

WEEK 14



Stress

Learning Outcomes

- Define stress
- Describe the potential of stress
- Explain individual differences of variables that moderate the stress - outcome relationship



What is Stress?

- **Stress** - A dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he/she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important

What is Stress?

- Stress is associated with constraints and demands.
- **Constraints** - Forces that prevent individuals from doing what they desire
- **Demands** - The loss of something desired

The Stress Scenario

- **Examples of "overload" situations are common in today's world:**
 - You and your spouse both work full time while you are raising your family. At the same time, your parents are retired, in ill health, and are dependent on your help with shopping and running errands.
 - You are a single person living alone, and your salary isn't rising as fast as the rate of inflation. It's getting harder each month to pay the bills.
 - You are a divorced parent and share the custody of your children with your former spouse. But the friction between the two of you in matters concerning the children is becoming more bitter and more frequent.
 - The expectations and competition at your workplace is becoming fierce. You find yourself coming in early, staying late, and taking on more work than you can handle.

What are the Signs of Stress?

- **The mental symptoms of stress include:**

- Tension
- Irritability
- Inability to concentrate
- Feeling excessively tired
- Trouble sleeping

- **The physical symptoms of stress include:**

- Dry mouth
- A pounding heart
- Difficulty breathing
- Stomach upset
- Frequent urination
- Sweating palms
- Tight muscles that may cause pain and trembling



Potential Sources of Stress - Environmental Factors

- **Environment factors:**
 - Economic uncertainty - economic downturn, people worried about the job security
 - Political uncertainty - it is caused by political coalitions, government laws and legislations
 - Technological uncertainty - innovation makes the employees' skills obsolete (robotics, automation, computer, etc)
 - Terrorism - incidents like 9/11, assassination

Potential Sources of Stress - Organization Factors

- Organization factors:
 - Task demands - related to person job, physical layout, task variety, overcrowded room, equipment (line speed for line operator)
 - Role demands - role conflicts, role ambiguity
 - Interpersonal demands - lack of colleagues support, less friends in the working place
 - Organizational structure - degree of rules and regulations, long procedure
 - Organizational leadership - leadership style
 - Organization's life stage - establishment (heavy workloads) and decline stage (lay-off workers)

Potential Sources of Stress - Individual

- Individual factors:
 - Family (commitment, relationship with children, spouse)
 - Economic problems (individual income)
 - Personality (optimistic and pessimistic)
 - Experience (lack of experience to handle problem)

Potential Sources of Stress - Individual

- Social support - friendship support
- Locus of control - the beliefs of oneself to control the fate
- Self-efficacy - the individual confidence to handle problem
- Hostility - mistrust and suspicious of others

Consequences of Stress

- Physiological symptoms - change in metabolism, increased heart and breathing rates, increased blood pressure
- Psychological symptoms - tension, anxiety, irritability, boredom, procrastination

Consequences of Stress

- Behavioural symptoms - changes in productivity, absence, turnover, changes in eating habits, increased smoking, consumption of alcohol
- In USA, according to one research, it cost about \$200 billion annually to resolve the stress problem

Managing Stress

- **Individual approach**

- Time management - making daily list of activities, prioritizing activities by importance to urgency, schedule activities, knowing your daily cycle and handling the demanding part first
- Physical exercise - provide mental diversion from work pressures
- Relaxation technique - meditation, hypnosis (the objective is to experience deep relaxation, feel physically relaxed and detach body from sensation)
- Social support network - having friends, work colleagues to talk to



Managing Stress

- Organization approaches
- Setting realistic goals - study the person's ability, specify the goals to the employees and have an appropriate time frame to complete
- Selection and placement - should not hire those with internal locus of control, know the CV well before selection
- Training - stress seminar yearly and quarterly
- Redesigning jobs - to give employee more responsibility, more autonomy, increased feedback, reduce uncertainty (provide nap time)
- Improve communication (downward communication, practice empathy)
- Increase employees involvement - participation and allow the workers to make decision
- Wellness programs - organizationally supported programs that focus on the employee's total physical and mental condition
- E.g. provide workshops to help people quit smoking, control alcohol use, lose weight, eat better, and develop and regular exercise