Management of stress to maintain human relations in workplace

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a natural reaction generated within the body of a person to tackle a particular situation or event with focus, toughness and strength. The stress allows people to find out the unknown and hidden areas within them to face a situation. The stress mainly happens in two steps. One is the external stimulus referred to as the stressor that arises in an environment and the second is the response generated by the body to tackle that particular external stimulus.

Stress could be basically categorised into different types. Eustress is the term that was coined to explain positive gains due to stress whereas distress is the stress that causes painfulness and negative fall backs. Hyper stress is the overreaction of a body due to the difficulties of worry or trauma and hypo stress is the under reaction or instability of a body due to an external circumstance. Chronic stress on the other hand creates long lasting and recurring effect on an individual whereas acute stress generates a sharp and point effect on a person for a short span of his lifetime.

Stress is experienced among all classes of people irrespective of age group, religion and nationalities. An individual right from the time of birth till the time when he becomes an old person and dies undergoes distinct and different kinds of stress. It is a common phenomenon encountered by all people at different times and phases of their life such as interaction with different individuals and performance of them under diverse situations of work environments.

There can be many reasons for the arising of stress. Physical and sexual abuses, education havocs, initial adjustment troubles to a new surrounding, financial dilemmas, competitiveness, death of dear ones, illnesses, negative thinking, job insecurity, tension in workplaces, inability to reach the life targets, lack of communication, unclear policies, lack of control, nil appreciation from bosses and fellow mates, inability to maintain work family balance and million others could be serious reasons for the cause of stress.

Stress is literally visible by cognitive, emotional, physical and relational symptoms. Anxiety, sleep troubles, headaches, heart problems, increase in blood pressure levels, depression, stomach cramps, irritability, overreactions, hair loss, imbalance in weight gain and loss, constipation etcetera are the displayed outburst of stress release.

Stress can be measured as both positive and negative. Sometimes it acts in a positive manner benefiting the individual and at times it can create an equal harm to the same person. When stress is felt, chemicals such as oxytoxin and endorphin gets released onto the body that endures strength and energy to face the current problem which converts itself as a positive support in the management of stress. But the same chemicals do harm when it affects the emotional part of a person as there is a lack of outlet for the generated energy and strength. Thus they may indulge in wrong practices like smoking, drinking and other energy let outs.

CAUSES OF STRESS

Stress can be self generated. But it can also be caused due to both internal and external factors. The external adders are the relationship difficulties,

maintenance of work family balance, financial problems, busy lifestyles, creation of harmony among a diverse workplace and meeting the major life challenges.

Relationship holds a prominent place in the existence of individuals. The connectivity and networking between people helps them to know that they are important people and that there are people to care for them. The sense of belongingness and the feel of emotional balance are prominent factors of survival. The lack of recognition and appreciation generates a lot of problems in the upbringing of better outcomes and greater results. Improper ways of handling the professional life and the family grounds threatens one's ability to carry on with his daily routines. Immense problems arise due to a cross cultural mix of people working in the same environment. The communication styles, the use of signs and expressions, gestures, facial changes and handshakes must be dealt with care as any misunderstanding could lead to stress and trouble.

The internal measures are the unrealistic expectations, the concept of idealising matters, perfectionism, inability to accept uncertainty, indulgence in negative talks and being pessimistic all the time.

Foreseeing goals that is not practical and being too much pessimistic leads to stress and loss of mental and physical health. The unfitness of the state of mind to accept and tolerate the ambiguous ways of life is very stressful. Thinking to be perfect and seeking perfectness from the surrounding is yet another major stress causing factor. Negative thinking all the time affects our body and causes harm.

CHALLENGES DUE TO STRESS

Stress stands as a major challenge in the overall growth of a person and an organisation. It affects the person by creating trouble to his emotional, physical, relational and cognitive phase of life. Stress is experienced in different levels by different sets and classes of people. It could be felt by various symptoms in our body.

Physical symptoms are the visible troubles seen which affects the health of a person. Chest pain, wet hands, indigestion, irregular heartbeat, quick aging, lethargy, fatigue, hair loss, reproduction problems, neck and head pains, diabetes are all instances. Emotional symptoms affects the will power and control of a person. Diffidence, low self esteem, memory problems, irritation, phobias, anxiety, depression and lack of concentration are all examples. Relational symptoms strikes the relatedness of people during work such as isolation, job shifts, constant arguments, conflicts, violence and rage. Cognitive symptoms are the symptoms displayed when the relatedness between people are lost. It leads to greater troubles.

Stress thus negatively affects the growth of an organisation if it is not controlled at the right time and in right amounts. It would delineate the alignment of the stability curve and yield to poor results and outcomes.

PREVENTION OF STRESSFUL ENVIRONMENT

Stress when creates a negative impact in our lives, needs to be checked and eliminated to a good extent to keep us going and meet our day to day goals. There can be healthy and non healthy ways of coping with stress. Non healthy habits can lead to excess amounts of pills usage, procrastinations,

withdrawing from relationships, overeating or under eating, surplus drinking and smoking, sitting for hours and hours in front of internet or television, creating physical violence and angry outbursts. Healthy behaviours can lead to positive outcomes and unexpected results. One can either change the situation or change the way of reacting to that situation. It is an individual's conscience to choose between the two alternatives.

