

Work Life Balance: A Tool to overcome Stress of Employee in an Organisation*"The primary cause of unhappiness is never the situation, but your thoughts about it."**Eckhart Tolle***Ms. Vishakha Sharma****Asst.Professor, Management Department (AVGSIMC)****Swami Vivekanand Subharti University, Meerut, UP****Mr. Vibhor Goyal****Asst.Professor, Management Department****BDS Group of Institution (UPTU), Meerut****Abstract**

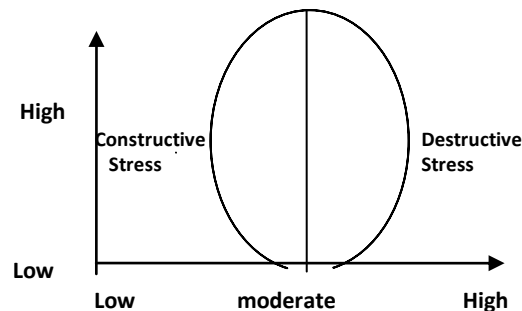
The article enlightens an integrative framework, which combines a stress management and work-life enrichment perspective. The aim is to focus on both potentials and barriers to a healthy working environment in an organization, as a means for optimizing business results. It covers personal strategies to efficient stress management/prevention and to locate new ways of optimizing work cultures and stimulating work-life synergies.

Key words: Stress, Constructive Stress, Destructive Stress, Quality of work life,

➤ WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress may be understood as state of tension experiences by an individual facing extraordinary demands, constraints or opportunities.

Two Faces of Stress



➤ Constructive Stress

- **Meaning:** Constructive Stress acts in a position manner for the individual and the organisation, e.g., winning a contest etc. it indicates a situation where an individual is in balance or within tolerable limits.

The figure shows that low to moderate amount of stress can act in a constructive or energising way.

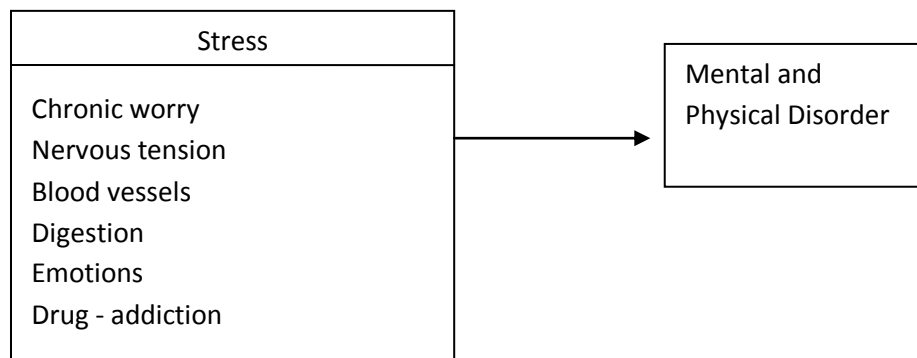
- **Consequences:** Moderate stress can increase efforts, stimulate creativity and encourage diligence in one's work.

➤ Destructive Stress

- **Meaning:** Destructive Stress or distress is not healthy for the individual and/ or organisation. Distress would indicate effects that are out of balance or outside the tolerance limits.
- **Consequences:** Excessive stress may lead to overload and break down a person's physical and mental system, absenteeism, turnover, errors, accidents and dissatisfaction and reduced performance.

Forms of Stress

Stress is understood by its different forms which may be either temporary or long term, mild or severe.



- **Milder form:** the milder form of stress is visible in digestive problems, high blood pressure, nervousness and inability to relax and insomnia.
- **Stiffer form:** if the stress is not prevented at milder stage, it becomes the stiffer form.
- **Chronic form:** chronic worries, insomnia, frustration, instability and uncooperative attitude are developed if stress is not checked initially.

