

Chapter 5-Conflict and Stress management

Cross-cultural communication and its effect on Conflict-

The term “Cultural Conflict” was firstly used in year 1949.

Definition-Cultural conflict is defined as “differences in values and beliefs that creates a disagreement between two parties”.

In terms of Culture, conflict relates to unharmonious or contradictory norms, values, priorities and motives.

Different cultures have their own communication rules and their own ways of exchanging messages.

In fact, it's fair to say that the way people communicate can vary greatly. In Asia and the Middle East for example, people rely less on words than people in the West and instead make great use of body language, facial expressions, silence and what is not said as opposed to what is said.

There are a huge number of ways in which poor cross-cultural communication competence can cause intercultural conflict.

To ensure productive and fruitful intercultural relationships, then it's important to understand that one's own way is not necessarily the ‘right’ way. By taking the time to understand the cultures we interface with, we are able to identify where intercultural conflict is most likely to happen and make efforts to ensure this is managed positively.

In today's world, Business has been spreading all over the world to assure high sustainability and complete with their competitors. The challenge is that even with all the goodwill in the world, miscommunication is likely to happen, especially when there are significant cultural differences between communicators. Miscommunication may lead to conflict, or aggravate conflict that already exists.

Many failures in international cooperation and conflict resolution seem to be related to communication problems and cultural differences. In other words, the establishment of realistic, proper and effective communication, based on mutual cultural understanding and on goodwill, would solve many national and international disputes. When communication takes place between two cultures, these effects get even more complicated, primarily because they are symbolized in one context and transferred into another. Intercultural communication, therefore, needs co-orientation as a prerequisite.

Co-orientation refers to any effort that may be necessary to familiarize and train an individual in the life, work, social and political relations, norms, values, traditions, religion and other aspects of one's own culture and those of other concerned nations.

The following principles could clarify the kind of co-orientation needed for conflict resolution:

1. To increase our awareness and understanding of our own rights.
2. To increase our awareness and understanding of our own culture.
3. To become more cognizant of our attitudes and feelings towards people of another country or community and vice versa.
4. To better understand the social, political and economic environments of other cultures and their impact on personal behavior.
5. To gain better awareness and appreciation of the similarities and differences between the different cultures.
6. To be flexible and realistic to an extent that could contribute to resolving conflicts. But certain factors facilitate the understanding of the reasons behind a conflict and help in dealing with its solution. The study of history, language, religion, traditions, values and norms of other nations definitely helps in intercultural understanding and problem-solving, but it is only a starting point. Goodwill, honesty and respect are bases on which to develop political and cultural knowledge.

The diagnosis and analysis of an organizational conflict and the development of effective intervention techniques and methods for conflict, are essential in turning a conflict into a positive experience. In doing so it is important to analyze the type of conflict, its impact on individuals, the team and the company as a whole, and use an appropriate conflict resolution style. In theory, it is common sense to manage conflict through a situational and contextualized approach, considering cross-cultural contexts, using a cooperative rather than an authoritative style of conflict handling.

Definition of Communication and Conflict-

Definition-Communication is giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, to seek information, to give information or to express emotions.

Communication is transfer of information from one person to another, whether or not it elicits confidence. But the information transferred must be understandable to the receiver.

“Conflicts are neither constructive nor disruptive but the ways these are handled make them either positive or negative.”

A healthy relationship is often characterized by both parties being able to show up authentically and negotiate in ways that result in a win-win outcome. They typically communicate desires, wants, feelings and perceptions with each other in a safe way. When conflict does arise, communication plays a big role in finding a mutually desirable resolution.

Ways to communicate that minimize conflict:

Be very clear and straightforward about your expectations – don't expect people to simply understand your wishes.

If communicating with a group of people don't merely depend on verbal communication – use email to keep a record and ensure everyone is in the loop. And never ignore or neglect certain members.

Be aware of the pitch and tone of your voice – try to remain polite and be a good listener.

Don't assume things or overreact to petty issues – and remember everyone has the right to express their views and be listened to so avoid interrupting.

