

Emotional Intelligence And Stress Management In Selection

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What is Emotional Intelligence?

Besides the usual scrutiny of academic excellence, intellectual ability, and technical proficiency, recruiters today seek the presence of, and determine the level of interpersonal skills in prospective team-members. It is believed that persons who handle themselves and others well are most likely to perform better at their jobs. These skills are not taught at schools and college and are necessary to complement the possession of adequate intellectual ability and technical skills which are assumed to be there in the job-seeker.

These qualities have been referred to in various names as 'Smartness', 'Soft-Skills', 'Personality' etc for some time. The term Emotional Intelligence encompasses these and more. These skills are synergistic with cognitive ones or those present both at birth, and those acquired during a lifetime by observation and through experience. Top performers have both skills. The more complex the job, the more important it is to possess Emotional Intelligence.

The nature of work in most organizations requires frequent interaction with people both individually, or as groups. Levels of interaction frequently change between peers, superiors and subordinates. Exposure to stress is also fairly regular. It is therefore necessary that all members of an organization have adequate Emotional Intelligence to cope with situations of varying complexity during their service.

Emotions.

The dictionary describes emotions as 'any agitation or disturbance of mind; and vehement or excited mental state'. It refers to a feeling with its accompanying range of actions eg. Anger, sadness, fear, enjoyment, love, surprise, disgust and shame. We must remember that human beings are not only motivated by reason and intelligence, but by

passions, desires, and feelings. The latter may be in a direction different from reason. Just as a watch would not function without its main spring or battery, human beings would be able to achieve little without emotions to motivate them.

Emotional Quotient (EQ) and Emotional Intelligence (EI).

This is a measure of Emotional Intelligence. Put simply, it means knowing what feels bad, what feels good, and how to get from bad to good earliest with least effort. Emotional Intelligence includes components as self-awareness, ability to manage moods, motivation, empathy, and social skills like cooperation and leadership. Emotions enable human beings to respond appropriately to a variety of environmental situations. Emotional Intelligence is the ability to understand people, to monitor our and others emotions, to discriminate between them, and to use own skills effectively to guide our own thinking and actions.

Emotional Competence.

Emotional Intelligence is based on the five elements of self awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy and adeptness in relationships. While Emotional Intelligence is the inherent potential in a person, Emotional Competence is the ability of any individual to apply this potential in day-to-day dealings at work and after work. It is necessary to be rich in Emotional Intelligence before acquiring competence to apply this knowledge to advantage.

Consequences of Low and High EQ/EI

(a) Young friends, a person with high EQ, high EI is 'happy' at most times, He is able to recognize the source of his negative feelings and has the confidence to initiate necessary corrective action thus increasing his long-term happiness. He assumes responsibility for his

happiness and depends less on others for relief when his state of happiness is threatened. These people are healthy, happy and more successful in their relationships. They strike a balance between emotion and reason, are empathic and compassionate towards others, and have high self-esteem.

(b) The art of influencing people entails proper handling of their emotions. Person with high EI send correct emotional signals to the persons they deal with. They communicate effectively and have an ability to sway their audience. They are effective leaders.

(c) Effective leadership is expected from the managerial cadre at all times. Particularly under trying conditions. Therefore, the presence of this capability and degree of inherent potential for growth are examined by the interview panels during selection of prospective officer level inductees.

Emotional Intelligence and Personality

EQ and IQ

Whereas IQ is a measure of a person's intelligence and is obtained from scores in Intelligence Tests, EQ is a measure of his emotional sensitivity and maturity.

A person with a high EQ knows that there is:-

- (a) A time to be aggressive and another to be passive.
- (b) A time to be together and another to be alone.
- (c) A time to confront and a time to withdraw.
- (d) A time to speak and a time to be silent.

Conversely, a person with low EQ lives on constant regrets viz 'If only I was rich, had been handsome, or, ... had a better job' etc.

