

MBA 609

Organizational Behaviour

Week 7

Stress and Trust topics



Objectives for today

- Distinguish among *stressors*, *stress*, and *stress reactions*.
- Discuss the role that personality plays in stress.
- Review the sources of stress encountered by various organizational role occupants.
- Discuss how we build trust.

Today's learning outcomes

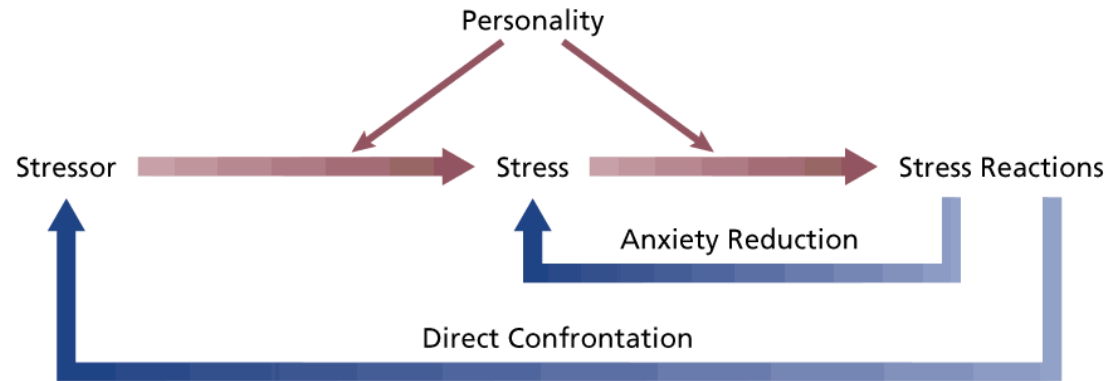
- What is stress?
- What is the role of personality in stress?
- Who is impacted by stress in organizations?
- What is trust?
- What are the bases of trust
- How do leaders build trust?

A Model of Stress in Organizations

- Stress has become a serious concern for individuals and organizations.
- The levels of stress in the workplace are at an all time high.
- Work is reported to be a potent source of stress, edging out health and relationships.
- Stress is part of the everyday routine of organizations.

Model of a Stress Episode

Model of a stress episode.



More interesting is the fact that the individual personality often determines the extent to which a potential stressor becomes a real stressor and actually induces stress.

Stressors

- *Stressors* are environmental events or conditions that have the potential to induce stress.
- Some conditions would be stressful for just about everyone (e.g., extreme heat or cold).
- Personality often determines the extent to which a potential stressor becomes a real stressor and induces stress.

Stress

- *Stress* is a psychological reaction to the demands inherent in a stressor that has the potential to make a person feel tense or anxious because the person does not feel capable of coping with these demands.
- Stress is not intrinsically bad.
- Moderate levels of stress can provide an appropriate level of stimulation.
- Stress becomes a problem when it leads to high levels of anxiety and tension.

Stress Reactions

- *Stress reactions* are the behavioural, psychological, and physiological consequences of stress.
- Some of these reactions are passive responses, over which the individual has little direct control (e.g., elevated blood pressure).
- Other reactions are active attempts to *cope* with some aspect of the stress episode.
- Coping attempts might be directed toward dealing directly with the stressor or reducing the anxiety generated by stress.

Personality and Stress

- Personality can affect both the extent to which potential stressors are perceived as stressful and the types of stress reactions that occur.
- Three key personality traits:
 - Locus of control
 - Type A behaviour pattern
 - Negative affectivity

Locus of Control

- Concerns people's beliefs about the factors that control their behaviour.
- Externals are more likely to feel anxious in the face of potential stressors.
- Internals are more likely to confront stressors directly.
- Externals are more prone to simple anxiety-reduction strategies that only work in the short run.

Type A Behaviour Pattern

- Type A people encounter more stressful situations than Type Bs do or they perceive themselves as doing so.
- Type A individuals are likely to exhibit adverse physiological reactions in response to stress.
- Type A individuals have a strong need to control their work environment.
- The major component of Type A behaviour that contributes to adverse physiological reactions is hostility and repressed anger.

