UNIT 9 STRESS MANAGEMENT

Structure

9.0   OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- define stress;

- identify the causes of stress;

- analyse consequences of stress;

- develop individual strategies of coping up the stress;

- explain the organisational strategies of stress reduction; and

- suggest creation of stress free environment.

9.1   INTRODUCTION

Stress is a psychological condition and body discomfort. Stress is a common phenomenon. Every individual experiences stress at some or other time. Employees experience stress in the process of meeting the targets and working for long hours. When the person experiences a constraint inhibiting the accomplishment of desire and demand for accomplishment, it leads to potential stress. Anxiety is converted into stress and ultimately it leads to job burnout. In fact for most of the time individuals are responsible for stress. However, organisations also create stress in the individuals. Why one should be concerned about stress? The reason is that the stress has more negative consequences than positive. In this unit, you will learn the definition, causes and consequences of stress. You will be exposed to the techniques of managing stress. You will further learn the process of creating stress free environment.

9.2   DEFINITION OF STRESS

Stress is a state of discomfort experienced by an individual. Loss of emotional stability is the general expression of stress. It is generally apparent when the individual experiences a biological disorder. Stress has a positive association with the age, life styles, time constraints and the nature of occupation. Certain occupations are more prone to the stress than the others. For instance, drivers of vehicles, doctors, lawyers and managers are more likely to get stress than teacher, bankers and operating personnel. Individuals feel stress when the needs or desires are not accomplished in the normal expected ways. This is because of the natural constraints operated on the individuals. The more the intensity of the desire and greater is the uncertainty associated with the achievement of the goal, the greater is the degree of stress. Employees are working for longer hours, taking on the work once done by laid-off colleagues, meeting tighter deadlines and cutting back on expenses are some of the causes of stress. Combined to this with the double-income family demands of monthly mortgages, childcare issues and aging parents, and the result for many is anxiety, sleeplessness, irritability, and physical and mental deterioration. Perhaps these are the potential reasons for stress in the employees. Let us first learn what is stress?

In the words of Fred Luthans, stress is defined as an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological, and/or behavioural deviations for organisational participants. Ivancevich and Matteson define stress as the interaction of the individual with the environment. It is an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and/or psychological processes that are consequence of any external action, situation or event that places special physical and / or psychological demands upon a person. Schuler defines stress as a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important.

The following are the features of stress.

- Stress is both psychological and physical aspect.

- It is common to both the genders.

- It results from the deviation of expectations from actual situation.

- It is symptomatic. Potential stress appears with the symptoms. If the potential stress is ignored it leads to actual stress.

- Stress is treated to be negative. Nevertheless, it has positive consequences. This is called as eustress.

- Stress is an interactive concept. It does not spring from the internal organs of the individual. It comes from the interaction of the human being with the environment. Thus, environment has a profound influence on the stress.

- Stress is generic term. If it is applied to the context of organisation, it is known as work stress or job stress.

- Stress occurs only when the human being feels mediation of the internal or external factors.

- Stress is related to the attitude of the person. Stress does not occur when the person is having an indifferent attitude to the opportunity.

- Stress is associated with certain common biological disorders such as heart attack, stroke, diabetic, blood pressure, neurological disorders etc.

The stress is caused when a person has needs, desires, wishes and expectations and certain forces prevent the person from doing the desired activities.
Stress and anxiety are not similar concepts. Anxiety occurs as a result of emotions caused by the interactions of environmental stimuli. Thus, it is confined to the psychological disturbance. On the other hand, stress is

originated by the psychological tensions and slowly leads to physical or biological breakdown. While stress is accompanied by anxiety, the latter need not always lead to stress.

Similarly, stress and burnout are different concepts. Prolonged stress leads to burnout. It is a state of mind. It results from a continuous feeling of emotional stress. An individual feels physical, mental and emotional exhaustion. Job burnout is characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and diminished personal accomplishment. Burnout is also closely associated with the so-called helping professions such as nursing, education, and social work.

9.3 CAUSES OF STRESS

Stress is a psychological state of imbalance coupled with biological disorder. Individual experiences deviation in his biological system which is called potential stress. Potential stress moderated by individual, organisational and environmental variable leads to actual stress. The variables that convert potential stress into actual stress are known as stressors. Thus, stressors can be intra- organisational and extra organisational. Intra-organisational stress arises out of individual, group, and organisational factors. Extra organisational factors relate to environment of the organisation. The intra organisational factors causing stress are divided into individual factors and organisational factors. Let us learn them in detail.

9.3.1 Intra Organisational Factors

Individual Factors: Individual factors, which cause stress include: personality and individual differences, family problems, economic problems, life styles and role demands.

i)   ***Personality and individual differences:*** Individual basic dispositions are the main reason for potential stress. Introversion, extroversion, masculinity, rigidity, locus of control, personal life, demographic differences such as age, health, education and occupation are some of the reasons causing stress in individuals. It is found that type A personality is prone to more stress than type B personality. Type A personality is characterised by emotion and sensitivity to organisation goals, competitive spirit and achievement oriented behaviour. This leads to frustration even for small deviations from the expectations, thus feeling of more stress. Type B personality is typically relaxed, carefree, patient and less serious in achieving objectives. Thus, he never feels stress. Some propositions of personality and individual stress are:

- Age is positively related to stress. When a person grows older, his expectations also go up. If he is unable to find avenues for realising expectations, he feels stress.