Persons with high EQ view a set back as a result of factors which they have the power to do something about rather than due to a flaw in themselves. They deal with a setback by finding a solution and recover fast wiser from the experience. On the other hand, the loser rues his luck and is 'beaten' by every setback. His attitude fosters a feeling of hopelessness and helplessness. While the former are catalysts for growth of their organizations, the latter only foster 'negative' growth.

Understanding Emotional Intelligence

Structure of the Mind

The human mind has two parts i.e. the 'Rational Mind' and the 'Emotional Mind'. The rational mind, or the out part of the brain enables planning, learning, loving, caring and making of moral and ethical distinctions. On the other hand, the Emotional Mind is a source of basic emotions as anger, sadness, fear, surprise, disgust etc. The harmony between the emotional and the rational minds constitutes emotional intelligence and is the key to a richer and more fulfilling life.

The Decision Making Process

Recent research has indicated that messages from the senses are registered by the brain in emotional memory. Thus emotional intelligence contributes to rational thought. Emotions take precedence over thoughts in making decisions as the rational mind takes longer to register and to respond than the emotional mind. The first impulse arises in the heart and not in the head. There is another type of reaction to a situation which is a slower and evaluative type. Emotions are triggered in a deliberate manner and there is extended appraisal of the situation. Both thoughts and cognition play a key role in determining what emotions will be aroused. Once an appraisal is made as 'this taxi-driver is cheating me', or, 'this baby is adorable', an appropriate emotional response follows. In this deliberate sequence, a fully articulated thought process precedes the emergence of emotion. The rational mind does not decide what emotions you should have – they emerge spontaneously. The rational mind can attempt to control the course of these reactions.

Positive or Negative Emotions

Emotion is necessary for survival. It leads to actions that prevent or minimize perceived loss or pain. Emotion drives action for survival. Emotion can be defined as a reactive impetus or an automatic response depending upon the way you have conditioned yourself to respond. Hence there are no 'positive' and 'negative' emotions. The basic survival principle is of 'fight or flight' and the two basic emotions are anger and fear. They form the bedrock of all other emotions. Emotions drive you to take action and it is necessary to balance the

emotions to be able to take a controlled decision despite the adversities or exuberant situations.

EQ and leadership

A good leader has adequate understanding of his own and others' emotional make-up and moves people in the direction of achieving. Organizational goals. There is a proven strong co-relation between emotional intelligence of leaders and performance of their teams.

A leader high on EQ has the following characteristics: –

(a) Ability to Regulate Emotions. He is open to feelings, monitors emotions relating to him and to others and manages his emotions as well as those of others by moderating negative emotions and enhancing positive ones. He is tolerant of others views. He is in control of their feelings and impulses.

(b) Ability to Analyze Emotions. He is able to recognize and understand his own emotions and drives, and their effect on others. Being self aware, he recognizes how his feelings affect others and their performance. He is thus able to steer out of emotional conflicts in a group easily.

(c) Sees the others Viewpoint. He is able to put himself in the others shoes and understands the cause of his reaction to a situation. He thus has ability to 'steer' a situation in the direction of his choice.

Leaders should acquire additional skills in the following broad areas of EQ :-

(a) Self Awareness. Have ability to recognize different feelings and the relationships between thoughts, feelings and actions. This will facilitate a better understanding of emotions.

(b) Managing Emotions. Realise what lies behind feelings and find ways to deal with emotions as fear, anger, anxiety and sadness. Being able to channelise emotions to a positive end to a given situation is necessary to raise EQ.

(c) Empathy. This is the ability to sense how others feel. It is necessary to be able to read non-verbal clues that contradict words people say. You can empathise with others only when you are attuned to them. Having basic 'people skills' and considerations for others is most important.

(d) Communication. Being able to express personal concerns without anger or passivity is

important. Such skills need to be developed constantly.

(e) Cooperation. Knowing when to take the lead and when to participate in efforts of a group to achieve its goal is necessary. Effective leadership is not based on domination, but on helping the teams to work together to achieve common goals. Recognizing the value of the contribution of others and encouraging their participation is necessary.

