



While a number of books and articles have been written on the subject, we can never get enough advice on stress management. Read on to find out the most common causes of stress and a few simple tips to cope

Forget stress, have a ball

Most of us find modern day life very stressful. Today, there are many more things to do, deadlines to meet, targets to achieve, and in even lesser time than you can think of doing it. What is the end result? Hypertension, insomnia, disturbed sleep and binge eating. There is no time to relax and pray.

An in-depth research into the causes and types of stress facing 21st century managers reveal interesting results. Modern day managers face three different types of stress — physical stress, mental stress and spiritual stress. It is a fact that few individuals perform better under stressful conditions but this is the exception that proves the rule.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

When is stress created? Stress is created when harmony is lost. Physical stress can be caused either due to lack of physical activity or restlessness. Mental stress is caused by thinking excessively about the past or about the future.

Mental stress can also be caused by worrying about financial matters or due to intense emotional trauma, including marital problems or financial losses. But the most important stress facing modern day managers is spiritual stress.

Spiritual stress is created when the soul becomes imbalanced and out of harmony with the universe. Lack of time to pray, hectic travel schedules, little or no formal religious training and an increasingly more materialistic world or a combination of the above factors are responsible for the high level of spiritual stress. This vacuum has resulted in the quest for spiritual anchors and gurus have attempted to fill this void.

Physical stress is also created due to an unhealthy lifestyle, improper diet and extremely long working hours. The need for constant cross-continental travel where managers need to be alert throughout the day and night for effectively responding to the rapidly changing business environment, also increases the demands on the body and mind. Unhealthy habits are the final nail in the proverbial

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coffin. Lavish business lunches, seven course dinners, cocktail parties and chain smoking are recipes for disaster. The modern day diet is nothing but slow poison. Enormous quantities of oil and fat. High amount of saturated fats present in meat, milk, dairy products and eggs put a tremendous pressure on the digestive system. Pesticide laden colas and alcohol, increases the degeneration of the liver increasing the toxins in the body.

Smoking is nothing but suicide over a longer time frame. A combination of the above intoxicants, coupled with a sedentary lifestyle without aerobic exercise results in obesity, blood pressure, insomnia, disturbed sleep and headaches.

SYMPTOMS

The body responds to the stress it is being subjected to by symptoms like migraines, blurred vision, diabetes and cardio-vascular diseases. This is the point at which highly stressed individuals approach medical help. The pressure on time also results in individuals getting to spend little or no quality time with family and children. This results in loosening of family bonds, often resulting in emotional stress due to separations, divorce or legal wrangles between family members. One of the most vital factors responsible for mental stress is the undue

importance given to deadlines. Targets that have to be met, schedules that have to be kept and flights that have to be caught, trains that have to be boarded. A split second delay could result in business inconvenience and cancellation of meetings. So managers are in a wild rush at all times.

STRESS VICTIMS

One of the first victims of today's information age has been the act of praying. Regular prayers at home have become a rarity. The

ritual of praying at office is almost non-existent due to the heterogeneity of the workforce, lack of time, atheist attitudes of senior management and lack of faith. However, it must be mentioned here, that on special occasions like festivals, the workforce do perform religious rituals at the workplace. However, these are restricted to about two or three occasions every year. The result is that most senior managers are in search of solace. They are constantly seeking peace of mind. Many actively search for spiritual anchors. Some attend meditation courses. Others practice yoga or pranayama. Some spend their weekends at ashrams. Few look for support within their communities. But the quest for an effective way to combat spiritual stress is a never-ending activity. After scientifically analysing the causes of stress and classifying the major types of stress into three broad categories, let us look at a few practical techniques to manage them.

A FEW MANAGING TECHNIQUES

Any stress management technique that needs practitioners to set aside an hour every day, becomes impractical, due to its very nature. Practitioners may start, even practice it for a month, but fall back to their old ways, as the human mind loves familiarity. To ask modern day managers to make time to manage stress is an impossibility. Give them techniques that fit in seamlessly with their hectic schedules and you begin to get compliance, almost immediately.

Physical stress can be managed by stimulating the pressure points on the wrists. This can be done by squeezing a rubber ball in your hands, while being seated in your office, or while traveling in the car, or airplanes. You can do it anytime, anywhere. All you have to remember, is to carry these small soft squeeze rubber ball in your coat pocket.

Multiple balls at the workplace, home, bathroom and car, increases the compliance of this simple technique. The balls have to be squeezed gently, like squeezing an orange. This results in stimulating the pressure points on the fingertips and palms, activating the pineal gland and stimulating the secretion of neurotransmitters, which induce a sense of calm and eliminate stress. □

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