CHAPTER – IV OCCUPATIONAL STRESS –

AN OVERVIEW

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Occupational Stress is defined in terms of its psychological and physiological effects on a person (or thing). Stress is mental, physical or emotional strain or tension or it is a situation or factor that can cause this. Occupational stress occurs when there is a discrepancy between the demands of the environment/workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete these demands. Often a stressor can lead the body to have a physiological effect which in turn will result in strain on a person physically as-well-as mentally. One of the main causes of occupational stress is overload of work. Occupational stress is often caused by an increased workload without the addition of employees to take on that additional work. Instead the increased amount of work is given to the current employees to finish it in the same time span that they would be asked to finish their regular or standard workload.

Stress is an inherent factor in any type of vocation or a career. At it's best, the presence of stress can be a motivator that urges the individual to strive for excellence. However, excess amounts of stress can lead to a lack of productivity, a loss of confidence, and the inability to perform routine tasks. As a result, quality employees lose their enthusiasm for their work and eventually withdraw from the company.
During the middle of the 20th century, employers began to initiate programs to help reshape corporate cultures in an effort to minimize the amount of productive stress found in the workplace. For many companies, this meant developing an occupational stress definition that was relevant to the individual business and the working environment as it was currently constituted. With the working definition in place, employers began to utilize resources such as confidential reporting methods, professional counselling, and employee committees to identify areas where the corporate climate could be enhanced and reduce stress levels at the same time.

The human body has a natural chemical response to a threat or demand, commonly known as the "flight or fight" reaction, which includes the release of adrenalin. Once the threat or demand is over, the body can return to its natural state. A Stressor is an event or set of conditions that causes a stress response. Stress is the body's physiological response to the stressor, and Strain is the body's longer-term reaction to chronic stress. Occupational stress can affect one's health when the stressors of the workplace exceed the employee's ability to have some control over their situation or to cope in other ways.

This has led to stressful working conditions for PEF members faced with:

☐ Downsizing/Privatization

☐ Hiring freezes

☐ Contingent work (e.g. part-time or temporary)

☐ Shift work/Rotating schedules

☐ Quality Programs/Worker Participation schemes
These changes foster an environment which gives rise to a number of sources of stress, including:

- Little autonomy or control over one's job
- Non-existent career ladders
- Inadequate resources to do the job
- High demands, workload, time pressures
- Lack of job security
- Understaffing
- Mandatory overtime
- Violence/Harassment

### 4.2 CAUSES

Some scholars note that an increase in workload, a hostile work environment, downsizing and shift work can result in occupational stress (Brynien, Igoe 2006). Often workloads remain immense although the employee does his or her best to complete them. If there isn't an increase in the hiring of employees to help with increased workloads, stress may be felt. The high demand and time pressures contribute to the stress (Brynien, Igoe 2006). Anytime there is privatizing of a company downsizing might occur. When downsizing occurs employees are laid off or fired. Those who still have their jobs have to worry about whether they will be next on the list of employees to be laid off. Those who have been laid off have to deal with the stressful situation of finding another job. If superiors are not supportive, discriminate towards certain employees while favouring others, do not offer encouragement or create a hostile work environment, this can cause stress for an
employee. Interpersonal conflicts within the workplace, uncertainty about the stability of job security and underutilized job abilities are also causes for occupational stress.

4.3 EFFECTS

Physical symptoms that may occur because of occupational stress include fatigue, headache, stomach problems, muscles aches and pains, chronic mild illness, sleep disturbances and eating disorders. Psychological and behavioural problems that may develop include anxiety, irritability, alcohol and drug use, feeling powerless and low morale (Brynien, Igoe 2006). If exposure to stressors in the workplace is prolonged, then chronic health problems can occur including stroke. Studies among the Japanese population specifically showed a more than 2-fold increase in the risk of total stroke among men with job strain (combination of high job demand and low job) control. Along with the risk of stroke comes high blood pressure and immune system dysfunction. Prolonged occupational stress can lead to occupational burnout.

4.4 STRESS MODELS

Over the years, the tools used to identify and effectively deal with occupational stress have continued to evolve. Today, there is a standard occupational stress index that is used in many stress management programmes to assess the potential for negative stress to undermine one or more employees. There are also various incarnations of an occupational stress indicator listing that can help individuals determine if general conditions have the potential to lead to unhealthy stress levels.
In response to tools such as the occupational stress scale, counselling and employee training programmes often include individual and group counselling opportunities. These programmes seek to teach employers and employees how to look at the workplace objectively, then take steps to contain or eliminate factors that are highly likely to undermine the confidence and function of employees. As a result, the company enjoys a higher level of productivity and the employee enjoys a more positive work environment within a company that is more likely to provide employment for many years to come.