- Sound health enables a person to cope up stress better than unsound health.

- Education and health are related positively and negatively. Better education provides an opportunity to understand things in a better manner. Even the level of maturity increases with better education. So better educated persons are less prone to stress. Poorly educated people in relation to the jobs are likely to feel more stress due to the poor adaptability on the jobs.

- The nature of the occupation and stress are related. Certain occupations are inherently stressful than the other occupations. For instance, doctors, lawyers, politicians etc. At the same time occupation also gives enough stress tolerance ability. Politicians are found to posses more stress tolerance ability.

- Strong urge for satisfaction of needs compel people to over work and may lead to stress.

- Greater degree of locus of control leads to stress. A person is less likely to feel stress as he believes that he can exercise control over external factors.

- Self-efficacy and stress are negatively related. Higher degree of self-efficacy elevates motivation levels. Therefore people with greater self-efficacy remain calm and effectively face stressful situation. Perception of capacity to bring changes provides greater ability to withstand stress.

- Another personal disposition related to stress is psychological hardiness. Hardiness is the ability to withstand provocation from others. People with greater psychological hardiness are able to survive and withstand stressful environment. For instance, people who remain calm even at the provocation of others and ignore the esteem are less likely to feel stress.

Individual differences in perception, job experiences, social support, hostility etc., are some of the reasons that cause stress.

- Perception helps in understanding the environment. Person possessing a positive perception understands reality and appraises the events objectively. Thus, he feels less stress.

- Job experience and stress are negatively related. As one gains experience he develops adaptability to various job and organisational demands. He realises the job expectations. He develops a mechanism to deal with stress situations. Therefore more experienced people remains cool, calm, and ignore stressors than young and inexperienced employees.

- Hostility and aggressive behaviour is positively related to stress. A person who becomes aggressive and gets quick anger is cynical and does not trust others. He feels more stress than others who are cool and calm.

ii)   *Family Problems:* Family issues influence the personal life of individuals. Sound marital relationships, marital discipline, early and healthy children may lead to happy personal life. They enjoy the life and become positive in their attitudes. So they do not tend to greater stress. On the other hand, poor marital relationships, nagging wife, family separations, extra marital relationships, disturbing children, poor settlement of family members, aging parents, dual working couple, death of spouse or other close family member are some of the reasons for greater stress in the individuals.

iii)   *Economic Problems:* Economic difficulties are the main cause of stress. Poor management of personal finances, heavy family expenditure, and constant demand for money, poor incoming earning capacity and slow financial growth in the job are some of the economic reasons responsible for greater stress. For instance, an increasing family expenditure, increased expenditure on children education and health create heavy demand for income. This creates greater stress in the individuals.

iv)   *Life Styles:* Life Styles of individuals can cause stress. The following situations of life style cause stress:

- Sedentary life styles cause greater stress.

- Individuals experiencing certain unique situations may be compelled to alter their attitude, emotions and behaviour. These are known as life trauma. Life trauma is potential reason for stress.

- Faster career changes bring more responsibilities to the individuals. Persons occupying higher positions in the younger age are likely to get heart attacks due to greater stress. This is because of inability to adapt to the new carrier responsibilities.

v) *Role Demands:* Individuals play multiple roles in their personal life and organisations. In their personal life, they play the roles of family head, husband, father, brother and son. In social life they play the roles of club members, informal community group members, members of recreation groups, religious groups and a number of other social groups. Similarly in organisations, employees play the role of superior, subordinate, co-worker, union leader, informal group leaders etc. Incidentally, all these roles are performed simultaneously. Thus, they cause anxiety and

emotion. Another potential reason is role conflict. It arises because of poor role perception, role ambiguity, role overload and role overlapping. Role ambiguity and stress are positively related. The greater the role conflict, individual experiences more stress.

Organisational Factors: An organisation is a combination of resources, goals, strategies, and policies. In order to make people to work, organisations create structure, process and working conditions. In modern organisations, number of factors create an environment of stress. The changing environmental dynamics, globalisation, organisational adjustments like mergers and acquisitions lead to stress among employees. In addition, a number of internal organisational factors cause employee stress. Some of them are poor working conditions, strained labour management relations, disputed resource allocations, co-employee behaviour, organisational design and policies, unpleasant leadership styles of the boss, misunderstandings in organisational communication, bureaucratic controls, improper motivation, job dissatisfaction, and less attention to merit and seniority. Let us learn the organisational stressors in detail.

i)   ***Working Conditions:*** Working conditions and stress are inversely related. Employees working with poor working conditions are subject to greater stress. The factors that lead to more stress are crowded work areas, dust, heat, noise, polluted air, strong odour due to toxic chemicals, radiation, poor ventilation, unsafe and dangerous conditions, lack of privacy etc.

