



Stress Management : Necessity for Survival in Recessionary Trends

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ABSTRACT

Ever since the concept of stress started being used in psychological circles in the West in 1920s and 1930s, much research has been carried out on stress and techniques of stress management. It has gained significant attention from researchers and practicenairs of several branches of knowledge like medicine, psychology, physiology, endocrinology, healthcare, HRD etc. The 'stress' is a song being increasingly sung by modern Wellness Gurus. It has become a buzz word across corporate corridors. Companies are spending a whole lot of money for providing their employees with facilities like Yoga classes, Gym, Stress Management trainings etc.

One may ask why there are so much hues and cries about stress. This paper is an attempt to answer this question. We are living in the world where highest temples of capitalism are collapsing. We have survived the worst economic recession ever seen in past 60 years. Though stress is an age old phenomenon, this issue deserves a special attention in times when global economic crises are messing with our heads.

Introduction:

"People are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

-Abraham Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln is considered to be one of the greatest leaders and thinkers in the history of human kind. And so is this statement, powerful and prestigious with his name. However, a man in the middle of his misery, with no job or money in his pocket and almost drunk in grief may not find this idea very cool. The point is that, reality is sometimes a rude jock and staying happy and hopeful is not just about making up one's mind.

People all over the world are looking for a way to live with a positive outlook in the middle of uncertainty and failure, and of course to turn it into success. When the whole world is in the crunch of economic slowdown, cut throat competition, the corporate and its people are crossing their fingers for a deliverance from misery and stress.

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), stress is causing lost productivity, absenteeism, turnover and increased medical costs, with a combined cost estimated to be more than \$300 billion per year. When the APA completed its survey, "Stress in America", it reported that the levels of stress felt by Americans can cause personal and relational problems and wrecks havoc on an individual's health. The obvious health impacts include fatigue, lack of motivation and interest, feeling depressed, headaches and muscular tension. In fact, over half of Americans say stress has caused them to lose sleep in the past month.

What is stress?

The term 'stress' is a form of the Middle English destresse, derived via Old French from the Latin stringere. This originally means to draw tight. It had long been in use in physics to refer to the internal distribution of a force exerted on a material body, resulting in strain.

The term stress was first employed in a biological context by the endocrinologist Hans Selye in the 1930s. The concept was later broadened and popularized to include inappropriate physiological and/or psychological response to any situation. It covers a wide range of phenomena, from mild irritation to drastic dysfunction that may cause severe health breakdown. One of the earliest researches was done on stress by Hans Selye. In his usage stress refers to a condition and stressor to

the stimulus causing it. In simple terms we can say that it refers to the consequence of the failure of an organism – human or animal – to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats, whether actual or imagined. Stress is studied even more sensitively in recent decades because of an awfully increased level of stress in the modern society.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the term was occasionally being used in psychological circles to refer to a mental strain or unwelcome happening or a harmful environmental agent that could cause illness. Walter Cannon used it in 1934 to refer to external factors that disrupted what he called homeostasis. From the late 1960s, Selye's concept started to be taken up by academic psychologists, who sought to quantify 'life stress' by scoring 'significant life events', and a large amount of research was undertaken to examine links between stress and disease of all kinds. By the late 1970s stress had become the greatest concern of medical area to the general population, and more basic research was called for to better address the issue.

Impact of stress on general health:

Stress can significantly affect many of the body's immune systems, as can an individual's perceptions of, and reactions to, stress. The term 'psycho neuroimmunology' is used to describe the interactions between the mental state, nervous and immune systems, as well as research on the interconnections of these systems. Immune system changes can create more vulnerability to infection, and have been observed to increase the potential for an outbreak of psoriasis for people with that skin disorder.

How do you know you are under stress?

Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and demands. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Stress isn't always bad. In small doses, it can help you perform under pressure and motivate you to do your best. But when you're constantly running in emergency mode, your mind and body pay the price.

Stress symptoms commonly include a state of alarm and adrenaline production, short-term resistance as a coping mechanism, and exhaustion, as well as irritability, muscular tension, inability to concentrate and a variety of physiological reactions such as headache and elevated heart rate. It can also cause heart attack or stroke in extreme cases. Stress is harmful to an organization as much as to an individual. An or-

ganization may suffer from lost productivity, high attrition rate or high absenteeism.

Stress Test:

Levels of stress can be measured. One way is through the use of the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale to rate stressful life events. Changes in blood pressure and galvanic skin response can also be measured to test stress levels, and changes in stress levels. A digital thermometer can be used to evaluate changes in skin temperature, which can indicate activation of the fight-or-flight response drawing blood away from the extremities.

