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THRESHOLD OF SIGNIFICANCE IN STRESS MANAGEMENT

Viewpoint

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I am

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Abstract

Stress management is the individual's ability to handle any situation, external conditions, to match the demands of the external environment. The researchers revealed several stages in the stress response. **A first phase** was called "alert reaction" or "immediate reaction to stress", phase in which there are physiological modifications and manifestations that occur under psychological aspect. **Adaptation phase** is the phase in which the reactions from the first phase diminishes or disappears. **Exhaustion phase** is related to the diversity of stress factors and time and may exceed the resources of the human body to adapt. Influencing factors may be: limited, cognitive, perceptual, and a priori. But there is a **threshold of significance in stress management**. Once the **reaction to external stimuli occurs**, awareness is needed. The **capability effect** occurs, any side effect goes away and comes out the **"I AM"** effect.

1. Defining stress/stress definition

The word “stress” was firstly used in the physics area, being afterwards introduced in the field of biology and medicine by its father, **Hans Selye**, who dedicated himself to the study of stress.

Hans Selye introduces the *concept of stress*, which he defined as " a general non-specific response of the body to the external action of various natural factors (physical, chemical, biological and mental)," known as stressors (Selye, 1974).

The notion of stressor was introduced by Hans Selye as a result of the research conducted during the period he launched the term of “stress” – according to which most of people were relating to environment unpleasant events.

The “stress” experts make a clear distinction between *stress as “external factor”* and *stress as “psychological and physiological intern process”*.

In physics, the term refers to external stress acting on the individual, while in biology and medicine- the referral consists in the body's response to external requests it.

According to Hans Selye research, stress represent all morphological-functional changes (especially endocrine), that occur to the human body, in response to external stressors: physical, chemical, biological, and psychic.

A current definition of “overall stress” is that given by **A. von Eiff** : “psycho- physical reaction of the body caused by stress agents acting via the sense organs all the way to the brain, being put into motion thanks to corticolimbic and hyphotalamic pathways, a whole range of neuro-vegetative and endocrine reactions, with visibility over the entire body.

From a psychological perspective stress is defined as "a particular relationship between the person and the environment in which a person evaluates the environment as imposing demands that exceed their own resources and threatens their wellbeing, this evaluation determines the triggering processes of coping, cognitive responses, affective and behavioral to the incoming feedback (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The concept of " coping " developed by Lazarus and Launtier, *designates a set of mechanisms and behaviors that the individual interposes between him and the event perceived as threatening, to master , to keep under control , to tolerate or reduce its impact over his state of physical and psychological comfort* .

The previous stress definitions are just some of the definitions given to this term, the studies in this field of interest being constantly evolving.

2. What is management stress?

Stress management is the individual's ability to handle any situation, external conditions, to match the demands of the external environment.

Each individual responses to stressors, responses ones need to cope with situations that arise, can be

cognitive or affective but also under behavior forms (addressing problems openly, adopting avoidance behavior, etc.) (Vacaru, 2009).

Stages

The researchers revealed several stages in the stress response.

A first phase was also called “*alert reaction”* or “*immediate reaction to stress”* .

During this reaction, a number of physiological changes occur. Increasing heart rate can be observed, changes in breathing rate, muscles become tense, etc.

Under psychological aspect, the manifestations may be: increasing attention, different emotions like: anxiety, fear, appear.

This type of reactions do not last long.

Adapting phase.

Although the influencing factors persist, the changes characteristic to this phase, diminish or disappear, the body is fighting more or less in order to counter the stressor.

Anyone able to adapt to any external request (regardless of its intensity) will surpass challenging conditions, passing through this **resistance phase**.

Awareness causes disruption of adapting reaction.

If the adapting reaction is interrupted by relaxations stage, imbalances disappear, irritability, fatigue and lack of concentration.

In the case this adapting reaction persists, different physical and mental state appear.

Exhaustion phase

The third phase is characterized by physical and mental exhaustion. The body is losing its energy and immunity resources.

The persistence of requests and all the stress factors are influencing each individual, the adapting resources of the body being totally exceeded.

There are situations in which the *reaction to stress is being prolonged*, failing to reach the adaptation stage, *reaching the exhaustion phase* (due to metabolic intense demands).