ii) ***Organisational Tasks:*** Organisational tasks are designed to meet the objectives and goals. Poorly designed tasks lead to greater stress. Task autonomy, task inter-dependency, task demands, task overload are some of the potential reasons for stress in organisations. For instance greater the task interdependence, greater is the coordination required. This requires employees to adjust themselves to coworkers, superiors, and subordinates, irrespective of their willingness. They are expected to communicate, coordinate, exchange views, with other people irrespective of caste, creed, gender, religion and political differences. Lack of adjustment and poor tolerance to others lead to greater degree of stress.

iii) ***Administrative Policies and Strategies:*** Employee's stress is related to certain administrative strategies followed by the organisations. Down sizing, competing pressure, unfair pay structures, rigidity in rules, job rotation and ambiguous policies are some of the reasons for stress in organisations.

iv) ***Organisational Structure and Design:*** As pointed out earlier organisational structure is designed to facilitate individual's interaction in the realisation of organisational goals. Certain aspects of design like specialisation, centralisation, line and staff relationships, span of control, and organisational communication can severely create stress in organisations. For example, wider span of management compels the executive to manage large number of subordinates. This may create greater stress. Similarly, frequent line and staff conflict lead to obstacles in the work performance. Inability to resolve the conflicts lead to stress.

v) ***Organisation Process and Styles:*** A number of organisational processes are designed for meeting organisational goals. Communication process, control process, decision making process, promotion process, performance appraisal process, etc. are designed for realising organisational objectives. These processes limit the scope of functioning of employees. Improper design of various organisational processes leads to strained relationships among the employees. They may also cause de-motivation and job dissatisfaction. Consequently, employee feels stress in adapting to the processes.

vi) ***Organisational Leaderships:*** Top management is responsible for creation of a sound organisation climate and culture by appropriate managerial style. The climate provided should be free of

tensions, fear, and anxiety. Authoritarian leadership style creates a directive environment in which employees are pressurised to attain targets. They work under impersonal relationships and tight controls. This creates greater work stress to employees. On the other hand, a climate of warm and friendliness, scope for participation in decision making, non financial motivation and flexibility are encouraged under democratic leadership style. This relieves stress in the employees. Therefore, employees working under authoritarian leadership styles experience stress than employees working under democratic leadership style.

vii) Organisational Life Cycle: Every organisation moves through four phases of organisational life cycle. They are birth, growth, maturity and decline. In each of these stages the structure and the design of organisation undergoes frequent changes. In addition, human beings are subject to metamorphosis to adapt to the stages in the life cycle. In this process, employees are subject to job stress. For instance in the initial stages of organisational birth, stress is caused because of ambiguous policies and designs. In the growth stage, employees experience stress due to failure to meet conflicting demands. At the time of decline, stress is caused due to down sizing, retrenchment and loss of financial rewards and changing organisational systems.

viii) *Group Dynamics:* Groups are omni present in organisations. Groups arise out of inherent desire of human beings and spontaneous reactions of people. In organisations both formal groups and informal groups exist. A formal group exist in the form of committees, informal group exit among different levels of organisation. Groups have a number of functional and dysfunctional consequences. They provide social support and satisfaction, which is helpful in relieving stress. At the same time, they become the source of stress also. Lack of cohesiveness, lack of social support, lack of recognition by the group and incompatible goals cause stress.

Thus a number of organisational factors cause stress in the individuals. Now let us learn about the extra-organisational factors.

9.3.2 Extra-Organisational Factors

Environmental Factors: Environmental factors are extra organisational. Nevertheless, they create job stress in the individuals. These are internal and external factors. Most of the internal environmental factors relate to the organisational goals, management systems, structure, processes and design of organisations. They are discussed in the preceding section. External environmental factors relate to the general environment of the organisation. They are political, economical, technological, legal, ecological, governmental, social, cultural and ethical. Certain propositions describing the impact of environment on stress are presented below:

i) The political party in power as per their ideology enacts legislation in the Parliament. As the new laws and regulations are enacted by the new political party, the political changes bring uncertainty in the environment. This compels employees to adapt to the new legal order. This creates stress.

ii) Economic environment deals with income levels, demand and supply, inflation etc. Changes in these factors may require more work or better strategy to cope up with the environment. This creates stress when the employees are unable to adjust to the new situations. For instance, increase in inflation levels creates pressures on the employee income levels leading to stress.

iii) Technological changes bring new methods of production and new ways of handling the organisational tasks. Employees are required to learn new skills in order to discharge their jobs effectively. Unable to cope up

with the new technology creates stress in the employees. For example, bank employees felt stress when the bank management decided to introduce computers.

iv) Legal environment consists of complex web of laws and regulation intended to control the business operations. Organisations are required to follow the legal provisions otherwise they are subject to prosecution. Practical difficulties arise in the implementation of the legislative framework. Employees who are unable to respond properly to the laws and regulations find themselves in stressful situation.

v) The government is enacting legislation to protect the ecological environment in the country. Organisations are compelled to adapt to the legislative framework protecting the ecological environment. Protecting the ecological balance becomes a cause for potential stress.

vi) Government Administration is composed of the administrative machinery and institutions that enforce the laws, regulations, policies and other government instructions. The bureaucratic practices of the administrative machinery can create stress in the executives.

vii) Social, cultural and ethical environment can bring stress in the individuals. Social factors influence the life styles of employees. Certain social security measures such as health protection, civic facilities and social groups reduce stress in the employees. Certain sociological variables such as race, sex, social class, gender etc., and cultural factors such as beliefs, customs and traditions cause potential stress.