The Demand Control model and the Effort Reward Imbalance model are two work stress models that help to identify particular job characteristics important for the employee's well being. The Demand Control model predicts that the most adverse health effects of psychological strain occur when job demands are high and decision latitude is low. The Effort Reward Imbalance model assumes that emotional distress and adverse health effects occur when there is an imbalance between efforts and occupational rewards. These models may be able to help employees and managers understand the correlation between job demand and high emotional and physiological distress. If so more preventive actions can be taken.

4.5 OCCUPATIONAL BURNOUT PREVENTION

Occupational burnout is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy within the workplace. More accurately defined, exhaustion refers to the depletion or draining of emotional resources. Cynicism refers to the indifference or distant attitude to work, and reduced professional efficacy refers to the
lack of satisfaction with past/present expectations. Occupational burnout is typically and particularly found within the human service professions. Such jobs that naturally experience high amounts of occupational burnout include: social workers, nurses, teachers, lawyers, physicians, and police officers. The reason why burnout is so prevalent in the human service professions is due to the high stress environment, emotional investment, and outcomes that are independent of the effort exerted by the working individual.

In order to quell occupational burnout, it is important to reduce or remove the negative aspects of the three main components that make up occupational burnout. However, it is difficult to treat all three components as the three burnout symptoms react differently to the same preventive or treatment activities. Exhaustion is more easily treated than cynicism and professional efficacy, which tend to be more resistant to treatment.

Burnout prevention programmes in the past focused upon cognitive-behavior, cognitive restructuring, didactic stress management, and relaxation. These types of prevention programs rely upon reducing the exhaustion component of occupational burnout. However, recent research indicates that, at the individual level, cognitive-behavioral strategies have the best potential for success. It is more complicated at the organizational level where reducing or removing job stressors have been shown to decrease burnout. Burnout experts believe that in order to reduce occupational burnout, a strategy of combining both organizational and individual level activities may be the most beneficial approach to reduce the three main symptoms. Job person
should be improved by focusing attention on the relationship between the person and the job situation appears to be a promising way to deal with burnout.

The individuals who are most vulnerable to occupational burnout are one who are strongly motivated, dedicated, and involved in the work in which they partake. As work for these individuals is a source of importance in which they derive meaning in life, it is significant that they find meaning by achieving their goals and expectations. Therefore, the process of burning out is the realization and reflection of the failure to find meaning and growth in life.

Occupational burnout is associated with increased work experience, increased workload, absenteeism and time missed from work, impaired empathy and cynical attitudes toward clientele, and thoughts of quitting.

4.5.1 Employee Rehabilitation

Employee rehabilitation is defined as a tertiary preventive intervention which means the strategies used in rehabilitation are meant to alleviate, as well as prevent, burnout symptoms. Such rehabilitation of the working population includes multidisciplinary activities with the intent of maintaining and improving employees‘ working ability and ensuring a supply of skilled and capable labour in society.

4.5.2 Insulation from Burnout

Several studies suggest that social-cognitive processes such as commitment to work, self-efficacy, learned resourcefulness, and hope may insulate individuals from experiencing occupational burnout.
4.6  STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress management is the amelioration of stress and especially chronic stress often for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. Stress produces numerous symptoms which vary according to persons, situations, and severity. These can include physical health decline as well as depression.

4.6.1 Transactional model

Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman suggested in 1984 that stress can be thought of as resulting from an imbalance between demands and resources or as occurring when pressure exceeds one's perceived ability to cope. Stress management was developed and premised on the idea that stress is not a direct response to a stressor but rather one's resources and ability to cope with and mediate the stress response and are amenable to change, thus allowing stress to be controllable.

In order to develop an effective stress management programme it is first necessary to identify the factors that are central to a person controlling his/her stress, and to identify the intervention methods which effectively target these factors. Lazarus and Folkman's interpretation of stress focuses on the transaction between people and their external environment (known as the Transactional Model). The model conceptualizes stress as a result of how a stressor is appraised and how a person appraises his/her resources to cope with the stressor. The model breaks the stressor-stress link by proposing that if stressors are perceived as positive or challenging rather than a threat, and if the stressed person is confident that he/she
possesses adequate rather than deficient coping strategies, stress may not necessarily follow the presence of a potential stressor.