(f) Resolving Conflicts. People in conflict are usually locked in a spiral of conflicting emotions. The genesis of the conflict is soon lost sight of. The effective leader wades through the conflicting emotions and having located the cause, identifies an amicable solution and steers the situation out of the conflict towards the solution.

Can EQ be Developed?

Having explained the concept of Emotional Intelligence, it is pertinent to dwell briefly on whether EQ can be developed. The good news is yes it can. Unlike IQ, Emotional Intelligence can be improved throughout ones life provided there is a conscious efforts on the part of the individual to do so. Studies reveal that given the motivation, people in the 20-40 age group are best suited for developing their Emotional Intelligence. The level of Emotional Intelligence is not fixed genetically and its development is not restricted to childhood. This is largely learned and develops throughout life as one learns from experiences. Thus, an individual's EQ keeps improving. The bottom line remains the keenness of an individual to hone his skills in this area.

Stress management and importance of stress in selection

Introduction

From time to time, everyone experiences a 'bad day' and the resulting stress. Moreover, small amounts of stress can sometimes have positive effects. However, if bad days seem to go on and on without letup, and If you keep up that sort of routine long enough, the resulting stress may seriously affect your health and personal life as well as harm your job performance.

Both managers and employees need to understand the effects of work stress, the relationship

between stress and performance, and the sources of stress within an organization. In particular, everyone should understand the relationships between stress and health. In this chapter, we examine the nature of stress, in a generic sense the sources of stress at work place, and the effects of stress and stress in relation to personality assessment. People can handle varying amounts of stress effectively, and we explore some of these individual differences. Finally, we examine ways that employees and organizations can cope with stress.

Nature of Stress

Stress is a consequence of or a general response to an action or situation that places special physical or psychological demands, or both, on a person. Stress involves the interaction of a person and that person's environment. The physical or psychological demands from the environment that cause stress are called stressors. Stressors can take a variety of forms, but all stressors have one thing in common: They create stress or the potential for stress when an individual perceives them as representing a demand that may exceed his or her ability to respond.

Work Stressors

Several surveys have indicated that, in many firms, an average of about 25% of employees suffer from stress-included problems. Most of the surveys report that: –

- * one in three workers said that they have thought about quitting because of stress;
- * one in two workers said that job stress reduces their productivity; and
- * one in five workers said they took sick leave in the past month because of stress.

Workload

For many people, having too much work to do and not enough time or resources to do it can be stressful. **Role overload** exists when demands exceed the capacity of a manager or employee to meet all of them adequately. Many stressful jobs may be described as perpetually being in a condition of role overload. Surveys commonly identify work overload or “working too hard” as a major source of stress.

Job conditions

Poor working conditions represent another important set of job stressors. Temperature extremes, loud noise, too much or too little lighting radiation,

and air pollution are just a few examples of the working conditions that can cause stress for employees. Job performance deteriorates, sometimes markedly, when environmental stressors (Such as bad lighting, noise, or unpleasant temperatures) are present. Further, the effects of these environmental stressors are cumulative over time, and they interact with other sources of stress. Heavy travel demands or commuting to work over long distances are other aspects of jobs that employees may find stressful. Poor working conditions, excessive travel, and long hours all add up to increased stress and decreased performance.

Role Conflict and Ambiguity

Differing expectations of or demands on a person's role at work produce **role conflict**. **Role ambiguity** describes the situation in which the employee is uncertain about assigned job duties and responsibilities. Role conflict and role ambiguity are particularly significant sources of job-related stress.

Career Development

Major stressors related to career planning and development involve job security, promotions, transfers, and developmental opportunities. As with too much or too little work, an employee can feel stress by underpromotion (failure to advance as rapidly as desired) or overpromotion (promotion to a job that exceeds the individuals capabilities.

Reorganization and downsizing may seriously threaten careers. When jobs, departments, work teams, or entire organizations are restructured, employees often have numerous career-related concerns: Can I perform competently in the new situations? Can I advance? Is my job secure? Typically, employees find these concerns stressful.