Certain other environmental factors that result in stress in recent times are stock market crashes, frequent elections, down sizing, information technology and the related changes in the business. Career oriented couples, racial and gender discriminations, health hazards due to pollution and imbalance in the natural environment etc. are contributing to stress.

Check Your Progress   A

1) Distinguiwh between stress and anxiety.
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2) List the individual stressors you have experienced recently.
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3) Identify the organisational stressors with reference to any organisations with which you are familiar.
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4) Give examples of organisational environmental factors of stress.

9.4   CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

An individual experiences stress through psychological emotions and is disseminated through physiological breakdown or biological changes. However stress is not negative always. Stress has also positive consequences. The positive form of stress is known as eustress. The word taken from Greek language means good stress. Mild stress elevates body metabolic and biological rates. The increase in the metabolism leads to secretion of juices from body glands that will increase the inner drive for achievement. Achievement motivation comes from deep intention, mild tensions, inner urge, fire and feeling of restlessness to achieve objectives. Stress helps in the development of people too. In its mild form it enhances job performance, leads to excellence and provides impetus to work hard and perform better. Individuals involved in the discharge of professional oriented jobs, jobs involving creativity, challenge, interpersonal communications and certain managerial jobs, will be benefited by stress, which leads to positive performances. However, jobs involving physical effort do not get benefit out of stress. As indicated above mild levels of stress increases job performance. It stimulates body and increases reactivity. Thus, individuals perform tasks better and in a rapid way. Inverted-U relationship illustrates this phenomenon. Some positive consequences are: increased productivity, positive response to target, development of proper perception in the decision making, increased motivation and performance, increased adaptability to change and increased quality of job performance. For instance, employee experiencing a moderate stress of repetitiveness on the job finds new ways of discharging jobs. Thus, stress promotes creativity in the employees.

However, in the modern organisations the negative consequences of stress are creating more problems. As pointed out by Schuler, Khan and Byosiyere, stress leads to high blood pressure, ulcer, cancer, accident proneness and irritation. Though there is no perfect association between stress and its consequences, stress itself demonstrates into physiological, psychological, behavioural, job and organisational consequences. The positive and negative consequences are discussed below:

Physiological Consequences: Stress influences the biological system of the human being. Certain visible forms of stress are increased blood pressure, proneness to heart disease, cancer, sweating, dry mouth, hot and cold flashes, frustration, anxiety, depression, increased level of cholesterol, ulcer, arthritis etc. Physical stress increases the body metabolic rate. This results into malfunctioning of internal gland and consequently the body disorder. This is felt in the form of increasing heart beating, increase in breathing rate and headache. This creates biological illness. The physical stress also creates psychological problems. In fact, physical stress and physiological disorders are interrelated. However, physical disorders and stress always need not associate positively. This is because of complexity of symptoms of physical stress and lack of objective measurement of impact of stress on bodily disorders.

Psychological Consequences: Psychological consequences are interrelated to biological consequences. They are invisible, but affect the employees' job performance. Psychological stress creates a pressure on human brain. This is expressed in terms of certain psychological symptoms such as anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritation, tension, boredom, aggressiveness, moodiness, hostility and poor concentration. Tensions, anxiety, and emotions lead to procrastination. Psychological stress produces interpersonal aggressions, misunderstanding in communication, poor interpersonal communication and low interpersonal attraction. This is demonstrated through aggressive actions like sabotage, increased interpersonal complaints, poor job performance, lowered self-esteem, increased resentment, low concentration on the job and increased dissatisfaction. Psychological stress produces harshness in the behaviour and may lead to assumption of authoritarian leadership style by the superior executive.

Behavioural Consequences: Stress has an impact on employee's behaviour. An abnormal behaviour is observed in those individuals who are prone to stress. A change in eating habits, sleep disorder, increased

smoking, alcoholism, fidgeting and aloofness are some of the behavioural changes observed in stressful employees. Sometimes stress leads to anxiety, apathy, depression and emotional disorder. This leads to impulsive and aggressive behaviour and frequent interpersonal conflicts. Under eating, overeating, drug abuse and sleeplessness are some of the behavioural consequences. The following are some propositions relating to stress and behaviour:

> *i) Perception:* Stressful individuals develop tension and anxiety. As a result, their level of understanding considerably decreases. When perceptual distortions occur in the employees, it may adversely affect decision making process, interpersonal understanding, interpersonal communication and capacity to work with groups. They become stress intolerable. All these lead to increased levels of interpersonal conflicts.

