. As such, what is distressing to one may be a joy to another. And even when we agree that a particular event is distressing, we are likely to differ in our physiological and psychological responses to it.

The person who loves to arbitrate disputes and moves from job site to job site would be stressed in a job which was stable and routine, whereas the person who thrives under stable conditions would very likely be stressed on a job where duties were highly varied. Also, our personal stress requirements and the amount which we can tolerate before we become distressed changes with our ages.

It has been found that most illness is related to unrelieved stress. If you are experiencing stress symptoms, you have gone beyond your optimal stress level; you need to reduce the stress in your life and/or improve your ability to manage it.

How Can I Manage Stress Better?

Identifying unrelieved stress and being aware of its effect on our lives is not sufficient for reducing its harmful effects. Just as there are many sources of stress, there are many possibilities for its management. However, all require effort toward change: changing the source of stress and/or changing your reaction to it. How do you proceed?

1. Become aware of your stressors and your emotional and physical reactions.
- Notice your distress. Don't ignore it. Don't gloss over your problems.

- Determine what events distress you. What are you telling yourself about meaning of these events?
 - Determine how your body responds to the stress. Do you become nervous or physically upset? If so, in what specific ways?
2. Recognize what you can change.
 - Can you change your stressors by avoiding or eliminating them completely?
 - Can you reduce their intensity (manage them over a period of time instead of on a daily or weekly basis)?
 - Can you shorten your exposure to stress (take a break, leave the physical premises)?
 - Can you devote the time and energy necessary to making a change (goal setting, time management techniques, and delayed gratification strategies may be helpful here)?
 3. Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress.
 - The stress reaction is triggered by your perception of danger... physical danger and/or emotional danger. Are you viewing your stressors in exaggerated terms and/or taking a difficult situation and making it a disaster?
 - Are you expecting to please everyone?
 - Are you overreacting and viewing things as absolutely critical and urgent? Do you feel you must always prevail in every situation?
 - Work at adopting more moderate views; try to see the stress as something you can cope with rather than something that overpowers you.
 - Try to temper your excess emotions. Put the situation in perspective. Do not labor on the negative aspects and the "what ifs."
 4. Learn to moderate your physical reactions to stress.
 - Slow, deep breathing will bring your heart rate and respiration back to normal.
 - Relaxation techniques can reduce muscle tension. Electronic biofeedback can help you gain voluntary control over such things as muscle tension, heart rate, and blood pressure.
 - Medications, when prescribed by a physician, can help in the short term in moderating your physical reactions. However, they alone are not the answer. Learning to moderate these reactions on your own is a preferable long-term solution.
 5. Build your physical reserves.
 - Exercise for cardiovascular fitness three to four times a week (moderate, prolonged rhythmic exercise is best, such as walking, swimming, cycling, or jogging).
 - Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals.
 - Maintain your ideal weight.
 - Avoid nicotine, excessive caffeine, and other stimulants.
 - Mix leisure with work. Take breaks and get away when you can.
 - Get enough sleep. Be as consistent with your sleep schedule as possible.
 6. Maintain your emotional reserves.
 - Develop some mutually supportive friendships/relationships.
 - Pursue realistic goals which are meaningful to you, rather than goals others have for you that you do not share.
 - Expect some frustrations, failures, and sorrows.
 - Always be kind and gentle with yourself—be a friend to yourself

Conclusion:

As we have seen, positive stress adds anticipation and excitement to life, and we all thrive under a certain amount of stress. Deadlines, competitions, confrontations, and even our frustrations and sorrows add depth and enrichment to our lives. Our goal is not to eliminate stress but to learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us. Insufficient stress acts as a depressant and may leave us feeling bored or dejected; on the other hand, excessive stress may leave us feeling "tied up in knots." What we need to do is find the optimal level of stress which will individually motivate but not overwhelm each of us.

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