While some tests, such as the Trier Social Stress Test, attempt to compare people's stress levels despite differences in their personalities, testing for stress in a standardized manner has been inherently difficult. Some people may be able to process many stressors at the same time, while others start to feel burned out just from managing a few.

Stress Management:

Stress management is the need of the hour. However hard we try to go beyond a stress situation, life seems to find new ways of stressing us out and plaguing us with anxiety attacks. Moreover, be it our anxiety, mind-body exhaustion or our erring attitudes, we tend to overlook causes of stress and the conditions triggered by those. In such unsettling moments we often forget that stressors, if not escapable, are fairly manageable and treatable.

Stress reactions, relaxation responses and stress management techniques are some of the body's important built-in response systems. Unfortunately, today, we don't get relaxing and soothing situations without asking. To be relaxed we have to strive to create such situations. This indicates that we cannot simply rely on our biological system to resist stress. We need to develop techniques through which we can manage our stress. Stress management is those sets of techniques which help us lead a productive life on threshold. How to be your own stress manager: Techniques and tips

Any passing mood or feeling can overpower and lay us low. Sadness wafts in and soon takes charge, as do anger, envy, jealousy, sloth and depression. We find it difficult to get on top of these feelings and instead put ourselves under their control, allowing them to dictate our thoughts, words and actions. We become the emotion - angry, envious or sad - without choice in the matter. These are the most common problems faced by almost every one of us is depleted.

Tips for stress management:

PEEP: PEEP means Place for Everything and Everything at its Place. Mess creates stress. PEEP a very simple but very effective method to keep us out of stress and improve our efficiency. Decide a fixed place for all important documents and articles. Make sure that they are available at the pre-decided place. This will save your time, improve certainty, and consequently reduce stress.

Take a power nap: Close your eyes, take a few deep, slow breaths, and rest. Do this for ten minutes to thirty minutes depending on the availability of time. At your surprise, a few minutes of nap will give you hours of energetic work sessions.

Listen to your favorite music: Keep a Discman or iPod on hand. Fill your intervals with folk and blues. This will refresh your mind simultaneously while you should complete odd jobs.

Keep in touch with your hobbies: Take some time from the busy schedule to join a painting class, or music/dancing club, play your favorite game. Involve yourself in anything you are

passionate about. Job satisfaction is a powerful weapon to beat at least mental stress.

Techniques for stress management:

"If the stressor persists, it becomes necessary to attempt some means of coping with the stress. In this stage the body tries to adapt to the strains or demands of the environment. However, the body cannot keep this up indefinitely. So, after a point of time, the resources of body are depleted."

-Hans Selve

Some stress conditions are beyond our control. A better approach in such cases is to consult a professional. Take training for well researched anti-stress therapies. Some very popular among them are:

Yoga and Meditation:

In Sanskrit, the term 'yoga' stands for 'union'. A yogi's ultimate aim is to be able to attain this 'union' with the Eternal Self with the help of certain mental and physical exercises. Yoga is a way of life. It is predominantly concerned with maintaining a state of equanimity at all costs. All yoga schools of thought emphasize the importance of the mind remaining calm. Attending Yoga and meditation camp is a certain way to peace of mind and healthy life. Companies are also providing such facilities for their employees.

Hypnomeditation:

As the name suggests, is a combination of two age-old disciplines—hypnosis and meditation. This unique combination of disciplines promises to heal your body and help achieve your goals by tapping the subconscious.

Psychic surgery and spiritual healing:

These are actually ancient systems of healing that rely on eliminating all negativity from the energy field around you. **As we evolve, the spirit will control the mind and body to determine our thoughts, words and actions. Spiritual healing is the techniques through which we can easily get rid of such negative energy and feelings.**

Music Therapy:

New Age medical practitioners are increasingly relying on the therapeutic powers of music to heal their patients. Music has been known to have soothing effects on stressed nerves since ancient times. But it's only recently that the curative abilities of the seven notes are being tapped. Music therapy has been a popular subject in the West where courses in music therapy are offered in many colleges.

Physiotherapy:

Physiotherapy has created a niche for itself as a leading health care system that improves health without the use of drugs or surgery. It helps in restoring normal body function and preventing disability arising from disease, trauma or injury. Physiotherapy is based on a detailed understanding of how the body works—posture, balance and movement, knowledge of diseases, injury and the healing process. Of late, people are increasingly resorting to physiotherapy as a holistic healing method to achieve a healthier life. Physiotherapy is both a curative and preventive discipline.

Conclusion:

This paper made a humble attempt to guide readers as how they can better manage their stress. However, reading this article will not reduce stress. Easier said than done! But this paper can certainly make you more aware and conscious about stress and give you an age to fight against it. We can understand that it is near to impossible to avoid stress entirely. But effective management of stress can not only reduce stress but also help us use the positive impact of stress on our productivity.

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