Interpersonal Relations in the Organization

Groups have a tremendous impact on the behavior of people in organizations. Good working relationships and interactions with peers, subordinates, and superiors are a crucial part of organizational life, helping people achieve personal and organizational goals; when poor or missing, they are sources of stress. For example, a study of clerical employees indicated that intrusions by others—interruptions from noisy co-workers, ringing telephones, and other people walking into and around their workstations—were principal sources of stress. A high level of political behavior, or “office

politics,” also may create stress for managers and employees. The nature of relationships with co-workers may influence how employees react to other stressors. In other words, interpersonal relationships can be either a source of stress or the social support that affect how employees react to stressors.

Conflict between Work and Other Roles

A person plays many roles in life, only one of which is typically associated with work (although some individuals may hold more than one job at a time). These roles may present conflicting demands that become sources of stress. Furthermore, work typically meets only some of employees’ goals and needs. Other personal goals and needs may conflict with career goals, presenting an additional source of stress. For example, employees’ personal needs to spend time with their families may conflict with the extra hours they must work to advance their careers. Current demographic trends, such as the increasingly higher number of dual-career couples, have brought work and family role conflicts into sharp focus. Such conflicts are obvious in the following Managing Diversity feature.

Life Stressors

The distinction between work and nonwork stressors isn’t always clear. For example, as the previous Managing Diversity feature indicates, one source of stress lies in potential conflicts between work and family. As Figure ___ illustrates, both work and family stressors may contribute to work-family conflict because stress in one area can reduce a person’s ability to cope with stress in the other. This conflict represents a further source of stress which, in turn, leads to problems such as depression.

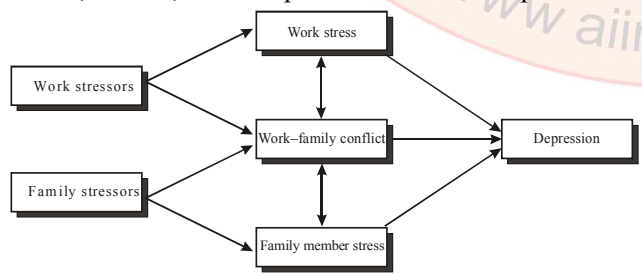


Fig :

Effects of Stress

Work stress may have both positive and negative effects. However, research on work stress tends to focus on its negative effects, which seems well targeted. The effects of work stress occur in three main areas: physiological, emotional and behavioral.

Examples of the effects of excessive stress in these three areas are as follows.

- **Physiological effects of stress** include increased blood pressure, increased heart rate, sweating, hot and cold spells, breathing difficulties, muscular tension, and increased gastrointestinal disorders.
- **Emotional effects of stress** include anger, anxiety, depression, lowered self-esteem, poorer intellectual functioning (including an inability to concentrate and make decisions), nervousness, irritability, resentment of supervision, and job dissatisfaction.
- **Behavioral effects of stress** include decreased performance, absenteeism, higher accident rates, higher turnover rates, higher alcohol and other drug abuses, impulsive behavior, and difficulties in communication.

These effects have important implications for organizational behavior. We examine some of the implications of work stress for the health and performance of managers and employees, including the phenomenon of job burnout.

Health and Stress

There is a strong link between stress and coronary heart disease. Other major health problems commonly associated with stress include back pain, headaches, stomach and intestinal problems, and various mental problems. Medical researchers recently have discovered possible links between stress and cancer. Although determining the precise role that stress plays in health in all individual cases is difficult, many illnesses appear to be stress-related. In Japan, a phenomenon known as karoushi—death by overwork—is well known. Sometimes called stress-death, karoushi is examined in the following Managing Across Cultures piece.

Personality and Stress

To a very real extent, the problems caused by stress depend on the type of person involved. Personality influences (1) how individuals are likely to perceive situations and stressors, and (2) how they will react to these environmental stressors.

Many personality dimensions or traits can be related to stress, including self-esteem and locus of control. A personality trait may affect the probability that someone will perceive a situation or an event as a stressor. For example, an individual with low self-

esteem may be more likely to experience stress in demanding work situations that will a person with high self-esteem. The reason may be that individuals high in self-esteem typically have more confidence in their ability to meet job demands. Employees with high internal locus of control may takes more effective action, more quickly, in coping with a sudden emergency (a stressor) than will employees with high external locus of control. Individuals high in internal locus of control are likely to believe that they can moderate the stressful situation.

