

Managing Stress and Time -Unit 4

Stress Management refers to techniques and strategies which are used to manage and control stress. It is a way of cognitive restructuring which helps one challenge negative thoughts. Stress management aims at reducing stress and building resilience, both of which are important for a balanced professional and personal life.

Causes of Stress- These may be environmental (noise pollution, air pollution, extreme weather fluctuations), social (financial crisis, riots, work demands), physiological (injury, disease, lack of adequate nutrition), cognitive (negative thoughts, overthinking etc.) A stressor is anything which causes stress.

Stress Management techniques use the following four A's which are - Avoid, Adapt, Alter, Accept.

For Stress Management, one needs to *avoid* unnecessary stress.

You should *adapt* to stressors and look at the bigger picture, which may be your family, health or other goals.

You should be more assertive and strong and try to look for alternative solutions.

Thus, you have to try to *alter* the situation. Finally, we must learn to *accept* the things that we cannot change and not hold grudges. We should take situations as they are and look for solutions instead of overthinking about it. A strategy which combines all the four A's is effective in reducing stress.

Other ways to reduce stress include the following-

- 1) Adopt a healthy lifestyle and organise your life and priorities. Have an optimistic worldview.
- 2) Practise techniques like meditation, tai chi, repetitive prayer, guided imagery, yoga etc. Mindfulness is a technique which reduces stress and anxiety.
- 3) Learn to communicate better with your loved ones and nurture yourself by indulging in your favourite hobbies. Mindfulness is the ability to pay attention to the present moment with curiosity, openness, and acceptance.
- 4) Dismantle negative stress cycle by looking out for early warning stress signs in your body and mind.
- 5) Learn to set goals so that you have a positive sense of commitment.
- 6) Learn about your triggers for stress so that you can try and reduce them.
- 7) Other than relaxation techniques, professionals can also try therapy like CBT- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.
- 8) Speak to your superior or employer if you feel that you are over-burdened with work and cannot cope.
- 9) Build a support system -These may be family, friends, colleagues you can share your problems with.
- 10) Try to reinterpret a situation through a positive lens. Give yourself some time and then reconsider other possibilities.

Time Management- As high expectations and demands leave us with little choice on how to spend our time, due to which we need to learn to manage our time well.

Lack of planning leads to deadlines and pressures which leads to a vicious cycle of stress. Time Management techniques utilise skills to manage time effectively and require the following-

- Choices
- Flexibility
- Discipline
- Questioning oneself
- Honesty

The four skills needed for time management are the following-

1) Management 2) Avoidance 3) Limits 4) Focus

Three particular skills separate time management success from failure:

- Awareness: thinking realistically about your time by understanding it is a limited resource.
- Arrangement: designing and organising your goals, plans, schedules, and tasks to effectively use time.
- Adaptation: monitoring your use of time while performing activities, including adjusting to interruptions or changing priorities.

Strategies for Time Management

- Keep a calendar with your weekly commitments and regularly check how you manage your time.
- Be realistic about how much work you can complete in a given amount of time.
- Take the so-even so approach.
- Take frequent breaks.
- Negotiate with yourself.
- Distinguish between what is important and what is urgent.
- Build accurate self-awareness of your time management skills. Seek feedback from others like one's peers or boss, or establishing a baseline of behaviors against which gauge improvements.