If conflict arises use these techniques:

The Defusing Technique: Try to find some value in the opposing point of view. This doesn't mean compromising your principles but validating the other's position so that you can reach resolution.

Empathy: Try to put yourself into the other person's shoes and see the situation from their point of view.

Exploration: Ask questions to understand the other person's opinions or feelings.

Use "I" Statements: Admit and accept your thoughts and feelings instead of blaming the other person. This will decrease the chance of the other person becoming defensive.

Stroking: Be respectful and identify some positives about the other person.

Functional vs. Dysfunctional conflict-

Functional conflict is healthy, constructive disagreement between groups **or** individuals.

Dysfunctional conflict is unhealthy disagreement that occurs between groups **or** individuals. Mediation can vastly improve **dysfunctional** situations to make them into a **functional conflict**.

Positive results of functional conflict include:

- Awareness of both sides of issues
- Improvement of working conditions due to accomplishing solutions together
- Solving issues together to improve overall morale
- Making innovations and improvements within an organization

Resolving personality conflicts/Handling personality clashes-

At some point in our professional lives, most of us will have to deal with people we just don't like or can't seem to get along with. A clash of personalities is most likely at the root of these conflicts.

The good news is that while workplace conflicts are unavoidable, there are ways to minimize them.

Some things to keep in mind:

- Your way is not always the right way, and your personality is not necessarily the “normal” one.
- Except that, people have different perspectives. All are valid.
- Different personalities, if handled correctly, can strengthen a team by contributing different ideas and solutions.
- When personality conflicts have reached the point where they interfere with the ability to work, it’s necessary to deal with them.

Strategies:

- I. **Acceptance** – sometimes all that’s necessary to defuse a personality conflict is a little bit of kindness and understanding. When we’re able to accept personality differences, it often defuses defensiveness and friction.
- II. **Stay professional** – conduct yourself in a professional manner. Be calm and courteous during interactions. Even when personality differences exist, if both parties remain professional, confrontation can be avoided. It’s not necessary for coworkers to like each other to work together effectively. Remain professional and don’t take it personally. Watch your tone. It’s important to make sure the tone of your communications whether in person, via e-mail or over the phone is appropriate and not hostile.
- III. **Find the source** – when personality conflicts do arise, it’s important to determine what the real issue is. Is it just a difference of opinion, or is there a more serious underlying problem? It’s a good idea to address the problem with the other person directly. It’s important for both parties to be aware and have an understanding of the conflict in order to have any hope of resolution.
- IV. **Take it to management** – if you have been unable to resolve a personality conflict that is interfering with your work, it may be necessary to bring it to the attention of management.
- V. Sometimes effective mediation by third-party is all that’s necessary to defuse conflict. Some companies offer workshops or training that teach coworkers how to navigate difficulties and learn to get along with each other, despite differences.

When those strategies don’t work, it may be necessary for management to separate the parties involved in the conflict. Sometimes it may be possible to simply assign the individuals to different projects or teams. In extreme cases, it may be necessary for one of the parties to be transferred to another department or division to eliminate contact.

Conflict resolution/Conflict Management Strategies-

Different people use different methods to resolve conflict, and most people have one or more natural, preferred conflict resolution strategies that they use regularly. It is possible to scientifically measure an individual's inclinations toward specific conflict resolution strategies. In this article, we will discuss the five different categories of conflict resolution from the Thomas-Kilmann model, as well as their advantages and disadvantages.

1. Problem Solving / Collaboration / Confronting

In this method, people involved in the conflict or having a difference in opinion, they come forward to discuss the problem at hand with a very open mind. They focus on resolving the conflict and finding the best alternative/solution for the team. They discuss by rising above personal emotions with the sole intention to finding what is best for the team. This leads to a win-win kind of an outcome. Here everyone collaborates.

2. Compromising/Reconciling

Sometimes for certain conflicts, there will be a need for the involved parties to think of a middle path wherein both parties decide to give up something and identify a resolution. This kind of solution will be temporary for that moment and are not long lasting solution. This leads to lose-lose kind of an outcome as both parties may feel they have lost something.