The model proposes that stress can be reduced by helping stressed people change their perceptions of stressors, providing them with strategies to help them cope and improving their confidence in their ability to do so.

4.6.2 Health realization/innate health model

The health realization/innate health model of stress is also founded on the idea that stress does not necessarily follow the presence of a potential stressor. Instead of focusing on the individual's appraisal of so-called stressors in relation to his or her own coping skills (as the transactional model does), the health realization model focuses on the nature of thought, stating that it is ultimately a person's thought processes that determine the response to potentially stressful external circumstances. In this model, stress results from appraising oneself and one's circumstances through a mental filter of insecurity and negativity, whereas a feeling of well-being results from approaching the world with a "quiet mind," "inner wisdom," and "common sense".

This model proposes that helping stressed individuals understand the nature of thought—especially providing them with the ability to recognize when they are in the grip of insecure thinking, disengage from it, and access natural positive feelings—will reduce their stress.
4.6.3 Measuring stress

Levels of stress can be measured. One way is through the use of the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale to rate stressful life events. Changes in blood pressure and galvanic skin response can also be measured to test stress levels, and changes in stress levels. A digital thermometer can be used to evaluate changes in skin temperature, which can indicate activation of the fight-or-flight response drawing blood away from the extremities. Stress management has physiological and immune benefit effects.

4.6.4 Effectiveness of stress management

Positive outcomes are observed using a combination of non-drug interventions.

- treatment of anger or hostility,
- autogenic training
- talking therapy (around relationship or existential issues)
- biofeedback
- cognitive therapy for anxiety or clinical depression

**Work-life balance** is a broad concept including proper prioritizing between "work" (career and ambition) on one hand and "life" (pleasure, leisure, family and spiritual development) on the other. Related, though broader, terms include "lifestyle balance" and "life balance".
4.6.5 Work statistics

According to a survey conducted by the National Life Insurance Company, four out of ten employees state that their jobs are "very" or "extremely" stressful. Those in high stress jobs are three times more likely than others who suffer from stress-related medical conditions and are twice as likely to quit. The study states that women, in particular, report stress related to the conflict between work and family.

4.7 STRESS AND WORK LIFE BALANCE

The number of stress-related disability claimed by American employees has doubled according to the Employee Assistance Professionals Association in Arlington, Virginia. Seventy-five to ninety percent of physician visits are related to stress and, according to the American Institute of Stress, the cost to industry has been estimated at $200 billion-$300 billion a year.

Steven L. Sauter, Chief of the Applied Psychology and Ergonomics Branch of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Cincinnati, Ohio, states that recent studies show that "the workplace has become the single greatest source of stress". Michael Feuerstein, Professor of clinical psychology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences at Bethesda Naval Hospital states, that there is a greater increase in work-related neuroskeletal disorders from a combination of stress and ergonomic stressors.

It is clear that problems caused by stress have become a major concern to both employers and employees. Symptoms of stress are manifested both physiologically
and psychologically. Persistent stress can result in cardiovascular disease, sexual health problems, a weaker immune system and frequent headaches, stiff muscles, or backache. It can also result in poor coping skills, irritability, jumpiness, insecurity, exhaustion, and difficulty in concentrating. Stress may also perpetuate or lead to binge eating, smoking, and alcohol consumption.

According to James Campbell Quick, a professor of organizational behavior at the University of Texas-Arlington, "The average tenure of presidents at land-grant universities in the past ten years has dropped from approximately seven to three-and-a-half years."

The feeling that simply working hard is not enough anymore is acknowledged by many other American workers. "To get ahead, a seventy-hour work week is the new standard. What little time is left is often divided up among relationships, kids, and sleep.‖ This increase in working hours over the past two decades means that less time was spent with family, friends, and community as well as for pursuing activities that one enjoys and taking the time to grow personally and spiritually.

Texas Quick, an expert witness a trials of companies who was accused of overworking his employees, states that "when people get worked beyond their capacity, companies pay the price.‖ Although some employers believe that workers should reduce their own stress by simplifying their lives and making a better effort to care for their health. Most experts feel that the chief responsibility for reducing stress should be the management.
According to Esther M. Orioli, President of Essi Systems, a stress management consulting firm, "Traditional stress-management programs placed the responsibility of reducing stress on the individual rather than on the organization—where it belongs. No matter how healthy individual employees are when they start out, if they work in a dysfunctional system, they will be burn out."