There are basically four A's that contributes to the stress management strategies. The situation can be handled in an effective manner by Avoiding the stressor and Altering the stressor. Unnecessary stress can be avoided by learning to say ' no' in your life, taking control of the environment, avoiding people who irritate you, elimination of controversial talks in the workplace and by absolute prioritising of ' shoulds' and ' musts' in your daily schedule. The situations can be altered by being more expressive in letting out your feelings at the right time, inculcating the ability to compromise with people, effective management of time and by being more assertive.

The reaction change to a particular situation can be adopted by Adapting to the stressor and Accepting the stressor. Adaptation to a situation can be done by reframing the whole situation to develop a positive outlook such as hearing to music, enjoying the loneliness etc when you are jammed in between a traffic block. The National Victim Assistance Academy, U. S, did a research on the adjustment of attitude which produced good results. They derived statistics that being optimistic and development of positive thoughts relieves stress and aid in a temporary comfort and relaxation. Have the mindset of setting up strong standards to view a particular event in a positive manner and be long term benefit oriented for the sake of avoidance

of temporary stress. The character of learning to accept the facts plays a major role in the suppressing of stress. Avoiding your involvement in controlling the uncontrollable and starting to share and forgive helps a lot to face the major challenges and look for the better opportunities in life.

Locate the source of stress and observe your own body's response to that particular situation. When you realise the change in your breath feel and muscle and stomach tightening, you come to know whether you are stressed or not. The sensory checks also contribute to stress reduction. Visual pleasures like a fresh bouquet of flowers in the middle of your table, hanging of a prism in the door front which gives a rainbow display helps stress release. Sound like the flow of soothing water, bird chatter, and listening to one's favourite music are also strong factors to stabilise oneself. The smell of fragrant fruits, perfumed surrounding and placement of scented candles in every room of the house aid in refreshing moments. A gentle touch can also benefit such as a soft running of an icy or warm beverage mug onto the surface of one's skin, a quick massage and temperature equalising can be of much help. The comfort of taste buds is a good stress buzzer. Eating slowly and enjoying the taste of the food inside your mouth makes one feel good. The movement is yet another major factor. Squeezing a small rubbery ball placed at your desk at regular intervals helps one to extract his body response onto the rubbery surface.

Development of emotional intelligence to average levels can aid in reduction of stress. According to Jeanne Segal (2008), there are five tools to develop emotional intelligence. The first tool emphasises on being elastic. It focuses on our means to control and manage stress to avoid emotional overload. The

second tool highlights on the glue effect. It brings the point of emotionally connecting with ourselves and the people around to strengthen our level of intelligence and get motivated. The third tool mainly brings our attention onto the pulley system which helps you to get the attention of others and be attracted. The fourth tool stresses on the ladder theory of climbing up through all the difficulties in your life for a better future. It enables a person to reduce the effect of stress, melt up anger, lift the inner spirits and mend any fences that arose.

One of the best parameters to tackle stress is to indulge in fun and relaxation. Going for a relaxed walk, talking to a good friend, having a massage, playing with a pet, listening to music, having a prolonged cool and refreshing bath, working in a garden or watching a comedy could all help to be in comfort and be in a position of ease. Always maintain a sense of humour in the workplace to avoid unnecessary thinking and be relaxed.

Adoption of a healthy lifestyle is always a safety measure. Exercising on a regular basis, having enough sleep, maintaining a healthy diet plan, reduction in the intake of caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes and drugs could also contribute to greater stress release. The equipping of body to practice various ways of yoga and meditation also can be one of the leading ways to eliminate daily stress.

A BRIEF CRITICAL ANALYSIS

According to Michael P O' Driscoll (1996), stress management strategies when searched for or written down in an article are the global and general views of encountering the stress. They do not target on the needs and

requirements of specific people who are under particular situations. In the article discussed, he has made use of Critical Incident Analysis (CIA) to explain the coping behaviours of individuals to a stressful situation. There arise three components in a stressful situation- the stressor, the behaviour shown in response to the stress and the consequence shown as a result. There are two ways in which individuals deal with the stress. One is the conceptual way which reflects a lack of the consensus on the various consequences and functions of coping behaviour. Good amounts of debates are still going on whether coping acts as a mediator or moderator in the stressor – strain relationship. The second is a more critical measure of the coping process being methodological. The reviews lack reliability and predictive validity about the coping processes displayed by persons. They are moreover assumptions rather than checking what the people actually do in that situation.