> *ii) Attitudes:* Continued stressful environment creates certain permanent negative impressions in the mind of the employees. These permanent impressions adversely influence their work performance. For example, an employee developing a negative attitude on work, superior, working conditions, organisational climate and culture intentionally decreases his output. He also becomes demoralised and the motivation level decreases.

> *iii) Learning :* Employees in organisations continuously learn new skills and techniques. Learning new methods and techniques to adapt themselves and discharge their jobs effectively is inevitable to employees. Stressful employees can not learn the things quickly.

Organisational Consequences : Stress has negative impact on the performance of the job. Organisations face the problems of poor performance and other negative consequences. Some of them are described below:

i)   *Absenteeism:* Employees subject to stress were found to addict to drugs and alcohol. Thus, they abstain from the jobs frequently. This creates discontinuity in the jobs and adversely effect performance of other employees.

ii)   *Turnover:* Turnover and stress have shown some relationships.   An employee experiencing continued stress develops disgust and frustration. Therefore, they are likely to change their jobs.

iii)   *Decision-Making:* Excessive stress distorts perception of managers. This adversely effects their capacity to take decision. Thus, stressful executives become irrational in the decision making. This leads to loss of organisational resources and reputation.

iv)   *Disturbed Customer Relationships:* Employees experiencing excessive stress develop irritation, looses emotional stability and emotional tolerance. Intolerance impels them to pick up conflicts easily due to misunderstandings. Employees dealing with the customers and the public disturb relationship due to their inpatient behaviour. For instance sales persons, bank employees, public relation executives are required to be more emotionally stable. Otherwise, customers dealing with them will have trouble in dealing with the company. This also creates poor impression on the corporate image of the organisation.

The consequences of stress are multifaceted. Stress has a vicious circle. Most of the consequences of the stress are interdependent. One has roots into the other. For instance, psychological consequences result in physiological disorders, the later will produce behavioural consequences and ultimately the organisation suffers from adverse effects. The ill effects of stress are more dangerous. Addiction to smoking, drinking alcohol, narcotic drugs, perverted sex, atrocities on women and children, criminal attitude, terrorism and indecent behaviour are some of the social consequences of stress. It is in this context that stress received more attention of the organisations, psychologists and the medical practitioners in recent times. A number of

strategies exist to overcome stress. Most of them suggest leading a peaceful, calm and regulated life. Interestingly people overlook their life styles and suffer from stress. However, stress is not difficult to overcome.

Check Your Progress B

1)   Identify the forms of eustress.
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2)   List out the consequences of stress in any organisation with which you are familiar.

Physiological   Psychological   Behavioural   Organisational

3)   Enumerate the organisational consequences of stress.
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9.5   TECHNIQUES OF MANAGING STRESS

Stress management has assumed greater importance in the modern organisations. More than organisations, individuals are concerned with the stress reduction. As the saying goes 'prevention is better than cure', prevention of stress is better than attempting to cure stress. This is because stress once experienced has negative consequences. Though employee possesses negative perception of stress, there is a need to induce moderate levels of stress for better performance. The question arises what should be the acceptable levels of stress? More over, there is a wide gap between theoretical and actual practice of stress management. For instance, practicing yoga early in the morning and doing exercise is considered very effective way of fighting stress. However, how many people really sacrifice morning comfortable sleep for the sake of yoga and exercises. When a problem occurs, people resort to yoga. Otherwise, they feel that taking allopathic medicine is easy than yoga and exercises.

Individual and organisational stimuli causes stress, and the implications are more negative at individual and organisational levels. It needs to be managed both by adopting individual and organisational strategies. The individual management techniques are more popular than organisational management techniques. Let us learn the strategies of stress management in detail.

9.5.1   Individual Management

Individuals assume automatic responsibility and look for ways and means of dealing with their stress. Individuals are more concerned about their health. There is an increasing rate of health clinics and health consciousness observed in recent times. Following are some of the techniques which individuals can adopt for reducing stress :

1)   **Time Management :** Time management and stress are inversely related. Improper and poor management of time are the root cause of a greater degree of stress. Improper and inadequate utilisation of time cause anxiety. The following principles of time management can help in combating stress.

    •   Identifying and listing of daily activities in a logical order.

    •   Arranging the activities of the day based on importance and urgency.

    •   Preparing logical schedule of activities.

- Analysing and understanding the daily cycle and nature of the job.

- Allocating time properly to various activities based on time demands.

- Delegating minor tasks to the subordinates in order to make use of the time in a better manner.

- Discouraging unwanted visitors.

- Setting unfinished tasks on the top of list for tomorrow.