4.7.1 Responsibilities of the employer

Companies have begun to realize how important the work-life balance is to the productivity and creativity of their employees. Research by Kenexa Research Institute in 2007 shows that those employees who were more favourable toward their organization's efforts to support work-life balance indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization. They also had greater pride in their organization, had willingness to recommend it as a place to work further had greater job satisfaction.

Employers can offer a range of programmes and initiatives, such as flexible working arrangements in the form of part time, casual and telecommuting work. More proactive employers can provide compulsory leave, strict maximum hours and foster an environment that encourages employees not to continue their work after working hours.

4.7.2 Real Commitment to Stress Reduction

Probably the most important step in healthy organizational change is to make a serious and sustained commitment to it. In non-unionized workplaces, this commitment should be made by top management. In unionized workplaces, both top
management and union representatives need to be involved. Healthy organizational change takes lot of time. No serious change effort should be initiated with a time frame limited to weeks or a few months. Healthy organizational change includes employee health and satisfaction as an explicit and independent outcome measure. These outcomes should be the key goals of their change in effort and not potential by products.

4.8 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS WORKSHOP

An occupational safety and health training agency in Massachusetts offered a stress reduction workshop to a diverse group of workers. They expected that the workshop would be of utmost interest to human service workers as well as other public sector workers. However, a number of workers from the manufacturing sector were also active participants. One concrete benefit to emerge from the initial workshop was that both the training agency and the manufacturing workers realized the extent to which stress on the job was negatively impacting on the workers' home lives. This led to additional training on coping skills and family dynamics. Workers participating in this second round of training found it extremely useful. A serious problem was identified, and employees were motivated to address it during the initial occupational stress workshop.

4.8.1 Occupational Stress Committee

A reasonable next step might be the formation of an occupational stress committee. This group could meet on an ongoing basis and formulate a strategy for improving the work environment in the organization. This group should have a
unique identity and focus. Group membership should include both labour and management. If employees are represented by a union or bargaining unit, they should be included in the committee. Potential conflicts with the collective bargaining process need to be avoided. If no bargaining unit exists, then a representative group of employees and administrators should attend the meetings. Since this committee is examining issues of the work environment, everyone involved in that work environment should be involved including clerical, support and maintenance staff.

Employees from various departments, divisions, shifts, and work groups should be included. Management representatives should include persons with real authority in the organization. It is also essential that employee representatives be protected from discrimination for their participation in the committee. The committee should be provided with adequate resources to make a serious and sustained effort. These resources might include access to relevant consultants, training materials, relevant records, and release time.

4.8.2 Increasing Employees' Control and Participation in the Workplace

The key point here is to increase real control and participation; not the illusion of control. Possible workplace strategies:

1) Using staff meetings more effectively to encourage participation and input.

A state law had been passed in California that required more frequent staff meeting in hospitals. In one hospital, an organizational psychologist worked with employees and management to measure the effects of participation in decision-
making on job stress, job satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover. Units where the intervention was carried out reported greater influence, less role conflict and ambiguity, less emotional strain, and greater job satisfaction, at 3-month and 6-month follow-up.

4.8.3 Develop autonomous work groups

Blue-Collar employees in a British confectionary company reported low scores on three job characteristics (autonomy, task identity and feedback), low work motivation, low job satisfaction and high levels of emotional distress. Increases in group autonomy were attempted by shifting responsibility and control to work teams and away from the supervisor. Teams had control over the work place, organization of rest breaks, and allocation of overtime and assignments. Six months and 18-month follow up revealed reduced emotional distress and lasting increase in autonomy.

4.8.4 Increasing the Skill Levels of Employees

Healthy work is a skillful work and allows for the ongoing development of new skills and the opportunity to use them. There has been a great deal of discussion at the national level concerning the importance of high skill, high wage work of increasing the productivity of U.S. companies. Unfortunately, many of the jobs being added to the economy are extremely low skill. Possible workplace strategies to counter this deskill effect (Incomplete).
4.8.5 Increased skill based training

A public sector child welfare agency initiated a competency based training program that targeted core practice skills. The trainings were designed to improve the professional skills of the staff in handling difficult client situations. Participants in the training showed a significant decrease in psychological strain symptoms compared with a control group. Skill development from this perspective should benefit the employee as well as the organization.

1) Use of career ladders to reward skill development,

2) Use of job rotation to expand skills,

3) Use of job redesign to increase range of skill needed,

4) Healthy use of computers for skill development,

An intervention designed to improve the case practice skills of child protective workers utilized interactive, multimedia computer-based training to provide both information, and to encourage further development of computer skills. This project also had extensive input from the staff regarding the design and implementation of software utilized by the agency.