Causes of Stress

The factors leading to stress among individual are called as stressors. Some of the factors/stressors acting on employees are-

- **Organizational factors-** With the growth in organizational stress and complexity, there is increase in organizational factors also which cause stress among employees. Some of such factors are-
 - Discrimination in pay/salary structure
 - Strict rules and regulations
 - Ineffective communication
 - Peer pressure
 - Goals conflicts/goals ambiguity
 - More of centralized and formal organization structure
 - Less promotional opportunities
 - Lack of employees participation in decision-making
 - Excessive control over the employees by the managers
- **Individual factors-** There are various expectations which the family members, peer, superior and subordinates have from the employee. Failure to understand such expectations or to convey such expectations lead to role ambiguity/role conflict which in turn causes employee stress. Other individual factors causing stress among employees are inherent personality traits such as being impatient, aggressive, rigid, feeling time pressure always, etc. Similarly, the family issues, personal financial problems, sudden career changes all lead to stress.
- **Job concerning factors-** Certain factors related to job which cause stress among employees are as follows-
 - Monotonous nature of job
 - Unsafe and unhealthy working conditions
 - Lack of confidentiality
 - Crowding
- **Extra-organizational factors-** There are certain issues outside the organization which lead to stress among employees. In today's modern and technology savvy world, stress has increased. Inflation, technological change, social responsibilities and rapid social changes are other extra-organizational factors causing stress.

➤ **Types of Stress**

Albrecht's four common types of stress are:

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

Let's look at each of these types of stress in detail, and discuss how they can identify and deal with each one.

1. Time Stress

One experience time stress when they worry about time, or the lack thereof. They worry about the number of things that they have to do, and fear of failure to achieve something important. They 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 they are going to work productively in a busy organization.

- a) One has to learn good **time management skills**. This can include using **To-Do Lists** , if they have to manage many simultaneous projects,
- b) **Action Programs**- Make sure that they are devoting enough time to their important priorities. Unfortunately, it's easy to get caught up in seemingly urgent tasks which actually have little impact on their overall objectives. This can leave them feeling exhausted, or feeling that they worked a full day yet accomplished nothing meaningful.

Their important tasks are usually the ones that will help them to reach their goals, and working on these projects is a better use of their time.

2. Anticipatory Stress

Anticipatory stress describes stress that individual experience concerning the future. Sometimes this stress can be focused on a specific event, such as an upcoming presentation that they are 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***

As anticipatory stress is future based, it starts by recognizing that the event they are dreading does not have to play out as we imagine.

- a) Use **positive visualization techniques** to imagine the situation going right.
- b) **Meditation** – will help them to develop focus and the ability to concentrate on what's happening right now, rather than on an imagined future. Consider setting aside time daily – even if it's only five minutes – to meditate.

3. Situational Stress

Individual experience situational stress when they are in a scary situation that they have no control over. This could be an emergency. More commonly, however, it is a situation that involves conflict, or a loss of status or acceptance in the eyes of their group. For instance, getting laid off or making a major mistake in front of their team are examples of events that can cause situational stress.

- **Managing Situational Stress**

Situational stress often appears suddenly, for example, they might get caught in a situation that they 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 their body sends out when they are under pressure.

- a) Conflict is a major source of situational stress. Learn effective **conflict resolution skills**, so that they're well-prepared to handle the stress of conflict when it arises. It is also important to learn how to **manage conflict in meetings**, since resolving group conflict can be different from resolving individual issues.
- b) Everyone reacts to situational stress differently, and it is essential that they understand both the physical and emotional symptoms of this stress, so that they can manage them appropriately. For instance, if their natural tendency is to withdraw emotionally, then learn how to **think on their feet** and communicate better during these situations. If their natural response is to get angry and shout, then learn how to **manage their emotions**.

4. Encounter Stress

Encounter stress revolves around people. They experience encounter stress when they worry about interacting with a certain person or group of people – they may not like them, or they might think that they're unpredictable.

It also occurs if their 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. It may also occur from "contact overload": when they feel overwhelmed or drained from interacting with too many people.

Managing Encounter Stress

Because encounter stress is focused entirely on people, they will manage this type of stress better by working on their people skills

- a) A good place to start is to develop greater **emotional intelligence**. Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize the emotions, wants, and needs of themselves and of others. This is an important skill in interacting with others and in building good relationships.
- b) **Empathy** is a valuable skill for coping with this type of stress, because it allows them to see the situation from the other person's perspective. This gives them greater understanding and helps them to structure their communications so that they address the other person's feelings, wants, and needs.

➤ **Symptoms of Stress**

“You will never feel truly satisfied by work until you are satisfied by life.”

Heather Schuck

Some of the symptoms of stress at workplace are as follows-

- Absenteeism, escaping from work responsibilities, arriving late, leaving early, etc.
- Deterioration in work performance, more of error prone work, memory loss, etc.
- Cribbing, over-reacting, arguing, getting irritated, anxiety, etc.
- Deteriorating health, more of accidents, etc.