Type A and B Personalities

People with a **Type A personality** are involved in a never-ending struggle to achieve more and more in less and less time. Characteristics of this personality type include.

- a chronic sense of urgency about time,
- an extremely competitive, almost hostile orientation;
- an aversion to idleness; and
- an impatience with barriers to task accomplishment.

Two medical researchers first identified the Type A personality when they noticed a recurrent personality pattern in their patients who suffered from premature heart disease. In addition to the characteristics mentioned, extreme Type A individuals often speak rapidly, are preoccupied with themselves, and are dissatisfied with life.

Four sets of behaviors and tendencies associated with the Type A personality are: (1) time urgency, (2) competitiveness and hostility, (3) polyphasic behavior (trying to do too many things at once), and (4) a lack of advance planning. Medical researchers have discovered that these behaviors and tendencies often relate to life and work stress. They tend to cause stress or to make stressful situations worse than they otherwise might be.

Evidence links Type A behavior with a vulnerability to heart attacks. For years, the conventional wisdom among medical researchers was that Type A individuals were two to three times more likely to develop heart disease than were Type B individuals. The **Type B personality** is considered to be the opposite of the Type A personality. Type B individuals tend to be more easygoing and relaxed, less concerned about time pressures, and less likely to overreact to situations in hostile or aggressive

ways. Recent research, however, suggests that the Type A personality description is too broad to predict coronary heart disease accurately. Rather, research indicates that only certain aspects of the Type A personality—particularly anger, hostility, and aggression—are strongly related to stress reactions and heart disease.

The Hardy Personality

A great deal of interest has emerged in identifying aspects of the personality that might buffer or protect individuals from, in particular, the negative health.

Stress Management

Articles in newspapers and popular magazines often suggest various ways of coping with stress. The frequency with which these articles appear demonstrates the prevalence of stress in our society. In addition, organizational programs to help employees cope with stress have become increasingly popular, as the tremendous toll taken by stress has become more widely known. We next explore some methods that individuals and organizations can use to manage stress and reduce its harmful effects. **Stress management** refers to any program that reduces stress by understanding the stress response, recognizing stressors, and using coping techniques to minimize the negative consequences of stress.

Individual Stress Coping Methods

Stress management by individuals includes activities and behaviors designed to (1) eliminate or control the sources of stress and (2) make the individual more resistant to stress or better able to cope with stress. The first step in individual stress management involves recognizing the stressors that are affecting a person's life. Next, the individual needs to decide what to do about them. The following are some of the many practical suggestions for individual stress management.

- Plan ahead and practice good time management.
- Get plenty of exercise, eat a balanced diet, get adequate rest, and generally take care of yourself.
- Develop a sound philosophy of life and maintain a positive attitude.

- Concentrate on balancing your work and personal life. Always take the time to have fun.
- Learn a relaxation technique.

Among the advantages of relaxation techniques are that individuals can use them during the workday to cope with job demands. For example, a common approach to learning a “relaxation response” when stressed is to

- choose a comfortable position;
- close your eyes;
- relax your muscles;
- become aware of your breathing;
- maintain a passive attitude when thoughts surface;
- continue for a set period of time (20 minutes is recommended); and
- practice the technique twice daily.

Organizational Stress Coping Methods

Government and non governmental organizations have been laying group emphasis on organization stress copying methods layoff last year, Phillips Petroleum Company formed a team to respond to problems created by stress among its current and former employees. Further, Phillips paid for outside help to supplement the counseling available within the organization. Some organisations offer stress management classes and free counseling services for workers who feel overloaded. Some conduct workshops to help employees deal with stress. A large percentage of organizations have in place or are developing various stress management programs.

As Figure ___ on p. ___ shows, stress management by organizations is designed to reduce the harmful effects of stress in three ways: (1) identify and then modify or eliminate work stressors, (2) help employees modify their perceptions and understandings of work stress, and (3) help employees to cope more effectively with the consequences of stress.

