

## 4.1 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF STRESS

Stress may be defined as "a state of psychological and / or physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual's ability and / or motivation to meet those demands."

### Definition of Stress

Stress is an imprecise term. It is usually defined in terms of the internal and external conditions that create stressful situations, and the symptoms that people experience when they are stressed.

- McGrath's definition implies that the degree of stress is correlated with a person's perceived inability to deal with an environmental demand. This would lead to the conclusion that a person's level of stress depends on their self-perceived abilities and self-confidence. Stress is correlated with a person's fear of failure.
- Arnold and Feldman (1986) define stress as "the reactions of individuals to new or threatening factors in their work environment." Since our work environments often contain new situations, this definition suggests that stress is inevitable. This definition also highlights the fact that reactions to stressful situations are individualized, and can result in emotional, perceptual, behavioural, and physiological changes.
- Williams and Huber (1986) define stress as "a psychological and physical reaction to prolonged internal and/or environmental conditions in which and individual's adaptive capabilities are overextended." They argue that stress is an adaptive response to a conscious or unconscious threat. Like McGrath, they point out that stress is a result of a "perceived" threat, and is not necessarily related to actual environmental conditions. The amount of stress that is produced by a given situation depends upon one's perception of the situation, not the situation itself. In other words, stress is a relativistic phenomenon.
- In *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* (Real People Press, 1969) Perls proposes a more general definition, where "stress is a manifestation of thinking about the future. Anxiety is

created by focusing attention away from the "here and now". It is created by expectations of the future--the tension between the now and the later. According to Perls, there is no difference between good stress and bad stress. They are both created by thinking about the future. When anxiety finds an outlet, we say that the stress was motivating; when it doesn't, we call it debilitating.

- French, Kast, and Rosenzweig (1985) also emphasized the idea that stress itself is not necessarily bad. "The term *stress* can be considered neutral with the words *distress* and *eustress* used for designating bad and good effects." They propose a model that defines an optimum range of stress in terms of its effect on performance. Stress levels that exceed an optimum level result in decreased performance and eventual burnout. Stress levels below a minimum level result in decreased performance and "rust-out".

## 4.2 TYPES OF STRESS

There are many subcategories of stress that are being treated today, the major types of stress can be broken down into four different categories:

### 1. Eustress

Eustress is one of the helpful types of stress. It is the type of stress you experience right before you have the need to exert physical force. Eustress prepares the muscles, heart, and mind for the strength needed for whatever is about to occur. Eustress can also apply to creative endeavors.

### 2. Distress

Distress is one of the negative types of stress. This is one of the types of stress that the mind and body undergoes when the normal routine is constantly adjusted and altered. The mind is not comfortable with this routine, and craves the familiarity of a common routine. There are actually two types of distress: acute stress and chronic stress.

### 3. Acute Stress

Acute stress is the type of stress that comes immediately with a change of routine. It is an intense type of stress, but it passes quickly. Acute stress is the body's way of getting a person to stand up and take inventory of what is going on, to make sure that everything is OK.

### 4. Chronic Stress

Chronic stress will occur if there is a constant change of routine for week after week. Chronic stress affects the body for a long period of time. This is the type of stress experienced by someone who constantly faces moves or job changes

## 4.3 SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Stress can cause changes in those experiencing it. In some cases there are clear signs that people are experiencing stress at work and if these can be identified early, action can be taken before the pressure becomes a problem. This may make it easier to reduce and eliminate the causes.

It is important that everyone looks out for changes in a person's or a group's behaviour. However, in many cases the changes may only be noticeable to the person subject to the stress.

### Signs of stress in individuals

If One is suffering from some of the following symptoms it may indicate that he is in stress.

#### Emotional symptoms

- Negative or depressive feeling
- Disappointment with yourself
- Increased emotional reactions - more tearful or sensitive or aggressive
- Loneliness, withdrawn
- Loss of motivation commitment and confidence
- Mood swings (not behavioural)

#### Mental

- Confusion, indecision
- Cant concentrate
- Poor memory

#### Changes from your normal behaviour

- Changes in eating habits
- Increased smoking, drinking or drug taking 'to cope'
- Mood swings effecting your behaviour
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Twitchy, nervous behaviour
- Changes in attendance such as arriving later or taking more time off.

## 4.4 SOURCES OF STRESS

While environmental factors are forces outside the organization, which may act as potential sources of stress due to uncertainties and threats that they create for any organization and its members, factors within organization can also act as potential source of stress. Together or singly they may cause a tense and volatile working environment which can cause stress for organizational members because the inability of individuals to handle the pressures arising out of these sources.

In organizational behaviour, job stress is more relevant than other types of stresses.. **Fred E. Luthans** identified four types of major sources, called the stressors. They are (1) Extra-organizational Stressors, (2) Organizational Stressors, (3) Group Stressors, and (4) Individual Stressors

The following may be seen to be the potential sources of stress: