

STRESS MANAGEMENT AT WORKPLACE

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Abstract

When we feel anxious, irritation or depressed, apathy, loss of interest in work, less sleeping time, fatigue, trouble concentrating, headaches, loss of sex drive, using alcohol or drugs to cope, then we can say that, we are taking stress. Stress is good if it is under limit. Even it increases level of performance. But after that certain limit it decrease performance level. If our staff are feeling continually stressed in workplace it is important for us to take action. There are many workplace stress management strategies that leaders and managers can take to help reduces stress levels within the team. Stress management is the most important subject of modern competitive world wherein every individual is undergoing stress and strain due to a multiplicity of factors especially ever growing cut throat competition in today achieving sociality in which ever sky is not the limit of success. It is high time when social scientists must seriously come out with certain well tested strategies of preventing and coping stress. There are a lot of factors contributing to increase stress at workplace. Such as overtime, time pressure, unrealistic targets, not receiving enough support from supervisors and managers, a lack of role clarity, poor communication, and conflict with colleagues or so many. For stake of organization, management must understand the factors which increase stress among employees and also try to remove it.

Keywords: Stress, Danger Zone, Work Life, Level of Performance.

Research Question: (1) what level of stress is good for organization?
(2) What are the factors that increase level of stress among employees?
(3) What are the sophisticate techniques to reduce stress?

Research Methodologies

- Literature review.
- Survey and Sampling.
- Data is based on secondary source.
- Expert opinion.

Introduction

It is said, there is no life at all without stress. It gives energy to us to do, our work. Stress is crucial part of our life. When we feel positive stress, we are starting work seriously. If we literally explain stress, so we found that 'beneficial stress'. The term stress was coined by endocrinologist Hans Selye, consisting of the Greek prefix meaning "good" and stress literally meaning "good stress". Without taking pressure, our performance level cannot be magnifying. When students take tension or stress then, they started to study for exam. Those who not take stress, they do not do anything for their exam. Hence we can say that stress is essential part of our life, whether it is study or working life.

As we know that "excess of everything is bad" and stress too. Over stress is subject to too much physical or mental stress. When we are constantly running in emergency mode, then our mind and body pay the price. If we frequently find our self feeling overwhelmed, it is to take action to bring our nervous system back to balance.

If your staff members are feeling continually stressed in workplace it is important for you to take action. Firstly we need to find that our staff feels stress or not. Ask the following question to your own self, for know about stress level among staff in your organization.

- (1) Are your people constantly missing lunch to get work done?
- (2) Does your staff often take work home after hours?
- (3) Are reports being submitted to you incomplete in proofread or just plain below standard? (because of rush)
- (4) Do they seem overly emotional irritable?
- (5) Notice anyone attention levels fading during meetings?
- (6) Do they take holiday or causal leave?
- (7) Are your staff members hale and hearty or not?

These above questions help to explore the level of stress in our organization.

Moreover there are some other reasons also, which increase stress level among employees such as workload, meaningless work, hours of work, abilities do not match job demand, lack of training, lack of ambiguity, level of responsibility, under or over promotion, less career opportunities, lack of support, poor communication, or many more.

Survey

Below is a quiz from the Canadian Mental Health Association of Ontario you can take to help identify your stress levels:

DO YOU FREQUENTLY:	YES	NO
Neglect your diet?		
Try to do everything yourself?		
Blow up easily?		
Seek unrealistic goals?		
Fail to see the humor in situations others find funny?		
Act rude?		
Make a 'big deal' of everything?		
Look to other people to make things happen?		
Have difficulty making decisions		
Complain you are disorganized?		
Avoid people whose ideas are different from your own?		
Keep everything inside?		
Neglect exercise?		
Have few supportive relationships?		
Use sleeping pills and tranquilizers without a doctor's approval?		
Get too little rest?		
Get angry when you are kept waiting?		
Ignore stress symptoms?		
Put things off until later?		
Think there is only one right way to do something?		
Fail to build relaxation time into your day?		
Gossip?		
Race through the day?		
Spend a lot of time complaining about the past?		
Fail to get a break from noise and crowds?		

Adapted from: What's Your Stress Index? Canadian Mental Health Association.