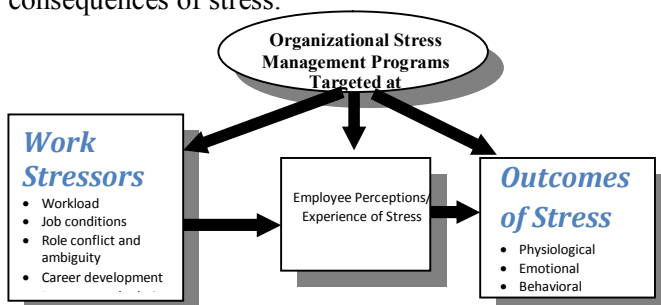


Fig :

Stress management programs aimed at eliminating or modifying work stressors often include

- improvements in the physical work environment;
- job redesign to eliminate stressors;
- changes in workloads and deadlines;
- structural reorganization;
- changes in work schedules, more flexible hours, and sabbaticals;
- management by objectives or other goal-setting programs;
- greater levels of employee participation, particularly in planning changes that affect them; and / or
- workshops dealing with role clarity and role analysis.

Programs of stress management targeted at perceptions and experiences of stress and outcomes of stress include

- team building;
- behavior modification;
- career counseling and other employees assistance programs;
- workshops on time management;
- workshops on job burnout to help employees understand its nature and symptoms;
- training in relaxation techniques; and / or
- physical fitness or “wellness” programs.

Stress and its Importance in Selection

Introduction

In looking into the psychodynamic aspects of an individual, a GTO, evaluates both his social aspect and dynamic aspect. The social aspect has already been covered in the manual. The dynamic aspect relates to the level of the stress resistance that the individual shows when faced with difficult and awkward situations, i.e. coolness in action or calmness in crisis. It is not only confined to the continuous capacity to resist the deteriorating effects of stress, but also to return to normal when these stresses have passed off. It is only under emotional stress that an individual’s superficial veneers drop away to reveal the true basic set. It is for this reason that the group situations tasks are stressful group

tasks providing sufficient emotional stress for the real part of the individual to reveal itself.

Intensity and Duration of Stress and its Effect

Intense stress of a fairly long duration will deeply penetrate the superficial crust of facade and conscious compensations and reveal the deeper strata of personality. However, the intensity and duration of the stress must be kept within the maximum tolerance limit of the individual and the group. This will depend upon the maturity, understanding and practical competence of the GTO. He must understand how to give graduated doses of stress and yet allow the candidate to maintain his identity and 'self-concept'. Extreme application of stress must be avoided as it would require a high degree of psychological skill to 'seal-off' or disperse the after effects of the same.

A number of laboratory studies on individuals under stress and field studies of reaction of the group to a wide variety of environmental stresses have led to the following generalisation about the effects of external stresses:

- (a) In their initial impact stresses increase variability of behaviour and reduce its consistency.
- (b) Moderate external stress tends to produce some performance improvement; severe stress results in disorganised performance.
- (c) Initial response to moderate stress is shock or resistance. This is followed by recovery and even overcompensation. If the stress is extreme or continues over a longer period of time, lowered performance and ultimately collapse or breakdown occurs.
- (d) Effective leadership and healthy inter-personal relations reduce the initial shock reaction and make possible a longer period of adaptation to unabated stress.

The graphic representations of performance under stress given hereunder are indicative of the crucial characteristics of stress and its effects. It is interesting to note the curves in case of soluble and insoluble tasks, showing mastery of stress, typical group performance under conditions of increasing intensity of stress and a condition of breakdown under extreme stress.

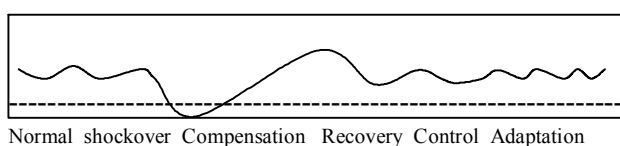


Fig. 4— Theoretical Curve of individual or group performance under stress over a period in case of mastery of stress.