4.8.6 Increasing Levels of Social Support

Key components to social support in the workplace are supervisory support and co-worker support. Possible workplace strategies are the supervisory approach emphasizes positive feedback, employee growth and development, open lines of communication, and strong levels of support.
1) Training in conflict resolution and team building.

2) Appropriate use of staff retreats.

4.8.7 Changes that Improve Physical Working Conditions

There is extensive evidence that poor physical working conditions contribute not only to physical hazards, but stress levels as well. Possible workplace strategies includes:

1) Improving indoor air quality.

2) Reducing levels of physical hazards such as noise, toxins, chemicals, etc.

3) Job redesign to reduce incidence of repetitive strain injuries (that is, reducing repetitive work, awkward work postures and/or heavy lifting.

4.9 HEALTHY USE OF TECHNOLOGY

More and more of our working time is spent in front of computers. While they can be a tremendous help in our work, they can also increase stress levels if the computer work is poorly designed. Cumulative trauma disorders can be a particular physical hazard of increased computer use.

Good ergonomics is a key to healthy computer use. State health departments usually have someone who is an expert in this area. They can help you with proper equipment, lighting and pace of work issues. They can also help you reduce the risk of repetitive strain injuries among your staff.
4.9.1 Staff involvement in choosing new equipment:

For the majority of the job we do is often one of the largest causes of stress in our lives - this is known as „Job Related Stress“ or „occupational stress“. Being unable to cope with the day to day needs of the employees job can easily lead to acute stress levels building up. Equally (and maybe surprisingly) so can being bored with your occupation and finding it all too easy.

Identifying the causes of employees' stress is the first and the most important step in self stress management. Without identifying where the stress in employees' life is stemming from, the industry will never be able to take proper steps to control it. So, read through this list that causes of occupational stress.

4.9.2 New technology

Technology was supposed to shorten the working week and give more leisure time, but the reverse seems to be happening, we all work longer hours and spend lesser time for family and leisure activities. Rapid changes in the working environment and working practices often lead to increased job-related stress levels. Many people in many different types of jobs and occupations find themselves struggling to keep up with the pace of change of modern technology.

Now-a-days, workers often feel like they are just part of the machine, rather than individuals. More people than ever before work alone or in isolation from their colleagues.
4.9.3 Shift Work

This is a prime source of occupational stress. It upsets the normal body clock and can interrupt the employee's sleep patterns. This in turn will make one tired, irritable and eventually leads to stress.

4.9.4 Deadlines

Jobs with constant deadlines are another potential source of occupational stress. Time pressures and urgent deadlines nearly always lead to job stress. This effect is doubled if the employees are prone to setting their unrealistic goals and deadlines.

4.9.5 Longer Working Hours

If the employees work too many hours in a week they become unproductive and tired and thus stress set in. Not getting enough proper sleep is a major cause of stress; a good night's sleep is essential. Managing time at work efficiently is one of the most important parts of controlling job related stress. One should not work for long hours and an opt for flexible working hours.

4.9.6 Commuting to Work

People tend to work farther away from home than they used to, and their travel to and from the workplace is often very stressful on today's congested roads and railways. This also greatly extends to working day and lessening the time available for non-work activities. Commuting is often one of the most stressful parts
of the working day, causing employees to arrive at work with the wrong frame of mind and stopping you from concentrating properly.

4.9.7 Working Conditions

Working in unhealthy conditions will contribute to increased stress levels. Noisy or overly hot, cramped or cluttered, excessively busy places or air conditioned windowless offices - all contribute to occupational stress.

4.9.8 Interest on job

Working just for money, leads to a lack of self value and lack of fulfilment. Most people do not realize just how stressful this can be and they underestimate the long term effects it can have on their health.

4.9.9 Work Colleagues

Working with people are do not like and don't 'get on with' can be a huge source of job related stress. Spending many hours each day with people they hate can be very bad for the employees long term health, especially if they are angry or resentful regularly.

4.9.10 Job Security

Gone are the days of a 'job for life'. The threat of losing a job makes life generally very stressful. Workers also put up with more hassles just to keep a job. Changing occupations is far more common now-a-days. This can be one of the most stressful times in a person's life.
4.9.11 Being a Boss

Being unpopular with the workers and making difficult, often conflicting, decisions, and demoting people often creates stress. Being in charge of people is one of the most stressful types of jobs. Whatever the main reasons for the stress in employees working life, the first step in **effective stress management is to identify the main causes.** After that the thing would be to find practical, workable solutions to lower long term dangerous stress.

