

# THE ADMINISTRATION OF ORGANIZED STRESS

## GESTIUNEA STRESULUI ORGANIZAȚIONAL

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**Abstract.** *All of us are victims of the stress considered like a disease of the XX-th century. But not all the types of stress affect our performances in a negative way. We can manage this pressure and become powerful recognizing the stress symptoms and prevent it. Our active way of living and the material aspects of the present life induce much more frequent and powerful pressure than in the past. The people are now used to live under the pressure and they want to do more things in a shorter period of time. In order to manage our life, we all need a "positive stress" (or eustress) acting like a motivating factor. Under this pressure we became more active until we touch the highest level of performance, when we touch the highest efficiency. The "negative stress" (or distress) develops when we can not manage the overwhelming feeling of being stressed. In order to manage this stress the correlation stress-risks should be taken into consideration.*

**Rezumat.** *Cu toții suntem victimele stresului considerat ca boala secolului XX. Dar nu toate tipurile de stres ne afectează în mod negativ performanțele. Putem împiedica presiunea să devină prea puternică recunoscând simptomele stresului și acționând preventiv. Viața trepidantă din zilele noastre și aspectele materiale tuturor ne provoacă presiuni mai frecvente și mai puternice decât în trecut. Oamenii s-au obișnuit să trăiască sub stres și se străduiesc să facă tot mai multe în timp mai puțin. Pentru a lua ce este mai bun de la viață, cu toții avem nevoie de "stres pozitiv" acesta acționând ca un factor motivator, sub influența lui devenim mai energici până atingem nivelul optim de performanță, când randamentul tău este maxim. "Stresul negativ" (sau stres) apare când presiunile din viață devin copleșitoare și nu mai le faci față. Acesta este tipul de stres la care se referă oameni atunci când sunt stresați și care necesită luarea în considerare a riscurilor multiple pe care le implică. Reacțiile la stres reprezintă consecințele comportamentale, psihologice și fiziologice ale stresului. Stresul negativ este cumulativ deoarece capacitatea organismului de a-i face față scade progresiv.*

The stress reactions represent the behavioral, psychological and physiological consequences of stress. The negative stress is cumulative because the human capacity to resist it is slowing down progressively. Slowing down the way of thinking and the concentration, the radical way of acting and the anxiety are the consequences of a long lasting stress that can be followed by seriously illness.

We try to present stress stages and the importance of identifying stress. An important aspect of our life is the occupational stress at work. The relationship between occupational stress during working hours and professional performances have generated a serial researches in USA and Europe, clarifying the causes of occupational stress and classifying them over the source—at managerial level, at subordinal level and common causes.

The most important aspect of the above mentioned researches is referring to the factors which affect the stress resistance: personality, age, qualification, professional categories. Stress involves an economical impact (the productivity of person and firm) and social one (conflicts, improper behavior with clients).

Improper stress management stress revolves in higher cost for person, firm and society. Based on several studies, Jonas and Crocq suggest the following definition: *Stress is a psychological and physiological reaction, mobilizing and protecting the body (the human being) from aggression due to a stressful event.*

According to Selye the tensions producing stress are a part of our daily life.

The stress is part of our daily life. At different levels the stress is not a new concept. The main difference between the modern period and the previous ones is **the number and the intensity of stressed factors**. Modern human being is still limited in acting and managing stress.

**The reactions at stress represent the behavioral, psychological and physiological consequences of stress.**

For most people stress has different interpretations. In fact, there are two type of stress:

- **Positive stress – acts** like an impulse, like an imbold factor; under pressure, the person acts more active until she touches the highest level of performance. Competition at work acts as a positive stress.

- **Negative stress – acts** when life events became overwhelming and to affect the true capacity of thinking.

The positive stress can easily become the negative stress. It becomes a matter of individual capacity of resistance. The resistance capacity to the above mentioned types of stress is different from person to person, and even at the same person from one moment to another according to the psychological and physiological dispositions and the situation. Usually people do not realize that their feelings and performance are caused by stress. Not recognizing these signs does not give them any chance to improve their own situation. There are people that can not cope with stressful events and eventually they are getting sick, performing with a lower productivity. The most important thing to realize is that **the person reaction at the stress factor is the one who create the stress, not the stress factor itself.**

**“Not what is happened with us is important, but the way we are acting”** Hans Selye said, the author of stress model. Philosopher Epicnet said, two century ago, that the reality is not the one that scars people, but just the reality image that they have about it.

In these terms-experts affirm-is **much better that the stress will be known and controlled, rather than unknown**. First step in solving the problem is to **identify the stress sources** (stress factors). The origin of these stress sources is split into three categories:

1. **Personal caused factors**. When is not a stressful situation, the causal factors are useful but other way they affect the way of acting in a negative way. And this caused factors are categorize as following:

- a) **urgently**-lead to do several things in a short time;
- b) **professionalism**- likely to reach higher standards;
- c) **ability to be appreciated**
- d) **”hard” work**;
- e) **empower**-the way of feeling strong and motivate.