3. Withdrawing/Avoiding

In some situation one of the parties in the conflict may decide to retract from the discussion and allows going with the other person's opinion. Or some situation, one of the parties may decide to completely avoid the conflict by maintaining silence. This works well in situation where one of the parties in the conflict is emotionally charged up or is angry. Hence avoiding any conflict resolution provides a "cooling off" period to the people involved so that they can later come back for meaningful resolution.

4. Forcing/Competing

In some situations, a person with authority and power can force his/her opinion and resolves the conflict without giving any chance to the other party/person. This leads to a win-lose kind of an outcome. Someone may end up feeling as a loser while the other person with authority may feel as a winner. This technique can be used if we see the conflicts are unnecessary and mostly destructive for the team.

5. Smoothing/Accommodating

This is a technique which is used when the atmosphere seems to be filled with apprehension/distrust among the parties involved. And no one is coming forward for resolving the conflict. In these kind of scenarios, one of the parties can take charge and tries to smooth the surrounding by using nice words and by emphasizing on the points of agreements and playing down on the points of disagreements. This can work as catalyst to break the discomfort between the involved parties by creating a feeling of trust and encourages them to come forward and resolve the conflict.

Negotiating & Communicating Styles-Negotiation is a process of discussion between two or more disputants, who seek to find out a common solution for a common problem, one that meets their needs and of interests.

During negotiations, parties involved must feel comfortable with what has been agreed so that they can move forward and develop an ongoing relationship. Either parties can take the process of negotiation themselves or they can take help of any professional negotiator.

Basics of Conflict Resolution through Negotiation/ Negotiation Strategy-

In comparison, truly effective negotiators apply a variety of negotiating strategies in different situations. With practice, each of these strategies can be learned. Your planning team must be able to call upon a variety of negotiating strategies that vary with the different types of conflicts it faces. Three basic strategies are:

1. *Cooperative strategy*. - This is also called the "soft bargaining" approach. It minimizes the degree of conflict by generating trust and kindness. You are looking for common ground and joint interests, and you want everyone to benefit. You compromise, and you expect other people to do the same. The approach is at its best when other individuals similarly cooperate. But it does not work when others regard your "soft" approach as a weakness that they can exploit.

2. *Competitive strategy*. - This is "hard bargaining" in which you give nothing and demand everything. You apply pressure to get your way. This approach is important when you absolutely must win, even if other persons will lose. The approach works well when you face weak or confused negotiators. It is less appropriate when a long-term relationship has to be maintained, or when your opponents are well prepared.

3. *Analytical strategy*. - In this approach, negotiation is a problem-solving exercise to create options that benefit everyone. This is sometimes called "interest-based bargaining," or

"principled negotiation." You try to: (1) separate the people from the problem; (2) focus on interests, not positions; (3) generate options for mutual gain; and (4) use objective criteria to make decisions.

The negotiator who favors "principled negotiation" does not rely on a forceful personality, or on a position of power in the relationship. Rather, he or she recognizes that everyone has legitimate interests to be satisfied. These interests are met through a search for mutual agreement rather than by application of one-sided force.

Yet this analytical approach also has its limitations. The two or more sides to an argument are not always logical. It can be impossible to avoid taking positions when individuals on the other side of a dispute are being irrational. This is especially true when the conflict is largely about differences in beliefs and values.

A competent negotiator knows what kind of image he or she projects. Good negotiators also recognize and respond to the negotiating styles on the opposite side of an argument. For example, is your conflict with someone who generally needs social approval, and who therefore will favor cooperative negotiation? Or is your conflict with an aggressive personality who enjoys defeating an opponent? Other styles include negotiators who are intuitive, naive, deceptive, hostile, sarcastic, and so on. In each situation, you try to understand your negotiating personality in relation to others. This increases the prospects for your negotiation to succeed.