2) **Physical Management :** Management of stress relates to understanding one's own biological and body conditions. Examining hereditary characteristics habits like smoking and drinking, life styles and body conditions help in understanding one's physiological conditions. Overcoming stress is possible with managing physiological relaxation. Physical exercises greatly help in relieving tension and stress. When body is conditioned with physical exercise, oxygen is inhaled properly and blood circulation increases. This promotes healthy secretions from glands and the supply of blood to all the parts of the body keeps every organ active. Consequently, immunity to withstand stress increases. Physical exercises could be reactive or proactive. Non competitive physical exercises like walking, jogging, swimming, riding, aerobics and playing games considerably increases heart capacity, provide mental diversion from work pressures and increases heart capacity to withstand stressful situations. The chances of heart attack, adverse blood pressure and diabetics reduce.

3) **Psychological Management :** Most of the stresses arise because of psychological tensions. Therefore, it is suggested that managing psychological activities lead to effective management of stress. The following are some of the psychological management techniques.

i) Relaxation : Relaxation of mind through meditation, hypnosis and biofeedback can effectively reduce mental tensions. Meditation involves silently sitting on the ground taking deep inhalation and chanting mantra. This takes the mind into deep relaxation. This technique relaxes muscles and mind. It also brings significant changes in heart rate, blood pressure, lung capacity and other biological organs of the body. Transcendental Meditation, Soul management, Atma yoga, Anthahakarana, Silence sitting posture, Shavasana, Bhavathetha meditation and praying the God are some of the relaxation techniques practiced for reducing stress.

ii) Behavioural Self-control: Stress also results from behavioural disorders. Exercising proper control over behaviour in dealing with others can bring down the chance of stress. Self-introspection brings self-awareness of the individual. Similarly knowing the antecedents and consequences of own behaviour enables behavioural self-control. Stress can be relaxed by developing proper perception, practicing good listening, maintaining calm and tension free mind empathy and positive attitude are some of the behavioural self control techniques.

iii) Cognitive Therapy: It is a technique of clinical psychology. Cognitive therapy involves knowing ones' own emotions to release anxiety and tension. In this technique, people are made to understand the reasons causing stress in them by the process of self-observation. For example, if an employee develops a feeling that he is incompetent to handle a new job, counselling is provided to develop a confidence of competence to handle all the new jobs. Thus, with the help of cognitive therapy, a positive impact is created for the mental satisfaction. Cognitive therapy enables people to exercise self- control for relaxing stress.

iv) *Yogic Management :* In recent times, yoga is an effective technique of relieving stress. Yoga practice involves Asana, Pranayama, Mudra and Kriya. Practicing a number of yogasana relaxes muscels, reduces blood pressure, controls asthma, relieves neurological problems, improves lung capacity, enhances proper flow of blood and helps relax tensions and strains. Certain asanas which help stress relaxation are pada hasthasana, vajra asana, sashanka asana, camel asana, lotus asana, crocodile asana, sarvanga asana, shava asana .

4) **Social Management:** Developing good social networks involves grouping of people who are good listeners and confidence builders. This increases social support to individuals. Encouraging informal groups to share information without inhibitions, developing free exchange of ideas, views and distasteful experiences, promoting confidence of social support decrease tensions and stress. Social clubs, recreation clubs, friendship clubs, informal gatherings, birthday parties, and family are some of the social networks that increase social support and reduce stress.

5) **Self-awareness Management:** Self-awareness is similar to self-audit or personal audit. Managers are required to understand themselves in a free and fair manner. They should encourage open communication and willing to listen to others especially on their deficiencies. Being aware of self is a difficult task, as individuals are unprepared to accept their defects. Self-awareness management involves three stages.
- **Stage – I:** Identify, understand and analyse one's own skills, capacities, limitations and defects.
- **Stage – II:** Encourage feed back from others viz., subordinates, peers, superiors, friends, family members and other social associations. This requires patient hearing without inhibitions.
- **Stage -III:** Develop self program to improve the skills, capacities to overcome the limitations in a scientific way. Attend self-management-training programs to develop the personality for all round development of self.

6) **Inter Personal Management:** One of the most successful techniques of stress management is developing inter personal understanding. Inter- personal communication, inter personal attraction and inter personal knowledge improve understanding of others behaviour. Most of the organisational stresses are created due to misunderstanding, organisational politics, setting one self-aloof from others and encouraging unreliable comments. Thus, maintaining openness of communication and valuing proper comment enable development of inter personal understanding. Transactional Analysis, Johari Window and Grid techniques help in the development of inter personal understanding and consequent relief from stress.

9.5.2 Organisational Management

In modern organisations, human resources are vital resources. Most of the organisational stresses are caused by the structure and design of the organisation, policies, programs and procedure of the administration and due to managerial styles and strategies. Thus organisations are interested in finding out the organisational stressors and remove them as far as possible. Organisations adapt the following techniques of stress management.

1) **Selection and Placement Policy:** Stress and personality characteristics of employees are closely related. Thus selecting the employees by a proper personality fit suitable to jobs minimise the chance of stress in the individuals. For instance a sales person jobs requires extensive travelling rather than experience. If a person having a poor attitude of travelling is selected, he is likely to experience more stress in performing the job. Therefore, proper recruitment and selection policy should be followed by the organisation to reduce stress.