Driscoll and Cooper still furthered their research by going close to each person and interviewing about their experience covering the three components of stressful situation. Although the technique offers factual proofs and written evidences, only very few people have made use of this method to describe their studies on coping process. A sample of 131 workers were gathered from 8 different New Zealand organisations for the interview who represented various kinds of industries like primary processing, education, retailers, and engineering backgrounds. According to the interviews conducted, 11 different stressors were found namely the conflict that arise within an organisation, work overload, unavailability or lack of control over resources, conflict with the people outside the organisation,

technological problems, role conflicts, communication problems, role ambiguity, inequity in wage distribution, skill deficit and non work conflict. The frequencies and percentages of coping behaviours showed by people were distinct. Some of them included consultation with a superior, delegation of the work, prioritising and scheduling tasks, seeking information and a rare few solved it by themselves. Few of the outcomes were good as the problem got solved, but many were only partially or temporarily solved or not at all solved. A wide variance was observed in the situational coping. Most of the conflicts within the organisation was resolved by consultation with the superiors, and people tend to resolve the work overload by working harder and prioritising. The lack of the control of resources were handled by exclusive solving by oneself. When the response effectiveness was measured, the highest ranking was for prioritising, seeking information and working harder. The least preference was for doing nothing.

The main aim for this test was to apply the Critical Incident Analysis as a technique to define the stress coping behaviours of individuals in the workplace environment. It was a striking discovery that role conflict and role ambiguity which stands as major sources of strain in normal studies didn't occupy a good position in the present study conducted. So it was proved that the strain and stress encountered by people under distinct situations are very different from the one's picked up from the existing theoretical models. The experiment was moreover problem focused or action oriented than emotionally connected. However research is still continuing to perform interviews to derive explanations to match both action oriented and emotion specific outcomes.

The major limitations of the technique are that the method focuses on individual responses rather than the organisational penetration to decrease the amount of job related stress. The second factor was the cost of conducting the research making use of this technique. It was necessary to take account of individual reactions as it explored the relationship of environmental stressors and the stress coping behaviours and also verified the effectiveness of distinct behaviours. But in some situations, the individuals had no impact where the organisation could be of any help. The cost incurred was for the analysis of the content part and interviewing by itself. The duration was 45 minutes for the current study. So with 130 participants, it almost covered a total of 150 hours that included going to different locations of the interview boards , coding of the data's and looking towards the research assistant's each of whom was given 10 hours for the content data analysis. Hence comparing to the data gathering techniques like mails, questionnaires etc, Critical Incident Analysis is a costly method.

A stress SWOT analysis could be performed to understand the unique strengths and weaknesses to mange stress in an organisation's background. As the first step, identify one's personal strengths, support networks and the resources available. Observe yourself in the ways you managed stress with your practical skills. Record the weaknesses within oneself and look at the past experiences where the weakness aroused a problem. Grab all the opportunities around and make the maximum use of it. Try to attack all the threats with one's physical and mental potential. An effective dynamic change happens when all the weaknesses are converted into strengths and all the threats are changed into ample reserve of wide spread opportunities.

HOW I AS A MANAGER WOULD TACKLE SITUATIONS

Possession of great positions makes an individual to be responsible and liable to many people around. It becomes their duty to be considerate and dutiful to the fellow workers and subordinates. If I were a manger or a superior executive, I would inculcate different practicalities and skills to cope up with the juniors working under me and make them comfortable and relaxed. Stress is a major factor that stands as a villain in the work places. So effective methods must be incorporated to alleviate its consequences on the employees and their work.

Stress could be developed due to acute misunderstandings and misinterpretation of people and concerned situations. So I would develop skills like empathy and attitude adjustments to compete and work with the co-workers in my work environment. I would also enable myself to learn and understand the different communication styles to deal with people from different nationalities and diverse cultures. Getting to know more people and making an effort to provide solutions to each of their problems would be a good measure to generate success in an organisation and reduce stress.

I would motivate the employees to do more and more job by complimenting and rewarding them at necessary periods of time that will help them to derive job satisfaction and aid in higher performance. Factors like emotional intelligence and emotional balance will be mixed in right proportions to maintain a work life culture and work family balance. Adapting to the different situations to bring about a long term change and difference have always helped me to tackle difficulties. I would also enable myself to accept

the negatives of people and value the positive side of them to eliminate the stress that could have otherwise arisen inside me. Dealing with problems then and there is the most efficient way of stress release rather than suppressing the emotions. Being optimistic and viewing things in a positive angle are genuine measures to sustain balance at work.

Good conflict management techniques and implementation of psychological contract are necessary for the ongoing of the job. With my mentoring skills, I would help the budding talents to sprout to the fullest. I will also make an effort to train the introverted people and the one's who are less skilled. Being simple and viewing things with simplicity is my style that has helped me go through in these many periods of time. I am sure that would be of great help in the years to come.

CONCLUSION

From the previous examples and definitions, I can conclude that stress has been a major phenomenon standing as a barrier for the progress of an individual and an organisation. Stress has always created disturbance and trouble among groups of people to proceed on with their normal activities during the time of job. It makes people loose the feeling of job security and job satisfaction.

As always, every object or process in this world has a positive and a negative aspect. Stress cannot be avoided from a place totally. But utilisation of accurate resources and implementation of exact stress management strategies can help the stress to be reduced to a high extent. Hence the response generated by the body of an individual to an external or an internal

stimulus could produce positive or negative consequence. It depends on the person to tackle stress in the right way to generate better and healthy outcomes rather than becoming a victim to its unhealthy side.