Stages in Negotiation process-

1. **Preparation:** The old maxim 'proper preparation prevents poor performance' is as crucial in negotiating as it is in other areas like presentations, businesses etc. Parties must be clear with their objectives and must plan their approach towards its attainment. Further, it is also important to anticipate the other party's approach so that a framework can be prepared for negotiation. Preparation also involves making decisions related to the most important issues and planning one's tactics.
2. **Discussion:** After preparation, the time comes when parties meet each other. During this stage, members from each side put forward their understanding of the situation. Key elements of this stage are questioning, listening and clarifying. Parties involved should try to understand each other's viewpoint and should take notes during the discussion to record all points put forward related to the case. Discussing each other's hopes and expectations sets the tone for the negotiation. Discussion also involves asking questions and understanding the key points important for reaching an agreement.

3. **Reassessment of tactics:** After initial discussion is over next important thing is re-assessment of tactics by the parties. Here parties consider viewpoints of each other, set their priorities and summarize before starting to make proposals and bargain.
4. **Make Proposals:** Now, the parties make the proposals before each other. A proposal is an offer with a condition or conditions. The parties must show flexibility in their offers and must know when to adjourn in a negotiation.
5. **Bargaining:** Here parties must bridge the gaps between their proposals. This stage focuses on what is termed a win-win outcome where both sides feel that their point of view have been taken into consideration and both sides feel they have gained something positive through the process of negotiation.
6. **Agreement:** After viewpoints and interests of both sides are considered, agreement is achieved. Agreement must be clear so that both parties know what has been decided.
7. **Implementing a Course of Action:** From the agreement, a course of action is developed which is to be followed by the parties. Course of action is the manner in which parties perform their duties.

Causes of stress and ways to cope up with stress:

Definition-Work stress refers to the process of job stressors, or stimuli in the workplace, leading to strains, or negative responses or reactions.

Work stress is a generic term that refers to work-related stimuli (aka job stressors) that may lead to physical, behavioral, or psychological consequences (i.e., strains) that affect both the health and well-being of the employee and the organization.

Stages in Stress or Burnout-

- Initial stage-there is anxiety due to new job, excitement, enthusiasm, pride, challenges in the first stage.a person uses his full potential to attain the goals.
- Fuel shortage stage-energy resources gradually go down in coping with the demands, habits and strategies for coping stress.
- Chronic & crisis stage-physiological symptoms are prominent, if it persists for a long time , we enter a crisis stage . Immediate attention needed to the psychological, physiological changes.
- Burnout stage-when the ability to cope with stress begins to let us down, then we are in this stage. It creates a sense of isolation, feeling of lost control, starts relating himself differently to work and others.

Factors which cause stress at work or Stressors:

A job stressor is a stimulus external to an employee and a result of an employee's work conditions. Example job stressors include organizational constraints, workplace mistreatments (such as abusive supervision, workplace ostracism, incivility, bullying), role stressors, workload, work-family conflicts, errors or mistakes, examinations and evaluations, and lack of structure. Although stressors may be categorized as hindrances and challenges, there is not yet sufficient information to be able to propose which stress management interventions would better serve to reduce those hindrance stressors or to reduce strain-producing challenge stressors while reinforcing engagement-producing challenge stressors.

1. Organizational Constraints-

Organizational constraints may be hindrance stressors as they prevent employees from translating their motivation and ability into high-level job performance. The constraints include- (1) job-related information, (2) budgetary support, (3) required support, (4) materials and supplies, (5) required services and help from others, (6) task preparation, (7) time availability, (8) the work environment, (9) scheduling of activities, (10) transportation, and (11) job-relevant authority. The inhibiting effect of organizational constraints may be due to the lack of, inadequacy of, or poor quality of these categories.

2. Workplace Mistreatment-

Workplace mistreatment presents a cluster of interpersonal variables, such as interpersonal conflict, bullying, incivility. Typical workplace mistreatment behaviors include gossiping, rude comments, showing favoritism, yelling, lying, and ignoring other people at work. These variables relate to employees' psychological well-being, physical well-being, work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction and organizational commitment), and turnover intention.