2) **Goal Setting:** Goal ambiguity, lack of proper perception of goals, challenging goal and unattainable goals cause stress in individuals. Therefore, organisations should follow a strategy of participation in goal setting to provide motivation, reduce frustration and ambiguity of goals. Management by Objectives (MBO) is an appropriate technique of goal setting which reduces stress.

3) **Job Enrichment and Job Design:** Job enrichment provides motivation to the employees. It enriches job factors such as responsibility, recognition, and opportunity for advancement, growth and self-

esteem. Routine, unstructured and poorly designed jobs cause greater stress in individuals. Job redesign provides more responsibility, more meaningful work, more autonomy and increased feed back. This provides greater control over work activities and reduces dependence on others. Therefore, job enrichment and job redesign provide an effective way of reducing stress.

4) **Role Clarity:** Organisational stress is associated with role ambiguity, role overlap, lack of role clarity and role conflict. Proper role definition helps employees understand their role in organisation and appraise interpersonal roles. This reduces the chance of role conflict and increases role compatibility. This eliminates stress in the individuals. Wherever role conflict arises, counselling and negotiation can be used to resolve inter- personal role conflict to avoid stressful situations.

5) **Communication and Counselling:** Barriers in communication are potential moderators of organisational stress. In organisations formal communication creates a number of problems of inter personal misunderstandings. Thus redesigning the formal communication channels can improve understanding and consequently reduce stress caused by communication bottlenecks. Counselling is exchange of ideas and views in a free and fair manner. It is intended to share problems of employees and cope up with the stressful situation. Counselling consists of advice, reassurance, communication, and release of emotional tensions, clarified thinking and reorientation. The techniques of counselling are non-directive, participative and directive.

6) **Carrier Planning and Development:** Employees in general are free to plan their careers. However, organisations also aim at employee development. The employee development is aimed at the enrichment of skills and the development of personality for undertaking future managerial jobs. Stress is caused when employees' expectations of their career in organisation are not fulfilled and when employees get promotion without the development of corresponding skills. Organisations take less interest in career planning of the employees. Designing appropriate career plans, education programs, development programs and organisation development considerably reduce employee's stress.

7) **Democratic Leadership:** Democratic leaders create confidence in the subordinates and allow participation in the decision making process. They create an atmosphere of warmth, friendship, and supportive climate. Under such climate employees feel satisfied, motivated and psychologically committed to the achievement of objectives. In addition, communication is open, conflicts are avoided and coordination improved. This enables employees to relieve stress and promote healthy work.

8) **Organisation Climate:** Organisation design is the basic reason for job stress. Bureaucratic, directive and ambiguous administration and poor organisational climate leads to greater stress. A sound organisation climate and culture characterised by sound administrative policy, good organisational communication, participative culture and supportive climate ensure reduction of stress.

9) **Wellness Programmes:** Programmes that focus on employee's physical and mental condition organised by the management are known as wellness programmes. As part of these programmes, workshops, seminars and counselling sessions are conducted to help the employees understand the dangers of smoking, alcoholism and drug abuse. They promote a positive attitude for eating better stuff, fighting obesity, doing regular physical exercise and developing positive personality. However, these programmes are successful only when the employee himself takes personal interest in his physical and mental health. Organisations act as only a catalyst to promote programmes that facilitate reduction of stress.

10) **Quality of Work Life:** The concept has been increasingly recognised in the recent years. This technique involves improving the working conditions and other internal and external aspects of work life. In addition, providing good housing facilities, living conditions, social and recreational facilities, training and development of employees for overall development of human resources in the organisation will develop quality of work life.

Stress is a multi faceted phenomenon. The cause and effect relationship in stress is difficult to obtain because it is a qualitative psychological phenomenon. Moreover, individuals overlook the symptoms of

stress until they experience physiological break down. Otherwise, they resort to a number of uncongenial life habits and addict to them. Changing their attitudes and addiction is not an easy task. Moreover, in large organisations functioning in a competitive and dynamic environment, organisational redesign, job redesign and administrative reorientation are more theoretical than practical. Even personal strategies sound theoretically good, but lack implementation. Hence, stress management programmes must be implemented carefully for the reduction of stress.

9.6   CREATING A STRESS FREE ENVIRONMENT

Stress is both positive and negative. You have already learnt that mild to moderate levels of stress helps in developing positive behaviour in the organisation and it is good for the organisational health. However negative consequences of stress always overweigh the positive ones. Thus, it is generally agreed that stress reduction is a serious concern to the management and individuals. The individual's responsibility should always be greater than organisational responsibility. This is because of the dictum that protecting ones health is their responsibility alone. Organisations perhaps help in developing certain programmes for stress reduction. It is not out of context to mention that theoretical management of stress should be distinguished from practical management. Most of the individual techniques relate to the personality of the individuals. Certain techniques require the individuals to sacrifice the self concept and comfortable levels. Thus, it is difficult to promote the individuals to adapt the strategies of stress reduction. Nevertheless, it should be understood that it is not an impossible task. Creating a stress free environment requires a thorough investigation of the stressors, understanding, analysing the implications, appraising the costs and benefits and above all bring commitment to the programmes by changing the attitude. Look at Table 9.1 which shows various stressors and the related techniques which help us in understanding the creation of stress free environment.