Negative Affectivity (NA)

- *Negative affectivity* is the propensity to view the world, including oneself and other people, in a negative light.
- People high in NA report more stressors in the work environment and feel more subjective stress.
- They are particularly likely to feel stressed in response to the demands of a heavy workload.

Negative Affectivity (continued)

- People with high NA are more susceptible to stress for a number of reasons:
 - A predisposition to *perceive* stressors in the workplace.
 - Hypersensitivity to existing stressors.
 - A tendency to *provoke* stress.
 - The use of passive, indirect coping styles that avoid the real sources of stress.

Stressors in Organizational Life

- The most common source of stress for people today is *workplace* stress.
- While some stressors are likely to affect almost everyone in any organization, others are likely to affect people who perform particular roles.

Executive and Managerial Stressors

- **Role Overload**
 - When one must perform too many tasks in too short a time period.
 - A heavy and protracted workload.
- **Heavy Responsibility**
 - Extremely important consequences for the organization and its members.
 - Personal consequences of an incorrect decision can be staggering.

Operative-Level Stressors

- Operatives are individuals who occupy non-professional and non-managerial positions in organizations.
- Occupants of operative positions are sometimes exposed to a special set of stressors.

Operative-Level Stressors (continued)

- **Poor Physical Working Conditions**
 - More likely to be exposed to physically unpleasant and even dangerous working conditions (e.g., excessive heat, cold, noise, pollution, and chance of accidents).
- **Poor Job Design**
 - Jobs that are too simple or not challenging enough.
 - Job scope can be a stressor at levels that are either too low or too high.

Burnout

- *Burnout* is a syndrome made up of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and low self-efficacy.
- Burnout was originally studied among those working in some capacity with people.
- Burnout follows a process that begins with emotional exhaustion that leads to cynicism and depersonalization followed by feelings of low self-efficacy and low personal accomplishment.
- It is most common among people who entered their jobs with especially high ideals.

Some General Stressors

- Some stressors that are experienced equally by occupants of all roles include:
 - Interpersonal conflict
 - Work-family conflict
 - Job insecurity and change
 - Role ambiguity
 - Sexual harassment

Consider this case

Two workers just out of college join the same provincial welfare agency. Both find their case loads very heavy and their roles very ambiguous. One exhibits negative stress reactions, including absence and elevated alcohol use. The other seems to cope very well.

Use the concepts we just viewed to explain why this might occur.

Consider this case

A Harris/Decima poll commissioned by Expedia.ca determined that almost 25% of the Canadians fail to use the vacation days they are entitled to during the year. The unused days range from 1.39 in the province of Quebec to 2.81 days in Alberta.

Although these numbers seem small, they project nationally to 34 million unused days a year. Despite this, 42% of those polled reported being tired, stressed, and in need of a vacation.

What do you think explains the reluctance of so many people to forego deserved vacations time? If you were a manager how would you react to staff who do not use their vacation days? What are the long term implications of this behaviour?

What is trust?

Trust is a psychological state that exists when you agree to make yourself vulnerable to another because you have positive expectations about how things are going to turn out.

What determines trust?

- Integrity
- Competence (technical and interpersonal)
- Consistency
- Loyalty
- Openness
- Procedural justice
- Interactional justice

How can you as a leader build trust?

- Building Social Capital:
 - Maintain integrity in your organization
 - Build organizational support for transparency
 - Set information free
- Building Team Trust:
 - Be a team player
 - Be fair
 - Show consistency with your team
 - Be trustworthy
 - Work on continuous improvement

Exercise

- Make groups of 4.
- Choose one of your work experiences related to trust
- This could be the way you built trust within a team that did not have any, or an unpleasant episode where you trusted a subordinate/a colleague.
- What did you do?
- What would you do it differently next time?

What did I learn today?
Make your own summary