

# Stress in media and communications professional worlds

[Health & Medicine](#), [Mental Health](#)



**“ Stress is not what happens to us. It is our response to what happens. And response is something we can choose.”**

**Maureen Killoran, Universalist Minister**

We are living in an era of digital ecosystem, where advanced communication techniques have taken over elementary ways of interacting, engaging and understanding. With the advent of contemporary technology and enhanced use of social media, the millennials in the work force today are marked by mounting psychological stress. According to American Psychological Association (APA), stress is defined as any uncomfortable emotional experience accompanied by predictable biochemical, physiological and behavioural changes. This kind of stress is propelled further when professional commitments come into play. Even though professional stress is inevitable, it is imperative to realise that stress affects individual as well as organisational efficiency. World Health Organisation (WHO) calls work-related stress, a response that people may have when assigned work demands that are not inclined with the knowledge and abilities of employees.

**So, what exactly is a healthy job?**

A healthy job is the one where work-related pressure is in proportion to the employees' resources, abilities and support from fellow colleagues. Provision of adequate information, training on health and other health-promoting initiatives are some of the initiatives that can be taken to maintain a healthy work environment.

According to a research conducted by the World Health Organisation, work-related stress is created by excessive demands and pressures that do not

match with a worker's ability and lesser potential to control or make choices and lack of support.

Professional stress affects the performance of an organisation, in turn reducing individual productivity, deteriorating physical conditions and social relations. However, it is the responsibility of employers as well as employees to identify the causes leading to professional stress and take necessary action to counter the same.

As a part of this dissertation, I had conducted a primary research survey to understand how stress is interpreted by professionals working in the media industry and how do they cope up with stress. With a sample size of 15 professionals of different age groups working in varied fields in the media industry, I found interesting results.

It was found that most participants were neutral towards stress in their professional life. It was also found that the participants' perception towards professional stress was primarily the lack of work-life imbalance due to the fast-paced work in media industry. Above mentioned are some of the responses provided by participants on dealing with professional stress.

The survey helped me understand that the primary reason why professionals in the communication industry feel stress is because of the work-life imbalance and to counter that I feel it is important for organisations to consider making work an interesting place to spend most of the time in a day. Outbound activities, cultural fests etc are some of the initiatives organisations should take to relieve stressed professionals in this industry.

**Here is the link to the above mentioned survey:****Acute stress chronic stress****Types of Stress**

One of the most common form of stress, acute stress derives from the pressures and demands of the recent past as well as anticipated pressures and demands of the near future, according to American Psychological Association.

Acute stress can be exciting in small amounts but can be exhausting at times.

Acute stress is short term and doesn't lead to extensive damage with respect to stress in long term.

**Symptoms:**

Feelings of anxiety, anger and depression;

Constipation, irritable bowel syndrome, acid stomach and other stomach and bowel problems;

Muscular and other problems such as back and jaw pain, ligament problems etc.

**Examples**

1. A sentence said in a negative connotation due to acute stress may lead to misinterpretation of the message.

2. Stress may lead to anger issues displayed in work space as well.

Anger, once directed towards a wrong direction may affect effective communication and in turn, productivity.

3. Acute stress also affects how someone behaves with their colleagues.

It can affect the cordial relationships between employees, which can be harmful for conducting business operations.

4. Stress can also make employees feel withdrawn and demotivated to work enthusiastically. This can lead to incomplete communication.

5. Anxiety and aggression may trigger certain behaviour in stressed employees. Things can escalate quickly in a workplace due to poor communication.

Chronic stress, on the other hand, comes when there doesn't seem to be a probable solution out of a miserable situation. It derives from unrelenting pressures and demands for seemingly interminable periods of time, according to the American Psychological Association.

Unlike acute stress, chronic stress is not thrilling and exciting. It grows from early childhood experiences or trauma that become a part of life and affect personality.

Chronic stress is long term as there is a factor of familiarity attached to it.

**Symptoms:**

Feelings of anxiety, muscle pain, high blood pressure, weakened immune system;

Sleep disturbances, chronic fatigue, unexplained head and stomach aches;

Getting easily upset or cry uncontrollably.