Interpretation of your score (based on the number of “Yes” selections):

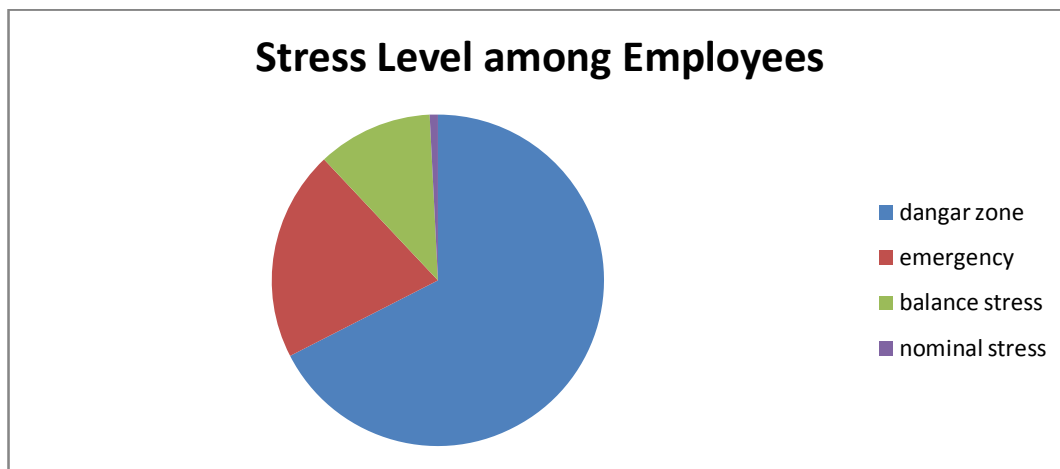
0-5: There are few hassles in your life. Make sure though, that you are not trying to deliberately avoid problems.

6-10: You've got your life in fairly good control. Work on the choices and habits that could still be causing you some unnecessary stress in your life.

11-15: You are approaching the danger zone. You may be suffering stress-related symptoms and your relationships could be strained. Think carefully about choices you've made and take relaxation breaks every day.

16-25: Emergency! It is critical that you stop and re-think how you are living; change your attitudes and pay careful attention to diet, exercise and relaxation

Output: the above survey was conducted on 150 employees. Most of them were teacher. The survey result was astonishing. The following pie chart shows result.



Maximum employees, these days suffering high level of stress. Approximate 68% employees are in danger zone and 20% are in EMERGENCY zone. Emergency is the pick of stress level, after that a person is starting to lose his health. Only 11 % people are in balance stress. And interesting fact is that, no one these days are stress less. Nominal stress does not exist. As per my survey, 0% people come under these categories.

Causes of workplace stress

- Fear of being laid off
- More overtime due to staff cutbacks

- Pressure to perform to meet rising expectations but with no increase in job satisfaction
- Pressure to work at optimum levels—all the time!
- Lack of control over how you do your work.

If we broadly speaking stress create by four main reasons.

1. Organizational stressors.
2. Personal stressors.
3. Group stressors.
4. Environmental stressors.

According to Friedman and Rosenman:

According to qualities human are divided into two categories.

- Type A personality.
 - ✓ They always eat fast.
 - ✓ They always walk fast.
 - ✓ Impatient easily.
 - ✓ Try to do a lot of work at the same time (Multitask).
 - ✓ Save their time
 - ✓ Nervousness
 - ✓ Do not wait for anyone.
 - ✓ They do not have time for relishing.
- Type B personality.
 - ✓ Patient.
 - ✓ Nothing is urgent.
 - ✓ Not like to show their achievement.
 - ✓ They play for fun not for win.

Signs and symptoms of excessive workplace stress

(1). Physiological symptoms.

- | |
|------------------------|
| ✓ Heart diseases. |
| ✓ Kindly disease. |
| ✓ High blood pressure. |
| ✓ Perspiration. |
| ✓ Digestive problems. |
| ✓ Dryness of throat. |

✓ Ulcer.
✓ Urinating frequently.
✓ Sleep disruption.

(2). Psychological symptoms.

✓ Depression
✓ Emotional instability.
✓ Feeling scared.
✓ Feeling irritable.
✓ Nervousness
✓ Tension.
✓ Job dissatisfaction.

(3). Behavioral symptoms.

✓ Absenteeism.
✓ Aggression.
✓ Smoking.
✓ Using alcohol.
✓ Grinding teeth.
✓ Losing confidence.
✓ Defensive.

Stress Management Strategies at Work Place

1.) Developing Empathy – Respect individual personality traits and quirks. No single human is the same as the other; the richness that comes up in any team is because of this difference, learn to appreciate it. Work optimally with what you have instead of trying to mould the employee according to your standards. You will find introverts, extroverts, optimistic as well as pessimistic employees in your team, don't favor or alienate anyone for their personality traits. Get to know each employee personally and interact with them at a level which is comfortable for them.

