TIME & STRESS MANAGEMENT

Time & stress management are two very closely related terms and are usually dealt with, collectively. All stress is bad though there's good and bad stress. Good stress is excitement, thrills, etc. The goal is to recognise personal signs of bad stress and deal with them, especially in the workplace. There are various causes of workplace stress like not knowing what you want or if you're getting it - poor planning. The feeling that there's too much to do consumes many even if there's hardly anything to do at all. Another aspect is not enjoying your job. This can be caused by lots of things, for example, not knowing what you want, not eating well, etc. However, most people always blame their jobs and the conflicting demands on the job as well as insufficient resources to do the job or not feeling appreciated. The biggest time wasters in one's business life are interruptions. There will always be interruptions so one must know how to handle them. Next is hopelessness. People "give in", "numb out" and "march through the day". Another is poor delegation skills. This involves not sharing work with others.

Common Symptoms
of Poor 'Stress & Time' Management

- Irritability. Fellow workers notice this first.
- Fatigue. How many adults even notice this?
- Difficulty concentrating. You often don't need to just to get through the day!
- Forgetfulness. You can't remember what you did all day, what you ate yesterday.
- Loss of sleep. This affects everything else!
- Physical disorders, for ex. headaches, rashes, cramps, etc.
- At worst, withdrawal and depression.

Principles of good
'Stress & Time' Management

- Learn your signs for being overstressed or having a time management problem. Ask your friends about you. Perhaps they can tell you what they see from you when you're overstressed.
- Most people feel that they are stressed and/or have a time management problem. Verify that you really have a problem. What do you see, hear or feel that leads you to conclude that you have a time or stress problem.
- Don't have the illusion that doing more will make you happier. Is it quantity of time that you want, or quality?
- Stress and time management problems have many causes and usually require more than one technique to fix. You don't need a lot of techniques, usually more than one, but not a lot.
- One of the major benefits of doing time planning is feeling that you're in control.
- Focus on results, not on busyness.
- It's the trying that counts - at least as much as doing the perfect technique.

Simple Techniques to manage 'Stress'

There are lots of things people can do to cut down on stress. Most people probably even know what they could do. It's not the lack of knowing what to do in order to cut down stress; it is doing what you know you have to do. The following techniques are geared to help you:

- Talk. You don't have to fix the problem, just report it.
- Notice if any of the muscles in your body are tense. Just noticing that will often relax the muscle.

- Delegate work. If you take on a technique to manage stress, tell someone else. They can help you be accountable to them and yourself.

- Cut down on caffeine and sweets. Take a walk instead. Tell someone that you're going to do that.

- Use basic techniques of planning, problem solving and decision making.

- Concise guidelines are included in this guidebook. Tell someone that you're going to use these techniques.

- Monitor number of hours that you work in a week. Tell your boss, family and/or friends how many hours you are working.

- Write weekly status reports. Include what you've accomplished last week and plan to do next week. Include any current issues or recommendations that you must report to your boss. Give the written status report to your boss on a weekly basis.

- Do something you can feel good about.

Simple Techniques to manage 'Time'

There never seems to be enough time in the roles of management and supervision. Therefore, the goal of time management should not be to find more time. The goal is set a reasonable amount of time to spend on these roles and then use that time wisely.

- Start with the simple techniques of stress management.

- Managing time takes practice. Practice asking yourself this question throughout the day: "Is this what I want or need to be doing right now?" If yes, then keep doing it.

- Find some way to realistically and practically analyse your time. Logging your time for a week in 15-minute intervals is not that hard and does not take up that much time. Do it for a week and review your results.

- Do a "todo" list for your day. Do it at the end of the previous day. Mark items as "A" and "B" in priority. Set aside two hours right away each day to do the important "A" items and then do the "B" items in the afternoon. Let your answering machine take your calls during your "A" time.

- At the end of your day, spend five minutes cleaning up your space. Use this time, too, to organise your space, including your desktop. That'll give you a clean start for the next day.

- Learn the difference between "Where can I help?" and "Where am I really needed?" Experienced leaders learn that the last question is much more important than the former.

- Learn the difference between "Do I need to do this now?" and "Do I need to do this at all?" Experienced leaders learn how to quickly answer this question when faced with a new task.

- Delegate. Delegation shows up as a frequent suggestion in this guide because it is one of the most important skills for a leader to have. Effective delegation will free up a great deal of time for you.

- If you are CEO in a corporation, then ask your Board for help. They are responsible to supervise you, as a CEO. Although the Board should not be micro-managing you, that is, involved in the day-to-day activities of the corporation, they still might have some ideas to help you with your time management. Remember, too, that good time management comes from good planning, and the Board is responsible to oversee development of major plans. Thus, the Board may be able to help you by doing a better themselves in their responsibilities as planners for the organisation.

- Use a "Do Not Disturb" sign! During the early part of the day, when you're attending to your important items (your "A" list), hang this sign on the doorknob outside your door.

- Sort your mail into categories including "read now", "handle now" and "read later". You'll quickly get a knack for sorting through your mail. You'll also notice that much of what you think you need to read later wasn't really all that important anyway.

- Read your mail at the same time each day. That way, you'll likely get to your mail on a regular basis and won't become distracted into any certain piece of mail that ends up taking too much of your time.

- Have a place for everything and put everything in its place. That way, you'll know where to find it when you need it. Another important outcome is that your people will see that you are somewhat organized, rather than out of control.

- Best suggestion for saving time - schedule 10 minutes to do nothing. That time can be used to just sit and clear your mind. You'll end up thinking more clearly, resulting in more time in your day. The best outcome of this practice is that it reminds you that you're not a slave to a clock - and that if you take 10 minutes out of your day, you and your organization won't fall apart.

- Learn good meeting management skills. Meetings can become a terrible waste of time. Guidelines for good meeting management are included later in this section.

An important aspect in regular working of organisations - time & stress was a topic at EPCH's recent awareness seminar in New Delhi. This was addressed by guest faculty from Fortune Institute of International Business Studies (FIIB) - Prof. (Dr.) Ritu Raj Kumar and Ms. Romaa Mageswari. This piece focuses on the importance of strategising time management in detail, as shared by this expert faculty.