



Dr. R. Natarajan, Chairman AICTE,
lighting the lamp

Stress Management and Quality of Work Life

Report on the National Seminar

Dr. J. R. ARORA
Professor, NDIM

New Delhi Institute of Management organized a national seminar on Stress Management and Quality of Work Life on 2nd February, 2004 at PHD House, New Delhi - 16. The Seminar was inaugurated by Prof. (Dr.) R. Natarajan, Chairman, All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE). The seminar was presided over by Mr. I K Rasgotra, Retired Secretary, Government of India.

The seminar on Stress Management was intended to provide a platform for interactions among the

Academicians, Researchers, Policy-Planners, Policy-Makers and Executors, Corporate Executives, Professionals, Clinical Psychologists, Medical

Practitioners, Students and Learners to promote interaction between Academia and Industry professionals. NDIM strongly believes that this kind of interaction facilitates a meaningful cross fertilization of ideas towards generating a concrete package for managing



NDIM students at the National Seminar

Stress and Outlook for Quality of Work Life.

Preface to the Seminar The 21st century may be termed as the age of 'Speed, Anxiety and Stress'. Some of the reasons are fierce competition, uncertain environment, high need for achievement, deteriorating quality of work life, etc. Stress is productive and imparts a touch of excitement when it is at the functional level. There is a growing concern about dysfunctional stress and improving the Quality of Work Life. The effective management of stress and proper enrichment of the quality of work life produces the desired work behavior and helps the individual to reap the desired results in the long term. The amount and degree of stress experienced at an individual employee level or at total organizational level affects efficiency and effectiveness at work. Keeping all these key issues NDIM organized this national seminar on 'Stress Management and Quality of Work Life' to identify, explain, and control stress and have a better understanding about the art of living in this complex world.

The purpose of the seminar was to raise issues related to individual and organizational stress and its impact on quality of work life. It focused on causes, consequences and management of stress. In continuity to this seminar, NDIM organized a talk on Quality of Life titled "Management Mantras in Emerging India" by His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar ji on 5th February, 2004, at Siri Fort Auditorium, Khe! Gaon Marg, New Delhi. This talk received an enormous response from members of the public in Delhi representing all sections of the society from devotees, academicians, intellectuals, professionals, teachers and students.

Inaugural Address

Delivering the inaugural address, Prof. (Dr.)R Natarajan, Chairman, AICTE, underlined the changes taking place in the professional and cultural environment in the new millennium all over the world as also in our own country. The employer's expectations about his employees have touched new heights and it is expected that the managers of today should have in-depth knowledge and academic excellence in their areas of specialization.

New societal norms have emerged in view of historic changes that have taken place at different places in the world such as the Unification of Germany, Breaking up of the USSR, Lifting up of the apartheid in

South Africa and its independence, etc. These epoch making events have unleashed the expectations of the learners from their teachers in understanding the impact of such changes and their impact on the new world order in which boundaries are vanishing fast. The teaching community is threatened with the rapid developments and exponential growth of technology as also the exponential decay of the utility of required and traditional knowledge.

Despite the materialistic view of some of the western economies, India continues to be proud of its heritage of being a land of spirituality. However, the liking of our young populace shows definite inclination towards materialism. The women are looking out for Information technology jobs and the men are looking for management assignments. A desire for possessing material assets such as the Mobile phones, preferably of Nokia make, Air Conditioner of LG make, and possession of farm houses preferably with swimming pools, etc. is strongly noticed amongst the employees in the developing economy of our country.

In this highly competitive world, the criterion for selection of candidates are shifting from traditional methods to an assessment of their capabilities to handle new demands being placed on them, and increase in their self knowledge to cope with the vicissitudes of the challenges of the work involved. They are expected to deliver a perfect job, not work hard only but to work intelligently, and develop skills on a continual basis.

Professor Natarajan while emphasizing on these points, mentioned also the view points of some of the established and successful business leaders of the country. Azim Prem ji, for example, believes in daring to dream, working hard to fulfill that dream, and the saddest words as 'I could have'. He also stressed the importance of the attitudinal factors, which is one of the most significant factors in the performance of a manager. The attitude may depend on factors such as environment, experience, and education. These factors therefore should be nurtured and cultivated right from the early stage of development.

Professor Natarajan ended his talk on a note that the winners always seek to answer the problem and losers always seek the problem first. The

happiness lies in the degree to which you are fulfilled.

Keynote Address

Delivering his outstanding keynote address, Professor J K Mitra, Faculty of Management Sciences, felt that in the era when business is to be conducted at the speed of thought, *a la* Bill Gates, we can hardly afford to spend a thought about how are we conducting our business, and ourselves. He felt that we are ourselves responsible in creating and recreating a world full of stress and anxiety. Identifying some of the potential sources of stress, he mentioned that several macro-level Political, Economic, Social, and Technological (PEST) demands pester us, organizational factors such as Structure, Task, Role, Interpersonal, & Path - goal leadership patterns (STRIP) may attempt to strip us of our mental peace. Though competition is a natural energizer that arouses us, challenging us to perform at our best to outperform others, it is the continuous state of arousal and excitement that curtails the utility and function of our actions. He opined that at an organizational level, there is a strong need to keep the systemic radar and antenna always alert to catch and cope with the faintest of the signals that may prove threatening for the future. Recent researchers have, however, shown that it is not the high-placed life-style per se, but the accompanying attitude of hostility-suspicion-impatience that really cause the damage in increasing the stress levels. Sometimes, the revelation of the fact that the competition is not on a level playing ground may also contribute to the accumulation of stress