2.) Installing booths for anonymous complaints and feedbacks – There is no better way to secure the trust of employees, and reduce employee stress, than to allow them to voice their

feedback and complaints. Conduct a weekly meeting to address their concerns. Don't take any negative feedback personally; try to address it in the best way possible. Sometimes a word of encouragement or hope can assuage the deepest fears in any employee and help stress management in workplace.

3.) Providing healthy food in the canteens – Small things go a long way in creating a happy and stress free work environment. Most employees like to unwind and relax during the lunch breaks, so the canteen should be a stress free place and food should be healthy. A noisy crowded canteen which supplies limp food can offset the most optimistic of employees.

4.) Monthly one to one interactions – Most managers seem to be implementing this strategy but without any concrete results. Ask yourself if you are really empathizing with the employee's concern or are you trying to defend your point of view? These meetings should be forums for the employees to come out with their concerns and suggestions for work place improvements. They should feel confident that you are willing to give them a fair and unprejudiced hearing. In itself this can be a very useful strategy for managing stress in workplace.

5.) Offering small incentives in terms of money and paid leaves – Small incentives can go a long way in encouraging better productivity among the employees. A gift during their birthdays, small bonuses for achieving deadlines and project completion, occasional paid dinners or lunches at a good restaurant and paid leaves, can make the employees feel appreciated and encouraged while reducing work place stress.

6.) Addressing performance fear among employees – Some top performing employees tend to slack-off after a while because they feel out of place among the rest of their colleagues. Top performers need to be encouraged privately so that they don't feel discomfited among other colleagues. A low performing employee should be dealt with even more carefully, the reasons for their slack need to be addressed with alacrity – may be the work they are doing is not challenging enough or maybe there is a lack of guidance on your part.

7.) Helping employees manage time effectively – Clear guidance and deadlines help the employees organize their work more effectively. Blurred instructions can cause employee stress through confusion or lack of direction. Emphasize the need for punctuality and time management but also encourage them to wind up their work by a definite closing time. Spending extra hours in the office becomes a habit with certain employees and this actually eats into their productivity in the long run.

8.) Praising employees for performance – You can employ small gestures of encourage and praise for the top performers to acknowledge their efforts and motivate the others. Be sure to acknowledge hard workers, smart workers and out-the-box thinkers – as long as an employee is giving his or her best they should be well appreciated. A useful tip for managers in managing stress at workplace would be – don't appear partial to any particular employee.

9.) Giving employees assurances that they will not be laid off – The greatest source of employee stress is job insecurity so you should try your best to assuage this fear. Sometimes hard decisions need to be taken but the way you communicate these decisions to the team would go a long way in assuring them and keeping them less stressed.

10.) Stress relieving toys and activities in the office – To add a dash of sporty feeling to the office you can place a few stress toys at employee cubes. Sand timers, pin arts, squeeze balls, jigsaw puzzles and cubix can add some fun to bland cubes and act as stress relievers for the employees.

11.) Improving interiors – The paint and lighting used in the office can also affect employee moods and stress. Go for light colors and yellow lights to keep the mood tranquil. Bright white lights are known to create more stress. Make sure the cubes are not too cramped and some personal space is available to each employee.

12.) Placing plants at the office cubicles – There is nothing like a dash of nature to liven up sagging spirits. Thick green foliage and flowering plants create a soothing environment in the office and improve the employee feel good factor.

13.) Ensuring a less noisy environment in the office – Silence is the antidote for stress and noise the perpetrator. Talk to the employees and ask them to keep the noise level as minimal as possible, especially while they are on phones. Make the office sound proof by lining the cubes and walls with sound absorbing materials and fabric.

14.) Ensuring clean washrooms and pantries – A leaking bathroom faucet or urinal can offset the best of moods. Make sure your employ enough cleaning staff to keep the washrooms and pantries in a sanitary and spotless condition.

15.) Delegating work efficiently: Allow for proper work delegation to avoid over burdening of some employees. There are times when certain employees are over worked while others have plenty of leisure time – bad delegation is the culprit. Keep tab of the work being done by the employees and ensure judicious work circulation.

16.) Not forcing employees to attend extra-curricular activities – Respect individuality among your employees. Some of your team members will prefer solitude to gatherings; restrain yourself from forcing them to attend get-togethers and outings. Allow plenty of space

for the employees to express their individuality instead of expecting them to always behave with a group mind-set. Some managers encourage open dress codes for this very reason.

Conclusion

As per my research I found that, Stress becomes crucial part of human life. Without stress we do not take anything seriously. As per my survey I found that, maximum people suffer excess level of stress in their work life. Neither total lack of stress nor stress to excess is good.

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