4.10 TECHNIQUES OF MANAGING STRESS

There are several ways of coping with stress. Some techniques of time management may help a person to control stress. In the face of high demands, effective stress management involves learning to set limits and to say "No" to some demands that others make. The following techniques have been recently dubbed −Destressitizers‖ by The Journal of the Canadian Medical Association. A destressitizer is any process by which an individual can relieve stress. Techniques of stress management will vary according to the theoretical paradigm adhered to, but may include some of the following:

- Autogenic training
- Cognitive therapy
- Conflict resolution
- Exercise
- Getting a hobby
- Meditation
- Relaxation techniques
- Artistic Expression
- Spas
- Spending time in nature
- Stress balls
- Natural medicine
- Time management
- Listening to certain types of relaxation music, particularly:
  - New Age music
  - Classical music
  - Psychedelic music
  - Sleep Music.

a). **Autogenic Training:**

Autogenic Training has been developed by Dr. Schultz who published the first book on the subject in 1932. Dr. Schultz recognized that during hypnosis the subject experiences various feelings such as warmth and heaviness. He went on to teach practices to self induce these feelings and, consequently, hypnotic states. From this, self induction practice comes with the name, Autogenic Training. Auto-genic means self-created. Autogenic Training has more in common with Yoga than with progressive relaxation.
b). **Cognitive therapy**

Cognitive therapy seeks to help the patient overcome difficulties by identifying and changing dysfunctional thinking, behavior, and emotional responses. This involves helping patients develop skills for modifying beliefs, identifying distorted thinking, relating to others in different ways, and changing behaviours.

c). **Conflict resolution**

Conflict resolution is a wide range of methods of addressing sources of conflict - whether at the inter-personal level or between states - and of finding means of resolving a given conflict or of continuing it in less destructive forms than, say, armed conflict. Processes of conflict resolution generally include negotiation, meditation, diplomacy and creative peace building. The term "conflict resolution" is sometimes used interchangeably with the terms dispute resolution or alternative dispute resolution.

d). **Exercise**

Exercise increases overall health and sense of well-being, which puts more pep in step every day. But exercise also has some direct stress-busting benefits.

**It pumps up endorphins.** Physical activity helps to bump up the production of one brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins. Although this function is often referred to as a runner's high, a rousing game of tennis or a nature hike also can contribute to this same feeling.
**It's meditation in motion.** After a fast-paced game of racquetball or several laps in the pool, one shall often find that they have forgotten the day's irritations and concentrated only on their body's movements. As they begin to regularly shed their daily tensions through movement and physical activity, they may find that this focus on a single task, and the resulting energy and optimism, can help them remain calm and clear in everything that they do.

**It improves mood.** Regular exercise can increase self-confidence and lower the symptoms associated with mild depression and anxiety. Exercise also can improve one's sleep, which is often disrupted by stress, depression and anxiety. All this can ease their stress levels and give them a sense of command over their body and life.

e). **Getting a hobby**

With today's stressful lifestyles, it is important to have time that takes to do something just for the fun of it. While there are many great hobbies to choose from the following list of hobbies are particularly useful in relieving stress. Some of the major hobbies are gardening, Exploring Photography, Scrapbooking, Maintaining a Saltwater Aquarium, Engaging in Puzzles, Drawing, Painting, knitting, Playing The Piano and writing.

f). **Meditation**

Meditation is a group of mental training techniques. One can use meditation to improve mental health and capacities, and also to improve physical health. Some of these techniques are very simple, so one can learn from a book or an article; and
others require guidance by a qualified meditation teacher. Meditation may sometimes give problems for people suffering from mental diseases, epilepsy, serious heart problems or neurological diseases. On the other hand, meditation may be of help in the treatment of these and other conditions.

**g). Relaxation Techniques**

Relaxation is a skill. With frequent practice one can improve these skills to control employees’ emotions and improve their physical well being. These techniques can be practices either day or night to assist the employees to relax and feel in control. It is really important to practice regularly.

**Slow Breathing Technique:** This is useful for the employees who start to over breath when they are feeling the first signs of anxiety or stress.

**Muscle Relaxation Technique:** This technique involves the employees using their slow breathing technique in conjunction with muscle relaxation. This can be practices any time. The more practice leads to easier to achieve the total relaxation and also the duration of feeling relaxed and being stress free for last longer.