Figure 4 shows the stages through which an individual or a group passes and the effect of the stress over a period. The mastery over the stress is due to the nature, intensity and duration of stress which is within the capacity of the individual or the group.

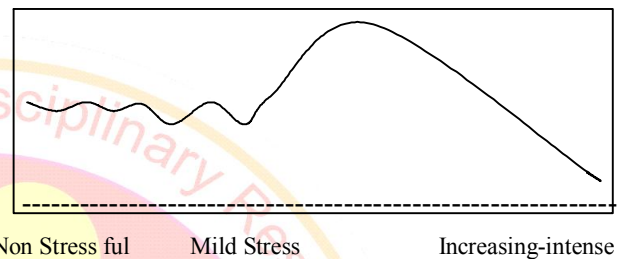


Fig. 5— Theoretical curve of typical individual or group performance under increasing intensity of Stress.

Figure 5 shows that mild stress results in improved response and increased activity but as the intensity increases, it results in the deterioration of performance.

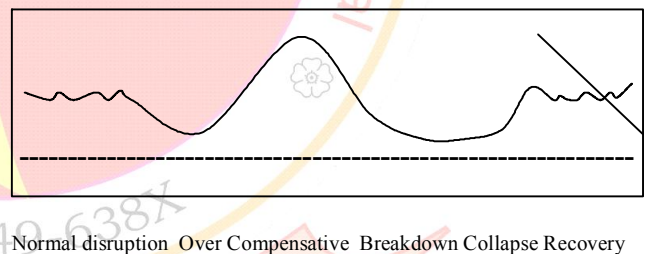


Fig. 6— Theoretical curve of functioning of an individual or group showing breakdown under stress.

Figure 6 shows three important happenings. Firstly there is a lowering of activity culminating in breakdown and disruption. Secondly, after the shock a state of overcompensation takes place; their being no supports, a breakdown of defences and collapse occurs. Thirdly, this state will last for sometime till the conditions improve and recovery takes place.

The intensity and the duration of stress influence different individuals differently even to the extent that an individual may break down under a certain stress while the same stress may result in increment of performance by another individual. A thorough understanding of the stresses and their effects on different individuals and group is therefore important to the GTO for administering controlled doses of

stresses warranted by the situation, so that a correct appraisal of an individual's and the group's stability can be made.

Stress and Stability

The capacity to withstand stress is known as stability. Stability is not a very dynamic term, for what is essentially a dynamic concept, i.e. the active and continuous capacity not only to resist the deteriorating effects of stress but also to return to normal when this has passed off. It indicates more of an actively normalising function than a passively resisting inertia.

Group tasks provide a medium by which an individual's functional capacity in stress can be assessed. The two main stresses in group testing are the problem stress and the social stress. Variety of tasks with a wide range of difficulty provide the problem stress and group situations causing the participants to interact generate social stress.

A well adjusted person is not the one without stress but the one who has learnt to handle the stress that he encounters. A diagnostic criterion for a stable person is the manner in which he copes with stresses.

Summary

Stress affects people physiologically, emotionally, and behaviorally. Researchers have linked stress to several serious health problems, particularly coronary heart disease. An inverted U-shaped relationship exists between stress and performance. An optimal level of stress probably exists for any particular task, and less or more stress than that level leads to reduced performance. Job burnout is a major result of unrelieved job-related stress.

Stress is a crucial issue for both individuals and organizations. Fortunately, various techniques and programs can help people manage stress in the workplace. These programs may focus on identifying and removing workplace stressors and helping employees cope with stress. Wellness programs are particularly promising in this latter regard.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to expose you to this new facet of human personality, and also to the inherent capacity among those gifted few to cope with people and situations. This is necessary to complement inherent academic and technical skills thus qualifying the person to be a good leader who

grows, and fosters the growth of his organization. This ability is also assessed by selectors for various jobs. You would do well to focus effort and energy in this direction, for the results will benefit you during your interaction in different situations and people, and thereafter in your chosen careers.

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