

## Stress - An overview

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Stress can be described as a circumstance that disturbs or is likely to disturb the normal physiological or psychological functioning of a person. It may seem that there's nothing one can do about stress. But in fact the control can be more than one can think about. **Objective:** Create awareness about psychological support in work-life balance, reduced stress levels at work and at home, greater focus and concentration, participate more fully in family and social life, pursue personal goals and hobbies, improved health. **Conclusion:** The simple realization that one can be in control of his/her life is the foundation of stress management.

**Key words:** Stress, psychological awareness, work-life balance.

## INTRODUCTION

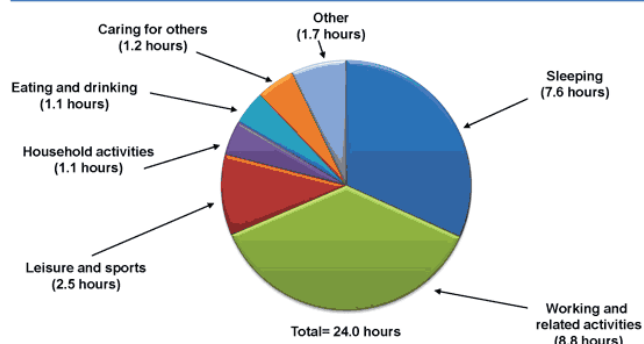
Everyone has different stress triggers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics's American Time Use Survey, the average employed persons between the ages of 25 and 54 works 8.8 hours per day (Fig:1). Work stress tops the list, according to surveys. Forty percent of U.S. workers admit to experiencing office stress, and one-quarter say work is the biggest source of stress in their lives. While some workplace stress is normal, excessive stress can interfere with the productivity and performance, impact physical and emotional health, and affect relationships and home life. It can even mean the difference between success and failure on the job. It is difficult to control everything in work environment, but that doesn't mean anyone is powerless—even when a person is stuck in a difficult situation. Whatever ambitions or work demands, there are various steps to protect from the damaging effects of stress, improved job satisfaction, and bolstered well-being in and out of the workplace.<sup>1</sup>

## DISCUSSION

### Positive side of stress

- Some stress is normal and even useful. Stress can help in working hard or react quickly.
- It can help to stay focused, energetic and able to meet new challenges in the workplace.
- It can help to perform under pressure and motivate one to give away the best.

Time use on an average work day for employed persons ages 25 to 54 with children



NOTE: Data include employed persons on days they worked, ages 25 to 54, who lived in households with children under 18. Data include non-holiday weekdays and are annual averages for 2011. Data include related travel for each activity.  
SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Time Use Survey

**Fig. 1:** Data of working hours employed person of 25 to 54 yr age according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' American Time Use Survey

### Negative side of stress

- Excessive stress can even interfere with productivity and performance.
- Impact physical and emotional health.
- Affect relationship and home life.
- It can even mean the difference between success and failure on the job.

## Signs and symptoms of stress <sup>2,3</sup>

- **Mental**
  - Trouble thinking clearly.
  - Memory problems.
  - Can't concentrate.
  - Low attention span.
  - Poor judgement.
  - Anxious or racing thoughts.
  - Constant worrying.
- **Emotional**
  - Moodiness.
  - Easily upset or hurt.
  - Irritability or short temper.
  - Agitation, unable to relax or keep still.
  - Feeling overwhelmed.
  - Sense of loneliness and isolation.
  - Depression or general unhappiness.
- **Physical**
  - Tightness in muscles.
  - Aches and pains.
  - Headaches, trembling, sweating.
  - Nausea, dizziness.
  - Chest pain, rapid heartbeat.
  - Loss of appetite.
  - Lack of sleep, dreams, nightmares.
- **Behavioural**
  - Eating more or less.
  - Sleeping too much or too little.
  - Isolating oneself from others.
  - Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities.
  - Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax.
  - Nervous habits (e. g. nail biting, pacing).

These signs and symptoms of stress can also be caused by other psychological and medical problems. If anyone experience any of these, it is important to consult doctor—as they can help to determine whether the symptoms are stress-related.

## Causes of stress

The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. There are 2 types of stressors:

- external (where outside forces act on us).
- internal (self-generated, we have some control over it).

## External causes of stress:

- Major life changes.
- Work.
- Relationship difficulties.
- Financial problems.
- Being too busy.
- Children and family.

## Internal causes of stress (self-generated):

- Inability to accept uncertainty.
- Doubt.
- Negative self-talk.
- Unrealistic expectations.
- Perfectionism.
- Lack of assertiveness.

## How to manage stress<sup>4,5</sup>

Managing stress is about making a plan to be able to cope effectively with daily pressures. The ultimate goal is to strike a balance between life, work, relationships, relaxation and fun. By doing this it is possible to deal with daily stress triggers and meet these challenges head on.

Some strategies that help to look after the mind and body, in turn help to better control behaviours. These strategies that take care of excessive stress include:

### Self care

- To identify the stress triggers.
- Recognise early warning signs and symptoms and act on them to reduce stress.
- Practise relaxation techniques or meditation.
- Eat a well-balanced & healthy diet.
- Exercise regularly—aim for at least 30 minutes every day.
- Get enough sleep—aim for around 8 hours every night.

### Thinking

- To try to worry less about things that cannot be controlled and make plans for dealing with the things can be in control.
- Set small, manageable, and achievable goals.
- Apply problem-solving techniques—identifying the problem, clarifying its nature and map out options for dealing with it.

- Choose to have a positive attitude.
- Self-Love and to think positively achievements.
- Take time out to visualise a calm and peaceful place.
- Develop, keep and use sense of humour.

### **Behaviours**

- Plan and organise ahead to allow enough time to get tasks done.
- Use 'to do' lists and set priorities to achieve goals.
- Be open and honest with people, rather than hiding thoughts and feelings.
- Seek guidance and support when anyone is in stress.
- Create a balanced lifestyle and allocate time for recreation and relaxation.
- Reward for self while arriving at accomplishments and objectives.
- To intake of alcohol, caffeine and other drugs.

### **Others way to cope with stress**

- Learn how to say “no”.
- Avoid people who creates stress.
- Express feelings.
- Prioritize tasks.
- Avoid over commitment.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Better time management.
- Focus on the positive.
- Not to control the uncontrollable.
- Learn to forgive.
- Do something that gives joy everyday.
- Love /enjoy workplace.
- Not to stay stuck do better.
- Not to worry/ expect about result.

### **Unhealthy ways of coping with stress<sup>6</sup>**

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking.
- Drinking too much.
- Overeating or under-eating.
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer.
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities.
- Using pills or drugs to relax.
- Sleeping too much.

- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems.
- Taking out about stress on others (angry outbursts, physical violence).

### **When self-help doesn't work**

- Sometimes stress is just too much to handle alone.
- Talking to a friend or family member may help, but professional help (psychiatrist/counselor) is more appropriate when stress is chronic and makes a person ill.
- Professionals will provide medication & psychotherapy.

### **CONCLUSION**

Stress is actually a normal part of life. At times, it serves a useful purpose. Stress can be motivational to get that promotion at work or run the last mile of a marathon. But if this stress does not get a hand to control and it becomes long-term, it can seriously interfere with the job, family life, and health. Stress do not disappear from life. And stress management isn't an overnight cure. But with ongoing practice and incorporation of resiliency into lifestyle, it is easy learn how to manage stress level and increase the ability to cope with life's challenges.

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