2. **Pressure at work place**. The most common stages of professional stress are:

- a) **setting very high standards**-work after hours;
- b) **unsure of work permanent changes**;
- c) **uncertainly of the work place**;
- d) **teamwork with unpleasant other workers**;
- e) **high standards of responsibility**.

3. **Personal events**:

- a) **important events** - separation, changing homes. This is a stress situation leading to strong emotions;
- b) **small daily sorrows**;

**c) age - affecting physical shape.**

**The well being**, second step of stress, is referring to emotional answers to excess, noticed in the way of acting and talking and having certain consequences into psychological and physiological behaviors.

The body's well being is characterized by three stages: *alarm stage*, including a shock stage (hypotension), followed of a contrary shock stage when we can develop defending reactions; *resistance stage* or recovery in which the body tries to recover, backing up to normality; *exhaust stage*, appears when the shock stage can't be stopped.

### ***C.Reactions at stress***

If an event is evaluated as being stressful, the person may have different reactions copying with stress.

1. Physical/physiological reactions: Heart pain, palpitations; Lower or higher appetite; Indigestion; Insomnia; Convulsions and muscular pain; Headache; Excessive sweating and dizziness, stage of general illness; Chronic tiredness; Tegument irritation; Allergy; Recurrence of some anterior diseases.
2. Cognitive reactions: Shortage of making out the actuality; Lower ideation flexibility; Decrease in creativity; Difficulties in taking a decisions; Negative thoughts about himself, world and future; Cognitive pessimistic.
3. Emotional reactions: Higher irritability; Lower interest into old hobbies ; Lower interest for friends; Emotional instability; Anxiety; Depression; The feeling that you are neglected; Repressing the emotions; Difficulties in finding relation; The feeling that you are a loser in your family and in your profession; The feeling that you can't trust anybody; Inability to get to finish a task; The fear to live alone; The fear to get sick.
4. Behavior reactions: Lower performances at work place or at school; Excessive smocking; Excessive drinking; Insomnia, sleep difficulties; Inefficient management of the time; Isolate from the friends; Excessive preoccupations for certain types of activities; Aggressive behaviors.

The employer and the employee think that the stress at work place is something normal. USA and European Union, during 2001-2002 years, were giving special attention to the Occupational Stress. The employee noticed a highest stress rate which made him feel tired, exhausted, anxious, antisocial and in the end supporting the consequences of loosing his job without the possibility to become employed again.

The employer noticed that the most common consequences of stress were: lower productivity, decreasing of the profit and the higher cost with the replacing the employees.

For each government the stress effects from above are raising the cost of health care.

### ***The main causes of occupational stress are the following:***

- Major changes of occupational work procedures;
- Working after hours;
- Major changes in required activity speed;
- Major reorganizations;
- To much to work in a short period of time;
- Criticize the employer when the results aren't good and the absence of reward when the result are good;
- Conflicts between the employees who work at the same project;

### ***Occupational stress effects are the following:***

- a) Lower intellectual, emotional and physical capacity;
- b) The International Organization of Work estimates that the occupational stress is responsible for 10% of unprofitability
- c) Higher number days of sick leave;
- d) Higher rate of absence due to sickness;

e) over 95% of the visit hours to the family doctor are caused by the stress, and over 80% of the affections of those who are in the hospital on USA are determined by stress.

The occupational stress is one on the main causes of decease: cardiovascular affections, cancer, lungs affections, accidents, cirrhosis, and suicide.

f) getting older much earlier and diminishing the hope of a long life caused by the chronically diseases and the deceases trough fast death.

**The stress factors at the work place are in total** depended with:

**The management style:**

- The absence of clear objectives;
- Lower communication and the missing information inside the organization;
- The absence of consultation and involvement of the workers in the changes from the place of work;
- The absence of support from the leaders.

**Organization rules:**

- Uncertain organization rules;
- Contradictory objectives and priorities;
- High level of responsibility at workplace.

**Career:**

- Uncertainty concerning the career evolution;
- Defrauds in career ;
- Lower experience;
- Job uncertainty ;
- Insufficiency of training program;
- Changing the organization rules.

**Decisions and control:**

- Weak participation decisions making process;
- The absence of control work.

**Work assignment and work speed:**

- The absence of control on our personal work.
- Work assignments above loaded:
- The absence of a prioritizing activity.

**Work schedule:**

- An inflexible schedule;
- The after works hours;
- After work hours not planned;
- Work in shifts;
- Excessive work after hours.