**h). Artistic Expression**

Expressing oneself through the arts can be a natural stress buster. The arts include visual arts, playing or creating musical arrangements, creative writing or poetry, as well as different forms of dance. One do not need to be a professional artist in any of these arts. But one can feel happy and be relieved of stress.
i). **SPAS**

It's a steam bath, followed by a great massage, which is a great way to relieve stress. Stress is one of the major causes of diseases like cancer and many other sicknesses. It has been proven that the benefits of this experience are very effective in reducing stress.

j). **Spending time amidst**

Spending time amidst reduces anxiety. It calms minds, soothes soul, and lifts spirits. Just looking at the colour green have given the health benefits. If one feels sad, fearful, or anxious, perhaps one just needs to get outside and interact with Mother Nature. Just a few minutes can do wonders. If they are not able to get outside there are still ways to incorporate nature and the outdoors into their day.

k). **Stress balls**

A stress ball is a malleable toy, usually not more than 7 cm in diameter. It is squeezed in the hand and manipulated by the fingers, ostensibly to either help relieve stress and muscle tension or to exercise the muscles of the hand. Stress balls are being used by many people for stress relief.

l). **Natural medicine**

Naturopathy or Natural Medicine is a form of alternative medicine based on a belief in vitalism, which posits that a special energy called vital energy or vital force guides bodily processes such as metabolism, reproduction, growth, and adaptation. Some of the herbals can reduce stress, support emotional wellness and health, lessen
common feelings of the blues, support the nervous system, support a healthy motivated attitude, support a positive mental attitude, address common menstrual moodiness, maintain a well-adjusted outlook and positive temperament, Support healthy sleep patterns and a healthy balanced appetite.

J). Time management

Time management is essential if one is to handle a heavy workload without excessive stress. By using time management skills effectively, they can reduce work stress by being more in control of their time, and by being more productive. This ensures that they have time to relax outside the work place.

A person probably knows that effective time management will help him get more done each day. It has important health benefits, too. By managing time more wisely, he can minimize stress and improve his quality of life.

4.11 STRESS AFFECTS THE BRAIN AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

To truly appreciate how seriously stress affects employee safety, it is helpful to understand how stress affects the human brain. The bottom line is this: stress interferes with brain functioning because our brain's ability to function is directly related to our emotional state. When we are in a positive emotional state, our brain works best, enabling us to perform at our best. When we are in a negative emotional state, such as feeling nervous, angry, depressed, or stressed out in any way, our brain works less effectively. This process was labeled Downshifting by Dr. Leslie Hart, an
educator who studied employees performance under varying emotional states. Dr. Hart's interest in how stress affects the brain arose from his observation that employees' ability to think and learn decreased as their stress level increased. Just as a car's speed and performance decrease if the driver downshifts from high gear to low gear, the brain's performance decreases when it downshifts. Dr. Hart's research, along with a great deal of other scientific research, shows that when people downshift, their intellectual, psychological, and behavioural responses deteriorate. Because downshifting plays such an important role in how stress affects employee performance and vulnerability to accidents and injuries. It is important to understand how it gets acted out in the workplace. To help make sense of this concept, we will break downshifting down into its component parts and give descriptions and examples of each.

4.11.1 Intellectual Downshifting

At the time of downshift intellectually, the way of thinking becomes less creative, our problem-solving ability diminishes, and our overall ability to process information deteriorates. One symptom of intellectual downshifting is the "deer in the headlights" look people get when they experience information overload. In this overloaded state, their ability to think literally shuts down. A common example of the combination of high stress and information overload leading to intellectual downshifting is the dreaded computer crash, followed by the even more dreaded call to a tech support hotline. In this stressed state, have great difficulty in understanding directions and processing information. If we are peppered with questions, and those questions include terms and jargon we know nothing about, our brain will likely to
shut down. In this downshifted state, nothing registers in a mind when someone says something. It is almost like they are speaking a foreign language. Another example of intellectual downshifting is when we are nervous and blurt out something stupid or ask a nonsensical question. Yet another example of the information overload aspect of downshifting is when you are driving with the radio on and either hit difficult traffic or get lost. Many people will shut off the radio at this point or ask their passengers to stop talking, so they can focus their attention on their driving. In this overloaded, stressed-out state, their brain cannot handle all the information coming in and still perform its job effectively. Intellectual downshifting can cause serious safety problems. If the employees are not thinking clearly or sharply, they are far more likely to make poor decisions, including those involving taking appropriate safety precautions. In such an overloaded, downshifted state, they are less likely to think clearly about potential consequences or dangers.