### **Examples**

1. Communication plays a key role in effective functioning of a business. A person suffering from chronic stress may not be able to convey messages that are imperative for the business.
2. Excessive fatigue as a result of chronic stress may hamper the efficiency of the employee in communicating effectively which in turn, will lead to inadequate productivity.
3. Chronic stress may also increase absenteeism of the employee. This will again affect the daily functioning of the business. Absenteeism will lead to a block in communication channels of the business.
4. During meetings and presentations, an anxious or depressed employee may not be able to deliver the message effectively and this will put the position of the business under a question mark.
5. Chronic stress can lower the emotional quotient of an individual significantly. This will make it difficult for employees to communicate naturally.

### **Stress and gender**

They say men and women are from different planets but do they behave similarly in stressful situations? According to American Psychological Association of India, both men and women tend to manage stress differently and their perception towards handling a stressful situation also varies. The association in one of its findings suggests that women are better in

connecting with others in their lives which help them develop stress management strategies.

According to a survey conducted by apa. org, women are more likely to report emotional and physical symptoms of stress than men. In a study conducted by California State University on ' The Effect of Gender on Stress Factors', it was found that women expressed more anger than men as a reaction to stress. There were other notable differences that were found between men and women with respect to their reactions to stress. Women were found to experience higher degree of frustration, anxiety, depression than men while the latter tended to display certain psychological reactions. The study further explains how reactions to stress are based on certain cultural norms that can have negative implications in not just daily lives but the work environment as well.

### **Stress and communication**

Everyone has a time when the ' right words' don't come to you and often, the pitch and language used becomes different from the usual way of communication. This time is triggered by certain stressful situations where our mind and body react in a different way. It is imperative to mention that it takes a lot of mental energy to communicate and at the times of stress, it can impair one's ability to communicate effectively. A lot of factors affect one's communication skills during stressful situation -

Distractions - Stressing about something leads to anxious thoughts and sensations which in turn, make you think about the issues that are stressful.

Such distracted thinking affects the way someone holds a meaningful two-way communication.

Poor listening - Distractions can further lead to trouble in understanding and interpreting messages due to lack of attention. This can lead to miscommunication and inadequate responses.

Overthinking - Stress can lead to overthinking, which in turn affects the natural flow of communication, which is essential in communicating clear messages. Trying to overthink every word to be communicated further may change meaning of the message completely.

### **Effective communication during stress**

Often stressful situations lead to unnecessary banter and misuse of words in a work place. However, such reactions can only intensify such situations and lead to harmful repercussions. In order to handle such stressful situations, it is important to keep a check on language, demeanour as well as body language. This is the time when managers and leaders in an organisation listen, connect and inspire conversations and bring back confidence and solidarity among team members.

Stress can lead to poor communication during temporary situations, which in turn can cause permanent damage. So, it is important to avoid transferring blames over situations out of control. Direct communication to understand the causes, reasons and situation control to avoid stressful situations.

Understanding and being empathetic towards employees play a key role in ensuring effective communication. Suggesting focus groups, psychologists



and mentorship programs will enable stressed employees to gain back their confidence.

During stressful situations, it is important to connect, acknowledge realities of stressed employees and inspire confidence in them. Several workshops on stress management in a workplace can be effective.

Asking questions and listening to answers is equally important to understand the reasons behind stress among employees. Feedback forms and other tools can be used to understand and introspect about the changes that need to be made.

Making employees feel a part of the organisation and setting a clear goal involving them as stakeholders will not only make them feel welcoming but will also reduce stress and intimidation.

### **JoHari Window Analysis**

“ A Johari window is a psychological tool created by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in 1955. It's a simple and useful tool for understanding and training.”

No one wants to live a stressful life and certainly not the one where going to a nine-to-five job seems nothing less than a penance. Professional stress does not just affect an individual, it also harms the organisation and its objectives. It is imperative for managers in an organisation to understand and know about every employee and the kind of behavioural patterns they portray. Stress management should be taken with utmost importance, especially in a fast-paced industry like communication.

Employers should come up with policies and plans to ensure sound mental health of their employees, with a bigger objective of maintaining the overall health of the organisation. Proper assessments should be made to identify stress and timely reaction should be devised, including rehabilitation. It is important to do a root-cause analysis of the kind of stress pertaining amongst the employees and effectively manage stress.

It is very rightly said that prevention is better than cure and that is why, organisations should identify the probable risks lying in the work environment that can lead to certain kind of stress and harm the well-being of employees. After all, the well-being of an organisation largely depends on the welfare of its employees. As long as they are happy and satisfied with their job, organisations progress towards its goal and as long as employees are stress-free, the there will be growth.