3. Influential factors.

The stress factors (stressors) are events, external or internal situations, real or imagined, sufficiently intense or frequent that require adaptive responses from the individual. Factors influencing stress management may be:

- **Limiting factors**

Hans Selye who dedicated his researches to the study of stress, already concluded in 1956 that stress is not necessarily something negative. Characterizing stress into positive or negative is dependable to each situation. There are circumstances that *diminish*, restrict within certain limits the stress level (Selye, 1956).

Up to a *certain limit* stress is even necessary in performing daily activities, for our protection, as it mobilizes our body resources, for example in a case

in which we need some reactions to avoid unpleasant events in traffic (for those who are driving a car).

In this situation the individual adapts to external request (*adaptation phase*).

- **Cognitive factors**

Individual resources that help coping stress are defined as being the *cognitive capacity*, emotional and behavioral to reduce, master or tolerate internal or external demands that exceed the capacity of the body's automatic response.

Adapting to stress implies the existence of real resources (intellectual, emotional, physical, social, etc.) but it also results from self-assessment of its own resources to meet events assessed as threatening (secondary assessment). Secondary assessment involves valuing the personal resources responsible for responding to the demands of a certain situation.

It should not be seen in isolation but as an ongoing process but along with the primary evaluation (this relates to the person's behavior, dividing the event into a threatening or challenging situation). (Nadasan, 2009).

Sometimes there are discrepancies between actual response resources and evaluating these resources (actual presence of resources, however, is evaluated by the concerning person as being insufficient), which often generates stress.

There are situations that for some people are stressful while for others are real challenges (a real change).

All the attention is focused on the things that are bothering us, worrying, stressing, are upsetting us and become frustrating.

Thus, our attention is no longer directed entirely over the things that we conduct or will be conducting. Appears a slowdown in executing what we have to accomplish.

Our emotions describe a lot of things. Their awareness can lead us to get out of that situation, *turning our attention to what we want, not what we do not want to*.

We have a responsibility, but also the power to change things, leaving a clean playground for our children.

- **Perception factors**

Each individual's characteristics and personality factors influence its **perception of stress** by the level, intensity, constant stress.

Researchers studied personality traits in relation to stress such as: behavior pattern type A / B, optimism control point, self-esteem, etc.

M. Friedman, and R. H. Rosenman revealed in 1957 the existence of two types of behavior: type A and type B behavior. As a result of the conducted studies researchers found some common features in all subjects characterized by pride, aggressiveness, competitive spirit, anxiety, lack of time constant

feeling and emotional responses as: irritability, hostility, and low frustration tolerance. These people are more affected by stress compared with type B which are characterized by: calm, relaxing, quiet lifestyle, lack of sensation that time is not enough, etc.

Thus, *each person can have different reactions*. Stress is directly linked to the reaction an individual develops to stress factors. Knowing what happens inside of us when we are stressed, makes us able to create a real picture of the situation that rises and to counteract by using *distress mechanisms (negative stressors) or/and eustress amplification (positive stressors)*. Stress has various ways of manifesting (manifestation): physical, intellectual, and emotional and can be characterized by experienced or *subjective perception* of not being able to cope with any situation, the overwhelmed sensation.

- **Priori factors**

We only know phenomena not factual things. This world of phenomena, object of priori knowledge, is governed by the law of causality, in which every phenomenon is caused by another, than all phenomena form a causal chain, *according to which everything that happens, happens necessarily and with a particular purpose*.

4. Stress management threshold

External factors reaction and capability effect.

Information comes. First of all the perception over the form appears, over information and in general. Afterwards interferes the "**external factors reaction**" such as: fear, anxiety, bewilderment, etc. These emotions are perceived by the brain in different waves or stages.

Like shocks, short circuits of energy. The brain processes them and then passes on everything in waves to different internal organs of the human body, in muscles, in tissues (Goleman, 2013).

So does energy nodes occur.

When the light is not flowing smoothly, fluid throughout the body, "**external factors reaction**" appears.

And it takes awareness.

How?

STEP 1: I observe what is happening to me NOW; I am only observing!

STEP 2: breathe deeply, slowly; Just breathe!

STEP 3: the body's reaction soon changes;

Peace interferes, that tranquility that's beyond us.

This is the capability effect.

Allowing light to pass through our body, any side effect disappears, melts.

Then comes **I AM**, because **I am love, everything is dressed up in love**.

5. Conclusions

Stress management is each individual's ability to handle any external conditions, to deal with reactions to external stimuli.

The key is awareness.

The art of self-knowledge.

Passing through self-knowledge path doesn't require a special training, special knowledge, just an open mind, patience and confidence in the unlimited potential of our being.

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