Table 9.1 Stressors and Related Techniques

Individual stressors	Stress Management	Organisational Stressors	Stress Management
Family troubles	Family counselling	Task and role demands	Job redesign and role clarification
Economic problems	structure, process and functions	Increased earning potential Redesign of organisational structure	Inconsistent organisation
Personality characteristics	Redesign recruitment and selection policy	Personality Development	Square peg in a round hole
Unable to cope up time demands	Time management	Goal ambiguity	Goal feedback
Suffering from lowered self esteem and lack of recognition management Role ambiguity	Role redesign		Democratic and participative
Aloofness and lack of social support sound organisational culture	Promote informal group membership	Corporate policies	Develop
	Physical conditions		Redesign organisational climate
	Economic problems		Restructure pay and promotion polices
	Communication Transactional analysis		
	Career ambiguity Career planning		

Check Your Progress C

1)   Mention the principles of time management you observe in your daily life to reduce stress.

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2)   Enumerate individual's management techniques for managing stress.

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3)   How democratic leadership style is helpful in reducing the stress?

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4)   How job enrichment and job design are used to manage the stress?

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9.7   LET US SUM UP

Stress is psychological concept leading to both biological and behavioural disorders. Stress and personality, occupations, age, life styles and time demands are related to each other. Stress is symptomatic. Interestingly prolonged stress leads to burnout. Stress is caused by a host of factors. Stressors are the factors that cause stress in individuals. Stressors can be intra organsiational and extra organisational. While individual stressors and organisational stressors are intra organisational, environmental stressors are known as extra organisational. Individual factors include personality, individual differences, family problems, and economic problems, life styles and role demands. A number of organisational factors cause stress in individuals. They include: poor working conditions, poor task design, unfair administrative policies and strategies, improper organisational structure and design, organisational process and design, organisational leadership, organisational life cycle, and group dynamics. Environmental factors are: political, economical, technological, legal, ecological, government and social, cultural and ethical environment.

Stress is considered as negative. Nevertheless, it is not always correct. Eustress is a positive stress. Mild levels of stress promote good performance. However, the negative consequences are more than the positive consequences. Physiological consequences are : increase in blood pressure, heart attack, cancer, sweating, frustration, anxiety and depression. Psychological consequences are: anger, aggressiveness, moodiness, hostility, poor concentration, tensions and anxiety. Abnormal behaviour is observed in stressful situations. Poor perception, inconsistent attitudes and poor learning are some of the behavioural consequences. Absenteeism, turnover, irrational decision making, disturbed customer relationships and consequently negative corporate image are observed due to stress.

Stress management has assumed paramount importance in the modern organisations. Individual management techniques are always better than organisational management techniques. Certain individual strategies are: time management, physical management, psychological management, yogic management, social management, self-awareness management and inter personal management. However, the role of organisations in the management of stress cannot be undermined. Organisations play a catalystic role in the management of stress. Organisations follow techniques such as proper selection and placement policy, goal setting, job enrichment and job design, role clarity, communication and counselling, career planning and development, democratic leadership, organisational climate and wellness programmes.

Creating a stress free environment requires diagnosing and analysing the stressors. It aims at changing the attitude of the employees. However, it should be remembered that practice of stress management is not as sound as theoretical management techniques. This is because most of the techniques require sacrifice of personal comfort. However, stress must be managed in a proper manner.

9.8   KEY WORDS

Anxiety: A state of psychological disturbance.

Burnout : A feeling of emotional exhaustion

Eustress : Good form of stress is called as eustress.

Job enrichment : Redesigning the jobs to provide more responsibility, recognition and self-esteem.

Organisational Life Cycle : The birth, growth, maturity and decline stages in the existence of organisation.

Psychological hardiness : The ability to withstand provocation from others.

Relaxation : Meditation to take deep relaxation of human mind.

Self-efficacy : It is a perception of capacity to bring changes.

Social Networks : Informal groups that provide social support to share feelings, emotions and distasteful experiences.

Stress : An internal experience, which creates physiological and psychological disorders.

Stressors: Factors that convert the potential stress into actual stress.

9.9   TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1)   'Stress is both physiological and psychological'. Discuss with examples.

2)   'Stress is moderated by anxiety and burnout'. Discuss with examples

3)   Examine intra organisational factors of stress. How do they influence the organisation?

4)   What do you mean by the extra organisational stressors? Discuss various extra organisational factors which create stress in the organisation.

5)   'Stress has positive consequences and negative consequences. Negative consequences have adverse impact on biological, psychological and behavioural systems, apart from organisational systems' Explain.

6)   Discuss individual management strategies of stress. Do you think that they can reduce stress in the organisation? Discuss.

7)   How organisations respond to bring down employee stress and make them better use in the organisation? Elucidate.

Note :   These questions will help you to understand the unit better. Try to write answers for them. Do not submit your answers to the university for assessment.   These are for your practice only.