3. Role Stressors/Multiple roles given-

Role stressors are demands, constraints, or opportunities a person perceives to be associated, and thus expected, with his or her work role(s) across various situations. Three commonly studied role stressors are role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload. Role ambiguity in the workplace occurs when an employee lacks clarity regarding what performance-related behaviors are expected of him or her. Role conflict refers to situations wherein an employee receives incompatible role requests from the same or different supervisors or the employee is asked to engage in work that impedes his or her performance in other work or non-work roles or clashes with his or her values. Role overload refers to excessive demands and insufficient time (quantitative) or knowledge (qualitative) to complete the work. The construct is often used interchangeably with workload, though role overload focuses more on perceived expectations from others about one's workload. These role stressors significantly relate to low job satisfaction, low organizational commitment, low job performance, high tension or anxiety, and high turnover intention.

4. Workload

Excessive workload is one of the most salient stressors at work. There are two types of workload: quantitative and qualitative workload. Quantitative workload refers to the excessive amount of work one has. Qualitative workload refers to the difficulty of work. Workload also differs by the type of the load. There are mental workload and physical workload. Excessive physical workload may result in physical discomfort or illness. Excessive mental workload will cause psychological distress such as anxiety or frustration.

5. Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which demands from one's work domain and one's family domain are incompatible to some extent. Work can interfere with family and/or family can interfere with work due to time-related commitments to participating in one domain or another, incompatible behavioral expectations, or when strains in one domain carry over to the other. Work-family conflict significantly relates to work-related outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, burnout, absenteeism, job performance, job strains, career satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors), family-related outcomes (e.g., marital satisfaction, family satisfaction, family-related performance, family-related strains), and domain-unspecific outcomes (e.g., life satisfaction, psychological strain, somatic or physical symptoms, depression, substance use or abuse, and anxiety);

Behavioral strains consist of actions that employees take in response to job stressors. Examples of behavioral strains include employees drinking alcohol in the workplace or intentionally calling in sick when they are not ill. Physical strains consist of health symptoms that are physiological in nature that employee's contract in response to job stressors. Headaches and ulcers are examples of physical strains. Lastly, psychological strains are emotional reactions and attitudes that employees have in response to job stressors. Examples of psychological strains are job dissatisfaction, anxiety, and frustration.

