



Stress in the Workplace



What Is Stress?

- Stress defined
 - **Stress** is the physical and emotional states that we experience as a result of changes and challenges in our lives.
- Effects of stress can be mental, physical, and emotional.

Not all types of stress are negative.

Stress Definitions

Distress—events or situations that produce negative or unwanted outcomes and are difficult to control.

Eustress—events or situations that create demands on a person that result in positive outcomes (e.g., becoming a new parent, accepting a desired job).

- Eustress can still have negative effects on the body and mind because it requires physical and psychological adjustments.

Stress Response

Defined as “nonspecific response of the body to any demand imposed upon it.”

Each person appraises a situation according to previous experiences and personality.

- Some situations can have positive, neutral, or negative outcomes for different people.
- The stressor can be real or imagined and the body reacts the same way.

Physical Changes

- Increased heartbeat
- Increased rate of breathing
- Narrower blood vessels
- Slower digestion
- Tensed muscles

These physical changes are preparing the body for the fight/flight/freeze response - a short term stress response.

Biological Systems

Stress effects the endocrine system and nervous system.

Autonomic nervous system

Sympathetic nervous system

Parasympathetic nervous system

Endocrine system

Pituitary, thyroid and adrenal glands release hormones

General Adaptation Syndrome – long term stress

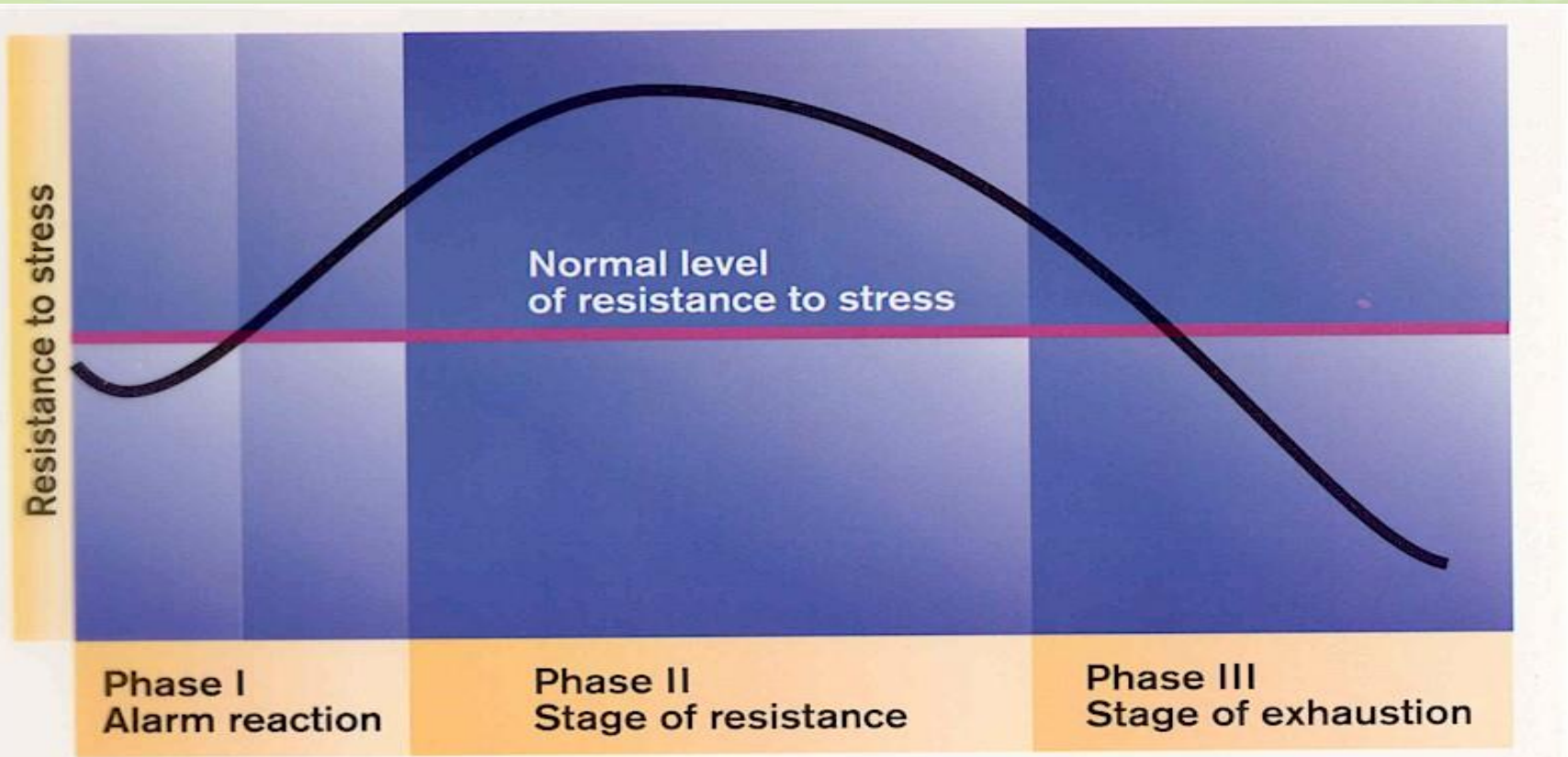
Three-stage response to stress

Alarm—adrenal glands release stress hormones

Resistance—body maintains protective reactions

Exhaustion—occurs when stress persists; the body's defense mechanisms weaken, leaving individuals more susceptible to infections

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)



Signs of Stress

Common signs & symptoms of stress:

- Frequent headaches.
- Cold or sweaty hands and feet.
- Frequent heartburn, stomach pain, or nausea.
- Panic attacks.
- Excessive sleeping, or insomnia.
- Persistent difficulty concentrating.
- Obsessive or compulsive behaviors.
- Social withdrawal or isolation.
- Constant fatigue.
- Irritability and angry episodes.
- Significant weight gain or loss.
- Consistent feelings of being overwhelmed or overloaded.

Sources of Workplace Stress

- Low salaries.
- Excessive workloads.
- Few opportunities for growth or advancement.
- Work that isn't engaging or challenging.
- Lack of social support.
- Not having enough control over job-related decisions.
- Conflicting demands or unclear performance expectations

Individual Stress Level

The Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale –
[Click this link](#) to be taken to the stress inventory to determine how recent life events may be affecting your health.

Stress Management Techniques

- Deep breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Meditation
- Imagery
- Develop time management skills
- Develop conflict resolution skills
- Physical exercise
- Create a Stress Diary

Learn how to relax

Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises and mindfulness (a state in which you actively observe present experiences and thoughts without judging them) can help melt away stress.)

Start by taking a few minutes each day to focus on a simple activity like breathing, walking or enjoying a meal. The skill of being able to focus purposefully on a single activity without distraction will get stronger with practice and you'll find that you can apply it to many different aspects of your life

Develop Healthy Responses

Instead of attempting to fight stress with fast food or alcohol, do your best to make healthy choices when you feel the tension rise. Exercise is a great stress-buster. Yoga can be an excellent choice, but any form of physical activity is beneficial.

Make time for hobbies and favorite activities. Make sure to set aside time for the things that bring you pleasure.

Getting enough good-quality sleep is also important for effective stress management. Build healthy sleep habits by limiting your caffeine intake late in the day and minimizing stimulating activities, such as computer and television use, at night

Take time to recharge.

To avoid the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout, we need time to replenish and return to our pre-stress level of functioning. This recovery process requires “switching off” from work by having periods of time when you are neither engaging in work-related activities, nor thinking about work. That's why it's critical that you disconnect from time to time, in a way that fits your needs and preferences. Don't let your vacation days go to waste. When possible, take time off to relax and unwind, so you come back to work feeling reinvigorated and ready to perform at your best. When you're not able to take time off, get a quick boost by turning off your smartphone and focusing your attention on non-work activities for a while.

Establish boundaries

Establish some work-life boundaries for yourself. That might mean making a rule not to check email from home in the evening, or not answering the phone during dinner. Although people have different preferences when it comes to how much they blend their work and home life, creating some clear boundaries between these realms can reduce the potential for work-life conflict and the stress that goes with it.