Improper eating habits (over-eating or under-eating), excessive smoking and drinking, sleeplessness, etc

➤ **Stress Management**

“Brain cells create ideas. Stress kills brain cells. Stress is not a good idea.”

Frederick Saunders

Organisational life is quiet stressful. New technologies, global competitive pressure have multiplied the woes of employees in recent times. To prevent executive burnout, organisations have launched stress management as an innovative step inside their organizations.

Managing stress is about making a plan to be able to cope effectively with daily pressures. The ultimate goal is to strike a balance between life, work, relationships, relaxation and fun. By doing this an individual is able to deal with daily stress triggers and meet these challenges head on.

➤ **Management of Stress**

S.No/Category	INDIVIDUAL COPING STRAREGIES	ORGANISATIONAL COPING STRAREGIES
1	Time Management	Role clarity
2	Exercise	Supportive Climate
3	Meditation and Relaxation	Clear Career Path

➤ **Models of Stress Management**

Models
Transactional model
Health realization/innate health model

- **Transactional model**

The model contends that stress may not be a stressor if the person does not perceive the stressor as a threat but rather as positive or even challenging. Also, if the person possesses or can use adequate coping skills, then stress may not actually be a result or develop because of the stressor. The transactional model proposes that people can be taught to manage their stress and cope with their stressors. They may learn to change their perspective of the stressor and provide them with the ability and confidence to improve their lives and handle all of types of stressors.

- **Health realization/innate health model**

The health realization model focuses on the nature of thought, stating that it is ultimately a person's thought processes that determine the response to potentially stressful external circumstances. This model proposes that helping stressed individuals understand the nature of thought—especially providing them with the ability to recognize when they are in the grip of insecure thinking, disengage from it, and access natural positive feelings—will reduce their stress.

➤ **Quality of Working Life (QWL)**

Quality of work life is a generic phrase that covers a person's feelings about every dimension of work including rewards and benefits, security, working conditions, organizational and interpersonal relationships and its intrinsic meaning in person's life.

➤ **Framework for Successful work life balance in organizations: Work Life Balance strategies**

The beginning of work life balance should be made within self & at the same time by the organizations. Following are some of the strategies that can be helpful to create Work Life balance among individuals.

For the organization:

- Organizations need to reconsider that compensation and benefits are one of the major factors to attract, motivate and retain their female workforce.
- Organizations need to be supportive and empathetic towards their women employees and also trust them by providing them multiple roles and responsibilities & can have more women into leadership roles.
- There should be a proper Women Grievance Cell which listens to the complaints from it employees which can help to deal with work place harassment issues.
- Organizations can focus on Wellbeing services for the women employees offering a variety of employee assistance programs
- Organizations can initiate steps to achieve work life balance by organizing workshops, cultural fests, foreign trips, events like fashion shows, etc .Also family day celebration where activities are planned for kids, Couples, etc can help the employees in achieving work life balance.
- Companies can also educate women employees about the various Flexibility options & how to leverage these to create a productive work environment
- Organizations can help by offering family-friendly policies that accommodate flexible scheduling, respect employee boundaries, and provide sufficient resources to get the work done without excessive overtime & at the same time Training supervisors to respond to work & family needs of the employees.

For individuals

- Spending time with people that can offer the greatest support and meaning in life, whether during meal-times, on "dates," or during weekends away or on a longer vacation – helps to fill in the gap & better understanding.
- Taking family into confidence, especially children & sharing with them the stressed out phases of the year-say month/quarter/year-end pressures, conferences, product launches & all those time demanding activities, which might entail staying away from home.

- Exploring something one can share with one's spouse or child like swimming, gym, yoga, playing an instrument etc. Such involvements helps one's family understands that they are not on a 'rationed time' with their loved ones.
- Lastly, also note that if women find stress beyond control and are unable to get rid of its effects, it is always wise to take professional help. This way, one can prevent severe health disorders resulting out of stress.

Conclusion

"The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another."

William James

Organisations should seek the positive performance edge provided by constructive stress. At the same time they must also pay attention to destructive stress and its likely impact on people and work performance in negative way.

Although most work-related worries may seem too huge to shake off, once we master the art of coping with stress and are able to get rid of any negative thoughts, we would find that peace would come to us naturally.

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