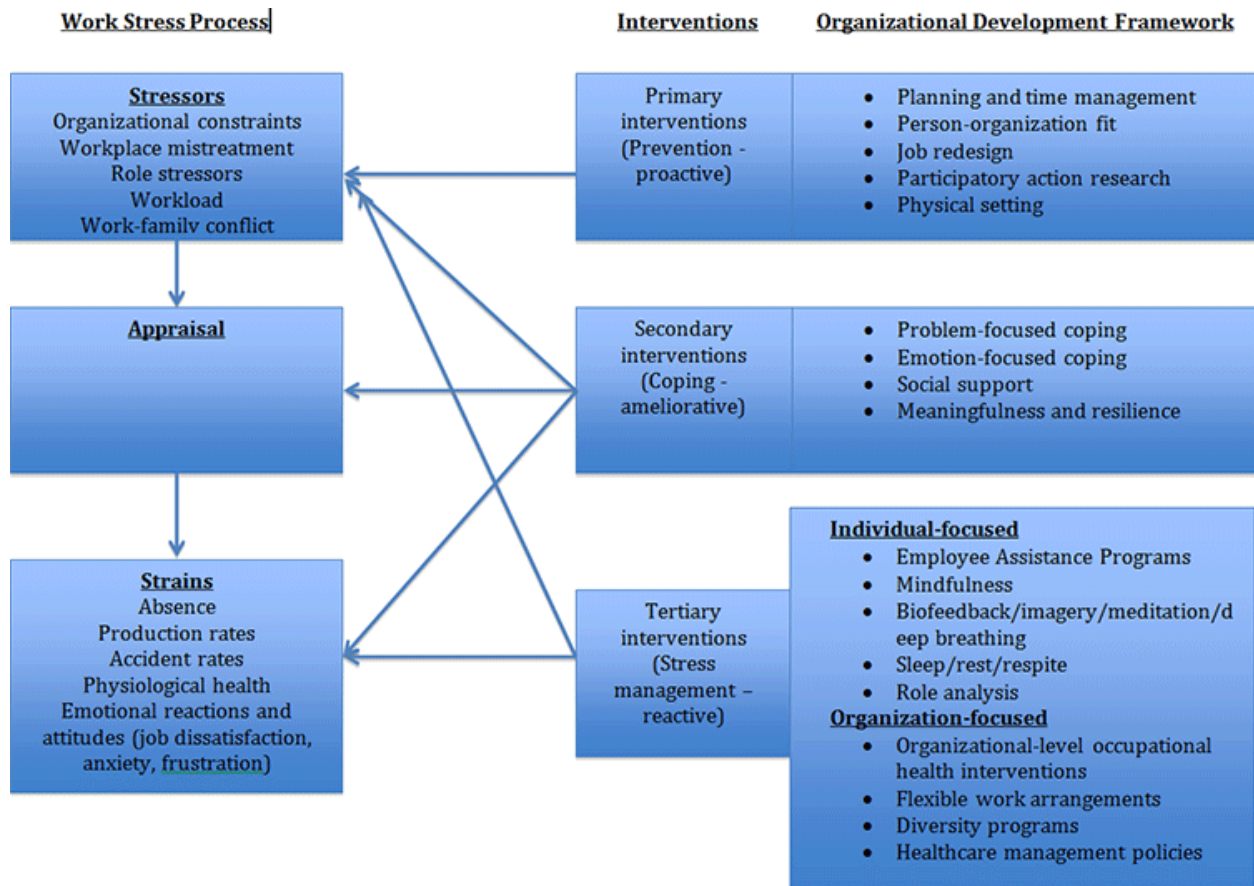
6. Personal inadequacy-It could be a factor for stress when the competencies of the employee are not up to the mark for the job for which he is hired, he may not be able to carry out the job given to him as he is not trained enough to handle the job efficiently.

7. Ethical issues –It could be a cause of stress when certain things are expected of you which do not fit in your ethical behavior and are forced to do. For instance whether or not to report the observed unethical behavior of another person, which may cause acute stress, especially for a person who has deep sense of personal and social responsibility.

8. Nature of the job-Common work related stress is experienced from task demand, time pressures, nature of job etc. Certain jobs are too demanding, monotonous, involves frequent transfers, cutting down the time you spend with your families etc.

9. Inter personal or group factors-It includes factors such as lack of cohesion, interpersonal conflicts, unpleasant relationship, poor communication, fear of being isolated from the group as a

valued member. working with superiors, peers or subordinates who are difficult to get along can be a source of stress.



Effects of stress/Work Stress Symptoms

Workplace stress derives from many sources. It can be a demanding boss, annoying co-workers, rebellious students, angry customers, hazardous conditions, long commutes and a never-ending workload. Your work performance is also affected by stressors such as family relationships, finances and a lack of sleep stemming from fears and anxieties about the future. How you handle the effects of stress depends on whether it is easier to change the situation or change your attitude toward it.

Poor Time Management

The positive side of stress is that it can jump-start your adrenalin and motivate you to perform your tasks more quickly in response to impending deadlines. An overwhelming workload, lack of peer support and too many demands at once, however, contribute to a sense of frustration and panic that there isn't enough time to complete the work. According to the authors of "Performance Under Pressure: Managing Stress in the Workplace," if these conditions routinely result in overtime or having to take work home, the stress of being unable to manage time efficiently can fuel employees' resentment toward the company as well as negatively influence their commitment and loyalty.

Strained Relationships

Stress is a major contributor to job burn-out and strained interactions with peers and supervisors. The combined feelings of helplessness and hopelessness generate heightened sensitivities to any and all forms of criticism, defensiveness, depression, paranoia about job security, jealousy and resentment toward co-workers who seem to have everything under control, short-fuse tempers, diminished self-esteem and withdrawal.

