

MANAGING STRESS: SEEKING BALANCE AND FULFILLMENT

*Executive MBA Council
Southeast Regional Meeting*

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Some Quick Facts About Stress

- Americans are working longer and harder. During the 1990s, the U.S. economy has created 6 million jobs, but the increased work load is equal to 8 million jobs.
- According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, 46% of working adults view their jobs as very stressful or extremely stressful.
- A survey by the American Management Association found that 81% percent of respondents suffer from the ill effects of stress at least once a week.
- In a survey of medical and personnel directors of Fortune 1,000 companies, 70% said mental health problems were fairly or very pervasive.
- Stress costs employers about \$150 billion annually in workers' compensation claims, absenteeism, turnover, and health and disability claims, reducing profits by about 10%.

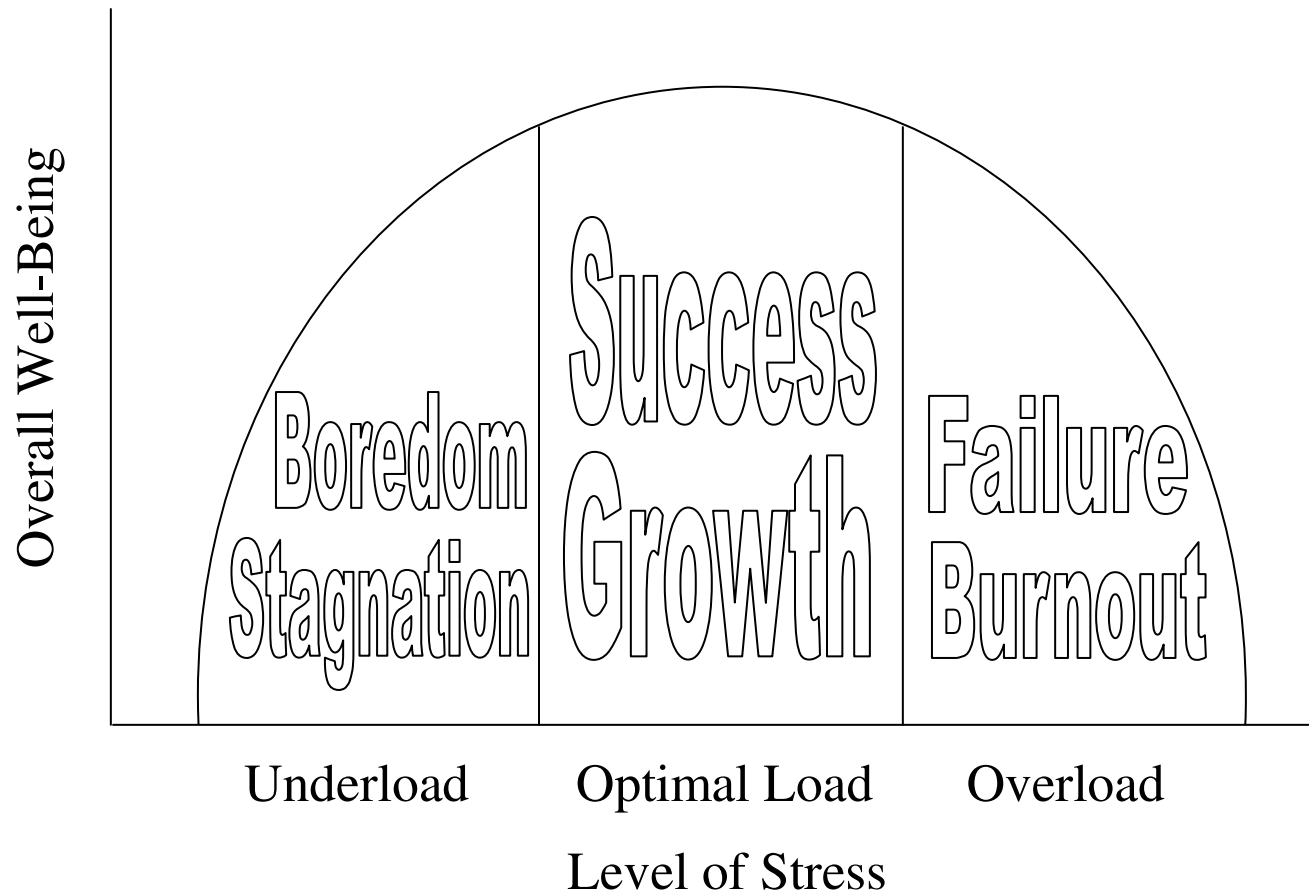
Session Objectives:

- To recognize behaviors that serve as “markers” of a stressful lifestyle
- To understand the consequences of a stressful lifestyle in terms of work, family, and personal goals
- To trace the root causes of a stressful lifestyle
- To develop an action plan for managing stress and enhancing overall well-being

Evaluating a Stressful Lifestyle Using Life Goals

- We pursue goals in different life areas:
 - » Work: Performance objectives, challenge, opportunity to learn, sense of accomplishment, financial rewards, relationships with coworkers, subordinates, supervisors
 - » Family: Quantity and quality of time spent with spouse, significant other, children, parents, siblings, extended family
 - » Personal: Leisure activities, social life, physical health, spiritual development
- We constantly juggle these goals, shifting time and energy between goals and trying not to “drop the ball” for any goal.
- This juggling act reflects the amount of stress in our lives.