No two individuals experience the same degree of stress even in same situation and many personality or individual factors contribute to the variance. Notwithstanding the fact that stress is essentially a subjective experience, organizations can do a lot in helping people to manage it better. Quoting from the Indian scriptures, Professor Mitra mentioned about the six enemies within us that need to be overpowered to experience the joy of being and bliss of life: Kaam (Desire or attachment), Krodh (Rage), Loav (Greed), Mohh (Enchantment), Maud (Excitement) and Matsarya (Jealousy). This is one of the reasons why a *Theory of Karma* is a lot more complex theory than Julian Rotter's Locus of Control, and possibly a perfect antidote to any stress of life.

Participants' Views

Mr. Subhash Jagota, Executive Director, Global Business Solution.

Mr. Subhash Jagota emphasized on the methods to combat stress. He advised the young managers to adopt and practice some of the following time tested remedies:

- Bring smile on the face.
- Learn to challenge yourself.
- Learn to appreciate others.
- Learn to utilize the strength of others.
- Learn about the value system of others.
- Learn to pick up your weaknesses.
- Make your family a backbone of your life.
- Do not impose your value system on others.
- Remove negative attitude from your mind.
- Keep competent people around you.
- Improve your facial expression.
- Locate your potential.
- Develop effective communication skills.

Mr. V P Singh, Executive Director (HR), Devyani Beverages.

Mr. V P Singh explained how stress could lead to loss of sense of purpose, fragmentation of life, indifference to body mechanism and efficiency, and inability to harness emotional energy. Some measures or experiments to handle stress could be, for example,

- Using humor at work.
- Halloween type celebrations.
- Conducting health workshops.
- Organizing fitness centers.
- Yoga/meditation sessions.
- Undertaking family support services.
- Organizing family day once in a year.

Simple things like the following could serve as stress busters:

- Holi celebrations
- Telling a joke about you.
- Sending a gift to some one who has done something special, and praising others when they have done something good for you.
- To constitute a social committee to organize

events at work.

- Practice one-minute manager, one-minute goal setter, one-minute praise, one-minute reprimand, etc.

Lt. Col. Shailesh Kumar

Lt. Col. Shailesh Kumar in his presentation, touched upon the philosophy of his organization to deal with the management of stress. Starting his talk, he said that his company believed in the principle of 1-2-3, which implies employing one person, paying him salary for two persons and taking work from him equivalent to three persons. He mentioned that the reasons for stress could be anything including money (expenditure), traffic, job related stress, lack of time etc. Stress could lead to anger and frustration, low productivity, work related injuries, lack of concentration, anxiety and depression. However, stress can also have a positive effect for instance; it provides the sense of urgency and responsibility. It is important to recognize stress. Some of the symptoms that may lead to stress are general irritability, elevated heart rate, increase in blood pressure, anxiety, trembling, insomnia, headaches, pain in the neck/head, etc. Col Shailesh Kumar recommended some measures for reducing stress as follows:

- Set long range goals and daily priorities
- Ask for help
- Identify and eliminate your personal time wasters
- Maintain a regular schedule for exercise including aerobics
- Eat well balanced meals, more whole grains, nuts, fruits and vegetables
- Try to get 7 hours of sleep.

While summarizing his talk, he advised that an ABC strategy should be adopted for the management of stress, implying creating **A**wareness, exercising **B**alance, and **C**ontrol.

Mr. Vivek Nanda, Head Direct Sales (North), Sharp Business Systems

Mr. Vivek Nanda identified the reasons of stress as follows:

- Zeal to excel

- Superior – subordinate relationship
- Dead lines
- Long working hours
- Lack of communications
- Fear
- Restlessness

To handle stress he recommended doing the following:

- Learn to dream
- Practice hard work
- Do not be Zealous
- Develop healthy relationships

Dr. Anand P Maheshwari, DIG (Admn.), CRPF

Dr Anand P Maheshwari expressed that stress and conflicts to a certain extent is healthy and it leads to positive change. All that we need to learn to manage stress is to make appropriate value additions in life. We need to recognize the level of our mind and our inner self and maximize our inner bliss through proper identification. He also mentioned about the importance of the managerial focus in the context of stress management, for example, know how of technological developments, do how of technological innovations, and think how on how we are going to accomplish. He also explained the relevance of some of the leadership dogmas, viz., Management by objectives, Management by exception, Catch them doing right, and Client approach.

Valedictory Address

Summarizing the discussions, Shri I K Rasgotra, during his valedictory address, expressed that every solution does not help everybody. Change in attitude, change in behavior, and other modes can be suited differently for different people. To maintain balance between various aspects and to love to live with stress would leave us without stress is the main mantra. Preparing for unforeseen necessities, meditation, and yoga corrects the balance between various factors and remedies the imbalance.