4.11.2 Psychological Downshifting

Not only does a person's emotional state affect his intellectual functioning, it also affects his psychological functioning. When individual downshifts psychologically, he becomes immature. Adults have temper tantrums or behave in childish ways when they were stressed out. Other examples of psychological downshifting are throwing or slamming things around, becoming defensive, acting rebelliously, and interacting with people in childish ways such as mocking, mimicking, and pouting. Sometimes a whole workforce can be psychologically downshifted if the organization has a negative emotional climate of fear or resentment. One of the most common causes of such a situation is managers who are
disrespectful and/or over controlling. When they act this way, their workers tend to act more like rebellious teenagers than adults. This creates many problems for the company. Psychologically downshifted employees are harder to manage, they do not perform as well, and they are more likely to have accidents and injuries. Psychologically downshifted employees are at higher risk of accidents and injuries because, being in an adolescent mind-set, they are less likely to listen to safety precautions. They are also more likely to do just the opposite of what they are told, to prove that no one can tell them what to do, just like teenagers do.

4.11.3 Behavioural Downshifting

When a person downshifts behaviourally, he becomes rigid and inflexible in his responses to problems and challenges. He also becomes more awkward and clumsy in his movements. One common example of increased behavioral rigidity due to downshifting a person occurs when one is late and cannot find his car keys. In this frantic, stressed-out state, he often looks for his car keys several times in the same location. He might reach into his pockets or peek under the same pile of papers several times, as if the keys will materialize in the next attempt. When we downshift, we tend to repeat behaviors, even though they are not working. This makes workers more apt to break equipment, because they are more likely to continue to try to force a piece of equipment to move in a certain way or do something it was not made to do. Rather than switching gears and doing something else, the downshifted worker is likely to continue trying to make the piece of equipment do what he wants it to do by using more force. The increased behavioural rigidity caused by downshifting also increases the chances that employees will continue to engage in behaviours that will
injure them. The downshifted employee is less likely to stop engaging in a physical activity that is causing them pain and start doing something else or seek help. Instead, they will doggedly continue the activity, despite signals that it is doing them harm. Physical downshifting also increases one's risk of injury because it makes people clumsier. When people feel rushed or pressured, they are more prone to bang into things. When nervous, people are more liable to drop or fumble objects. One way to understand how downshifting causes these problems is to think of stress as overloading the brain's circuits. Because the brain is so busy processing whatever is causing the person stress, it does not have that processing power available to deal with all the information required to produce effective hand and eye coordination or graceful body movements. Thus, if a person is stressed out and his brain circuit is overloaded, he becomes clumsy and awkward in their movements, making him/her vulnerable to accidents and injuries.

4.11.4 Other Consequences of Downshifting

Downshifting impact on employee performance and the bottom line goes far beyond its impact on safety. Without going into detail, the following list indicates how costly a problem downshifting is in terms of its overall effects and influences on other than safety-related issues.

When people downshift they are more likely to become:

- Fearful of and resistant to change
- Over reactive to minor hassles, inconveniences, and frustrations
- Immature
□ Aggressive
□ Defensive and paranoid
□ Territorial
□ Distrustful of anybody who is different from themselves—seeing the world in an “us versus them” way
□ —Control Freaks
□ —Power hungry
□ Simplistic in their thinking
□ Self-centered, interpersonally dense, and unable to empathize with others

The preceding list of characteristics is obviously not a formula for the ideal employee. Unfortunately, many organizations have some—if not the majority—of their employees who display these characteristics. Because their employees are stressed out and downshifted, the company gets the worst out of them, rather than the best.

When people become stressed, their brain downshifts. When in a downshifted state, their ability to function intellectually, psychologically, and behaviorally is all compromised. This makes them more vulnerable to accidents and injuries. Downshifting also causes a large number of other undesirable qualities and behaviours that lead to performance problems.
4.12 CONCLUSION

Most of the organizations have realized that living ethical would not be a good industrial practice but would pay in the long run. To be ethical an organization requires treating its employees properly and fairly. An organisation that would be interested in growth and profits must establish the relationship with the employees based on trust and improvement of the employer – employee relationship. First of all, the productivity of employees would increase to treat employees as humanly rather than mechanically (Mc Gregor 1960, p1). Secondly, employees could feel that increased ethical power on their part actually results in higher compensations. Thirdly, even if there was no material gain ethically, appropriate behaviours provide an intrinsic sense of self satisfaction (Bhile: 1990, p 121). Therefore, it would be advantageous for every organisation to maintain high ethical standard and thereby stress free work and approach between an organisation and employees.