Talk to your supervisor.

Healthy employees are typically more productive, so your boss has an incentive to create a work environment that promotes employee well-being. Start by having an open conversation with your supervisor. The purpose of this isn't to lay out a list of complaints, but rather to come up with an effective plan for managing the stressors you've identified, so you can perform at your best on the job. While some parts of the plan may be designed to help you improve your skills in areas such as time management, other elements might include identifying employer-sponsored wellness resources you can tap into, clarifying what's expected of you, getting necessary resources or support from colleagues, enriching your job to include more challenging or meaningful tasks, or making changes to your physical workspace to make it more comfortable and reduce strain.

Get some support

Accepting help from trusted friends and family members can improve your ability to manage stress. Your employer may also have stress management resources available through an employee assistance program (EAP), including online information, available counseling and referral to mental health professionals, if needed. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by work stress, you may want to talk to a psychologist, who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behavior.

Diary

Track your stressors. Keep a journal for a week or two to identify which situations create the most stress and how you respond to them. Record your thoughts, feelings and information about the environment, including the people and circumstances involved, the physical setting and how you reacted. Taking notes can help you find patterns among your stressors and your reactions to them

The Four Categories of Stress

- Time stress
- Anticipatory stress
- Situational stress
- Encounter stress

Time Stress

You experience time stress when you worry about time, or the lack thereof. You worry about the number of things that you have to do, and you fear that you'll fail to achieve something important. You might feel trapped, unhappy, or even hopeless.

Common examples of time stress include worrying about deadlines or rushing to avoid being late for a meeting.

Managing Time Stress

- Time stress is one of the most common types of stress that we experience today. It is essential to learn how to manage this type of stress if you're going to work productively in a busy organization.
- 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 important priorities. Unfortunately, it's easy to get caught up in seemingly urgent tasks which actually have little impact on your overall objectives. This can leave you feeling exhausted, or feeling that you worked a full day yet accomplished nothing meaningful.
- Also, make sure that you're polite but assertive about saying "no" to tasks that you don't have the capacity to do.

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 that you're going to give.

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.
- Other techniques – like meditation– will help you develop focus and the ability to concentrate on what's happening right now, rather than on an imagined future. Consider setting aside time daily to meditate.
- Anticipatory stress can result 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 your presentation won't be interesting. Often, addressing these personal fears directly will lower your stress. In this example, if you put in extra time to practice and prepare for tough questions, you'll likely feel more prepared for the event.

Situational Stress

Situational stress is when you are in a scary situation that you have no control over. This could be an emergency. More commonly, however, it's a situation that involves conflict, or a loss of status or acceptance in the eyes of your group.

For instance, 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

- Situational stress often appears suddenly, for example, you might get caught in a situation that you completely failed to anticipate. To manage situational stress better, learn to be more self-aware. This means recognizing the "automatic" physical and emotional signals that your body sends out when you're under pressure.
- 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, and it's essential that you understand both the physical and emotional symptoms of this stress, so that you can manage them appropriately, and communicate better during these situations. 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, or you might think 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 have high rates of 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

- It's important to know when you're about to reach your limit for interactions in the day. Everyone has different symptoms for encounter stress, but a common one is withdrawing psychologically from others and working mechanically. Another common symptom is getting cranky, or impersonal with others in your interactions. When you start to experience these symptoms, do whatever you can to take a break. Go for a walk, drink water, and practice deep breathing exercises.
- Empathy is a valuable skill for coping with this type of stress, because it allows you to see the situation from the other person's perspective. This gives you greater understanding and helps you to structure your communications so that you address the other person's feelings, wants, and needs.

Stress, health and illness

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO) [2] stress, especially that relating to work, is the second most frequent health problem, impacting one third of employed people in the European Union.
- Research has connected stress to cardiovascular disease [3], metabolic syndrome [5], obesity [6], emotional overeating [7], infectious disease [10], cancer [11] and an increase in depression cases.



Thank you for reviewing the Stress in the Workplace online presentation.

To meet the requirement for the Be Well Reward Program. Please click the link below and complete the brief quiz.

[Take the Quiz, click here](#)

Sources

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