Lack of Focus

Stress affects your ability to remember things you already know, to process new information you are learning and to apply both to analytical situations and physical tasks that require concentration. When you are mentally exhausted from all of the worries, anxieties and tension brought on by a stressful environment or lifestyle, you are more easily distracted and prone to make costly, harmful or even fatal mistakes on the job.

Effect on Health

In addition to headaches, sleep disorders, vision problems, weight loss/gain and blood pressure, stress affects cardiovascular, gastrointestinal and musculoskeletal systems, says Richard Weinstein, author of "The Stress Effect." If you're not feeling well, you're not going to do your best work. Further, the amount of sick leave taken to rest and recuperate from stress-related illnesses often means that the work only accumulates during your absence and, thus, generates even more stress about how to catch up once you return.

When stressful situations are ongoing or unresolved, this response is constantly activated, causing wear and tear on different biological systems. Eventually, fatigue occurs and the immune system is weakened. This increases the risk of disease or injury.

In recent decades, researchers have studied the relationship between job stress and physical illness. Examples include sleep disturbances, upset stomach and headache, as well as compromised relationships with family and friends. Other symptoms include:

- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Indigestion
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Depression
- Short attention span
- Loss of appetite
- Procrastination
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Poor job performance

These signs are easy to recognize, but the effects of stress on chronic disease are less obvious because these ailments develop .

Other factors-The studies show “stressful working conditions are actually associated with increased absenteeism, tardiness, and intentions by workers to quit their jobs — all of which have a negative effect on the bottom line.” A healthy workplace is defined as one that has low rates of illness, injury and disability in its workforce while remaining competitive in the marketplace.

Strategies to overcome stress at work or stress Management techniques

The strategies that can prevent job stress include:-

1. **Delegation of work-**Many tasks can be delegated to the subordinates without compromising the effectiveness. Discussing important issues every morning with the subordinates not only provides them with the structure to manage many of their activities but allows the manager to attend to the more critical managerial functions.
2. **Time management-**Time management can be practiced at work prioritizing the activities having telephone calls and visitors screened by the assistants leaving the routine letters to be attended by the assistants save the manager’s time.
3. **Stress management training and employee assistance programs-** can improve workers’ ability to deal with difficult work situations through understanding the sources of stress, the effects of stress on health and strategies to eliminate stressors. Another way to mitigate workplace stress is by hiring a consultant who can recommend ways to improve the work environment. This is a direct way to reduce stressors at work and involves identifying stressful factors and then reducing them as much as possible. It can also change work routines for the better, increasing productivity.
4. **Other leadership strategies** that can prevent job stress include:
 - Ensuring that workload is aligned with employee capabilities and resources

- Designing jobs that provide meaning and opportunities for workers to succeed
- Clearly defining roles and responsibilities
- Providing opportunities for professional development and participation in decision-making
- Improving communication concerning the overall health of the company
- Providing opportunities for social interaction among workers
- Establishing schedules that make sense for demands and responsibilities outside of work (work-life balance)

These efforts may vary due to the size and complexity of the organization, along with available resources and the specific stress-related problems in the workplace.

5. Other strategies-

- Recognition of employees for good work performance
 - Opportunities for career development
 - An organizational culture that values the individual worker
 - Management actions that are consistent with organizational values
- There are actions that reduce job stress as well.

6. Managing stress at individual level-Employees also have the ability to maintain good mental health and reduce stress in their own lives. There are many ways to do this, such as learning to relax, taking short breaks throughout the day, prioritizing, managing time well and communicating effectively with coworkers. Lifestyle changes such as increasing exercise and making healthy food choices are other ways that employees can decrease stress, as these good habits will carry over into the workplace.

7. Goal oriented work-Mere engagement in number of activities does not ensure that the desired results are attained. Thus one has to frequently assess how goal oriented one's work or efforts are. It is easy to fall into the trap of being busy all the time with no end results. Effectiveness versus efficiency should be observed all the time.

8. Enhancing personal skills for top job performance-Constant upgrading and training advancement is needed to update your skills. It reduces the level of anxiety and fear of failure, because of non-job performance.