**Categorizing stress:**

- Normal stress;
- Cumulative stress;
- Traumatic stress.

The consequences can be classified in:

- *Subjective effects*: anxiety, aggression, apathy, boredom, depression, tiredness, indisposition, losing the confidence in yourself, irritability.
- *Behavior effects*: predisposition to accidents, alcoholism, excessive use of coffee, emotional impulse, nervous laughter.
- *Cognitive effects*: decrease of the ability of taking the right decisions, weak concentration, decrease of attention, and hypersensitivity at criticism.

- *Organizational effects*: absentness, resignation, lower productivity, isolation, dissatisfaction at work, diminishing the responsibilities concerning the organization.

- *Physiological effects*: higher levels of sugar, cardiac pulse, of arterial tension, dry mouth, heat or cold waves.

Fortunately, the stress effects are diminished through any way of making stress *predictable* or ensure the potential for *personal control* of stress factors. The combination of different stress factors can be leading to intellectual overworking, physical exhaustion.

Stress indicators on the organization:

**Stress can lead to:**

- High level of absenteeism;
- Decrease of focusing to the objectives and the incapability to reach the target;
- Increase of the rate accident and error rate;
- Higher level of conflict between the employees;
- Higher level of fluctuation in personnel.

The costs induce for the organization could be substantial, so the people who lead have the right to implement measures for diminishing the level of stress, all this that the organization will have a normal functionality. The measures needed to be implemented by the leaders to diminish the stress between employees, can be split in two categories:

***A) Preventing the stress by the organization***

Preventing the stress is very is a measure hard to be reached, for any healthy and active organization. There are measures that can be taken for stimulating the employees too, without stressing them. Some examples would be:

- Defying every position according to the employee competences, implementing in the same time changes to make every time his interests awake;
- Defying each employee activity in a way that he will have a certain level of responsibilities allowing him to have the same authority and to take part at the decision who will influence his life;
- Encourage any specialist to adopt a participation style of leading;
- Encouraging the team spirit;
- Encouraging communication between the departments, as well between the management team, as well the realization of a feedback to every employee (concerning the work results, employee evaluation);
- Authorize the decisional department in a way that every department of the employee to be part at the decisions process who influence his job;
- Development of a cultural organization with a positive attitude.

***B) Necessary measures to prevent the stress at the place of work***

- Decreasing the number of changes mandatory to the employee level;
- Restricting the procedural complexity and of other nature in performing;
- Providing the possibility that the employee will address someone at the superior level, colleague, member of a council;
- Providing social and sports facilities;
- Providing medical service facilities;
- Decreasing the work period at 35 hours and even less at places with a high level of occupational stress;
- Dividing into fragments the vacation, special to the employees with work with high level of occupational stress;
- Advertising professional training in each work department;
- Each employee will have him personal record with his time work and his attributions;

- Cooperation and fair competition
- Realizing a balance between activities and between the liked and compulsory activities;
- Establishing every day priorities and examining the activities;
- Exercise and physical activities;
- Lunch rest and 6-8 hours of sleep thru the night;
- Allocating enough time for family and friends;

#### **Counseling services on stress issues**

*Counseling at work is the situation in which a person uses different methods for help another person to think systematic and to achieve the facts of his decisions, even if are on his personal life or from work.*

**D. Counseling** represents a process in with one person help another to: identify the problem; to realize what the better solution is for him; to rethink which are the proper solutions for him.

Given the situations above we can conclude:

- Investing in employees and in their family, to create new places of work and good relation at place of work trough a continue education for choosing the optimum life styles, is an investment with benefits on long terms for the company, for employees and them families;
- No company and no country can't afford to:
  - to disperse the health resources;
  - to make use of the work forces in the conditions that is too difficult;
  - to lose a gained position on national and international economical market due to low performance and a low health level of the employees.

**Smocking, alcoholism, drug addiction and the absence of exercise are indicators of person incompatibilities to cooperate with daily stress factors.**

Active methods of "Stress management" must be implemented and promoted. This could include: the abilities to solve daily problems; the balance between rest and work and between activity and pleasure; capacity to be relax on difficult periods; sport; meditation; other responsibilities. A special attention must be taken to the personal training of each person for a good cooperation with daily stress factors.

#### **Stress management**

The first step in is to succeed in to the stress programs is to admit it.

The main managerial causes creating stress are: new managerial techniques-payment of the performance function, overloading information, and a long after hour program, post record, harassment of the employee, and work in shifts, supply on work market and unemployment, personal and general financial instability. For establishing the optimum level of development, stress tolerance is necessary that the employees to: know their duties, to acknowledge employer demands, to know that they can manage to fit into.

**In conclusion** what we put down reflect the stress complexity, necessity of an individual broach and finding methods to control stress at individual and organizational level.

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