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STRESS MANAGEMENT: HOW TO REDUCE, PREVENT, AND COPE WITH STRESS

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ABSTRACT

Managing stress is all taking charge: taking charge of your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun-plus the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on. It may seem that there's nothing you can do about your stress level. The bills are not going to stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day for all your errands, and your career or family responsibilities will always be demanding. But you have a lot more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you are in control of your life is the foundation of stress management. Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life. This is not as easy as it sounds.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is defined as the perception of a discrepancy between environmental demands and individual capacities to fulfil these demands. Stress has been of great concern to the management, employee and other stakeholder of organisation. Occupational stress researchers agree that stress is a serious problem in many organizations. At a personal, stress might lead to increased morbidity and mortality.

Identify the sources of stress in your life

Stress management starts with identifying sources of stress in your life. 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 not 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.

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 undereating
- 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)

Learning healthier ways to manage stress

If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it is 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 is 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.

Stress management strategy 1: Avoid necessary 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.

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 favorite 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 and energy elsewhere.

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 life.

Express your feeling instead of bottling them up. If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concern in an open and respectful way. If you do not your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will likely remain the same.

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

Stress management strategy 3: Adapt to the stressor

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

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 is 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 behaviour 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 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.

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 will 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.
- Play with a pet.
- Work in your garden.
- Get a massage.
- Curl up with a good book.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a comedy.

Don't get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of your 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 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.

Learn the relaxation response

You can control your stress levels with relaxation techniques that evoke the body's relaxation response a state of restfulness that is the opposite of the stress response. Regularly practicing these techniques will build your physical and emotional resilience, heal your body, and boost your overall feelings of joy and equanimity.

Stress management strategy 6: Adopt 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 will feel more relaxed and you will sleep better.

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

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

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that stress exists in company and managers in various organizations must come up with various interventions to manage occupational stress. The traditional approach of counselling employees is not enough to manage stress. Therefore, there is the finding of this study indicate that occupational stress is mainly caused by the increase of work load, uncertainty about the future, poor communication in organizations, insufficient resources and conflicts. The findings also reveal that the outcomes associated with the occupational stress adversely affect the organisation, especially in reducing efficiency in organization operations, increasing employee turnover and the expenditure of health costs of employees, low motivation and accidents.

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