Optimizing Stress for Growth and Well-Being



Tracing Behavior to its Root Causes

- Guiding Premise: Behavior = f (Person, Situation)

The Person

- » Experience
- » Assumptions
- » Values
- » Competencies
- » Habits

The Situation

- » Job content
- » Reward systems
- » Policies & procedures
- » Influential people
- » Nonwork factors

- The same person may behave differently in different situations
- Different people may behave differently in the same situation
- Behavior may be changed by changing the person, the situation, or both

ACTION PLAN FOR LIFE BALANCE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

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What You Should Know About Type A Behavior

Myth

- There is only one type of Type A behavior.
- Any Type A behavior is bad.
- All Type As have heart attacks.
- Type As perform better.
- Once a Type A, always a Type A.

Reality

- Type A is a collection of behaviors that includes speed, impatience, competitive drive, workaholism, and anger
- Anger is the “bad actor” in Type A.
- Type A is like any risk factor. Some Type As live long, healthy lives, and some Type Bs do not.
- Type As work faster, but do not necessarily perform better.
- Type A behavior can be changed.

Scoring Key for Behavior Pattern Scale

	Overall Type A (all items)	Hard-Driving & Competitive (2, 6, 11, 14)	Speed & Impatience (3, 4, 5, 7, 10)
Extreme B	14-63	4-17	5-22
Moderate B	64-92	18-26	23-32
Moderate A	93-107	27-30	33-38
Extreme A	108-154	31-44	39-55

Instructions for Stress Management Action Plan:

1. Review your scores from the behavior pattern scale. List behaviors that help and hinder your efforts to achieve your work, family, and personal goals.
2. Select a behavior that is keeping you from achieving your goals. Identify root causes of that behavior, in yourself and in your situation.
3. Write a specific description of the behavior you targeted for change. Clearly describe what the behavior is now and what you would like it to be.
4. List ideas for changing the targeted behavior. Include ideas focused on yourself, your situation, and your symptoms.
5. Identify specific steps for carrying out your action plan. Consider using the self-change contract as a model.

1. Linking Behavior to Work, Family, and Personal Goals

Constructive Behaviors

Destructive Behaviors

Work

Family

Personal

Underline behaviors most in need of change, based on linkages to important goals

2. Tracing Behavior to Root Causes

Personal Causes

*(e.g., experience, assumptions,
values, competencies, habits)*

Situational Causes

*(e.g., job content, reward systems,
policies & procedures, influential
people, nonwork factors)*

Underline the person and situation causes that, if changed, would have the biggest payoff

3. Describing the Behavior Targeted for Change

The current and desired status of my targeted behaviors are:

Current Behavior

Desired Behavior

You can describe current and desired behaviors in terms of their frequency or intensity

4. Ideas for Changing the Targeted Behavior:

- Manage the situation (restructure activities, confront barriers, obtain critical resources, etc.):

- Manage the self (reset goals, reprioritize goals, build skills, etc.):

- Manage the symptoms (exercise, diet, relaxation, medication, etc.)

Underline the most promising ideas (e.g., greatest benefit, least cost)

5. Outlining Specific Steps for Taking Action:

- *What* specific steps must I take to make this plan succeed?

- *Who* will I involve in this plan?

- *When* will I begin, and how will I measure my progress?

An Action Plan for Using Relaxation Methods

I have decided on the following schedule for practicing relaxation methods in the first stage of my stress management action plan. My helper will be _____.

1. A 15-minute deep muscle relaxation drill at 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 p.m.
2. Instant relaxation drills five times daily, at least three to be done at work.

My responsibilities are: (1) to practice the above drills as designated; (2) to record the number of instant relaxation drills I practice per day; and (3) to place a small circular piece of tape with "R" written on it in the center of my automobile steering wheel and on the handle of my telephone to remind me to do my relaxation drills.

My helper's responsibilities are: (1) to judge the extent of my relaxation during the deep muscle relaxation drills; and (2) to remind me to carry out my drills. Our joint responsibility is to evaluate the results of the program in two weeks.

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Review Date: _____

Helper: _____

Source: Farquhar, J. W. (1987). *The American Way of Life Need Not Be Hazardous to Your Health*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Questions for Discussion Groups

Before you begin your group discussion, take some time to outline your action plan individually. Then, use your discussion time to get feedback, give suggestions, and identify “best practices” in managing a stressful lifestyle. Questions for your group discussion:

1. Describe the focus of your action plan. What specific behaviors have you chosen for change, and why?
2. Discuss some ideas or strategies that may help you change the behaviors you have chosen. Ask for reactions and suggestions.
3. Outline the details of your action plan. What specific steps do you plan to take? Who will be involved in your plan? When will you begin, and how will you evaluate your progress?

Managing a Stressful Lifestyle: Three Angles of Attack

- Manage the situation:
 - » Restructure activities (time management, access control, delegation)
 - » Confront interpersonal and procedural barriers
 - » Obtain critical resources
- Manage the self:
 - » Reset goals, understanding the sky is not always the limit
 - » Reprioritize goals, focus on what is worth pursuing
 - » Build skills needed to reach high-priority goals
- Manage the symptoms:
 - » Diet, exercise, smoking, and other risk factors
 - » Relaxation, meditation
 - » Medication