CHAPTER – IX

STRESS – CURATIVE MEANS AVAILABLE AND THE NEED FOR A TOLERANCE MIND SET

Stress has proved itself to be a necessary evil, over the years. It is known for its ubiquity. In this fast developing world, it is almost impossible to get rid of it or do without it. From the discussion on stress in SW firms held hither to, it is clear that when work pressure keeps rising and exceeds a tolerable limit the SW professionals who are assigned target oriented or result oriented work, are deprived of the benefit of enjoying a comfortable work life balance. They are called upon to remain glued to their seats till the work allotted to them is satisfactorily completed. It might at times take 9 to 14 hours to do justice to work. How to over come this problem is a big question. However, it is sought to be addressed in the following way.

Ours is a democratic country. It has a government which is by the people, for the people and of the people. Therefore, the government enjoys boundless powers to enact legislations regarding the number of hours one should work everyday and enforce them. Further, the government should introduce the shift systems in all the companies which strive to attain their goals, so that SW professionals also work shifts of eight hour duration. If this system comes into practice, the problems such as work overload, poor work life balance and stress will cease to exist. If this is done with out fear or favour to
any body and no body is excluded from the application of the legislation regarding shift system, the welfare of workers in general and the SW professionals in particular, could be safeguarded. This, according to the investigator, is one of the ways available to those who are wielding the reigns of administration, to thwart the accumulation and attack of stress on people entrusted with the responsibility of handling result oriented jobs.

Secondly, the western culture of enjoying week ends should be allowed to pervade, the whole country, known for its diverse culture and civilization. People in the western countries drink life to the lease by enjoying their week ends, with scant regard for a sound bank balance. The simple logic is that those who are mindful of a sound bank balance, can never expect a comfortable work life balance. They are certainly two major goals which are diametrically opposed or inversely correlated.

It is quite true that works in SW firms are stress ridden. As there is a fierce and a neck to neck competition for survival, SW firms, are under tremendous pressure to train their professionals adequately to keep them updated in technology. The ‘on the job training’ given to SW professionals show how alert the SW companies are, in fine tuning the skills of their professionals. Thus, it is evident that hard work is absolutely essential for growth. If SW professionals insist on a comfortable work life balance they would be treated for all practical purposes as misfits.
Software companies are known for their strategic significance. They are inextricably linked with almost all kinds of industries in the country. As they handle information from the aviation industry and the Defense Research and Development organization, they have to be alert and active round the clock. Further, the work done should be absolutely free from errors because they constitute the basis for vital decision making processes so work overload cannot be given a wide berth to, in SW companies.

In the fierce struggle for existence, those who conquer stress and do not succumb to mounting work pressure alone can emerge as victors in their respective fields. The easiest method which could be adopted to achieve this end is time management. It is a process of planning, organizing and controlling ones time. The process involves making a schedule of goals to be achieved and their estimated dead lines, analyzing resources and efforts required to achieve these goals, making a list of all the activities that would lead to the achievement of goals and prioritizing the tasks, to take care of these activities. It also includes estimating how long it will take to complete the task, planning activities starting from the most important task first until the goals is accomplished. This will help individuals to manage their time properly and overcome the problem of stress.

9.1 Relaxation

Relaxation is very important for mental health. Practically speaking it costs nothing. It is quite advisable for SW professionals who feel mentally and
physically fatigued due to the mounting pressure of work. The simple method, which is very often recommended to SW people, who are stress ridden is to relax while on the job. It is quite possible by taking regular breaks while on work, every day. Instead of remaining glued to ones seat with out even a smile, one can take a break and relax for a short while over a cup of tea or coffee. As one of the informants in TCS said, it is possible to remain with eyes closed for a short while and then resume the work. According to him this is the way he is getting rid of the problem of boredom, and stress. Besides these in the company itself there is a staff retaining team. The aim of the team is to try their best to encourage professionals who are noted for their sense of commitment, devotion, integrity, ability, innovative skill and loyalty, to continue in service against all odds. They are advised to give attention to their composure and calmness while at work. Further they are led to believe that freedom from stress and strain could easily be accessed by refraining from intoxicants. On top of all these SW professionals who face the problem of very heavy work load should develop a sense of accomplishment. It would keep them in a state of contentment and satisfaction. This is one of the best ways of getting out of stress and continuing on ones job with joy and satisfaction.

9.2 Help Seeking

The information gathered from the sample informants makes it clear that certain professionals are pushed into the thraldom of stress because they are found wanting in technological knowledge and skill very much needed for their
target and result oriented jobs. The hard skills acquired from the class rooms and text books will not stand them in good stead when they are called upon to handle highly demanding and highly paying jobs. Under such circumstances, instead of fleeing from the job, they can easily access their human resource development officer and ask for supplementary help. In SW companies there are provisions to help such people at the expense of the company itself. So it is very important for SW professionals to find out the support and help available in the company to cope with stress. The process involved in this special endeavour is called mentoring. Here a junior level employee is attached to a senior level person, to help him in times of stress. In most of the SW companies’ mentoring has been found to be helpful in gaining relief from stress caused by high performance demands, pressure for change and job challenges.

9.3 Getting close to others for open hearted chatting

In most of the SW companies the professionals involved in high tension jobs, always keep themselves to themselves. They seldom move, on freely and friendly terms, with their fellow professionals. They do not give a free vent to their feelings, emotions and problems. This keeps them in a state of awful frustration. They forget the fact that they can build a support system for themselves by getting chummy with the people around them. In the SW field it is necessary for every technocrat to have a group of people on whom he/she can rely, for encouragement support, and comfort. The trusting relationship, which one has with others is critically important. Viewed from a different
angle, it could be treated as a social support system. The idea enshrined in the social support system is that, stress level could be brought down, when some one talks over his/her problem, if others listen, a way out would automatically evolve. So every SW professional should find time to have friendly chat with like minded people, whom they think are trust worthy, to be happy and gay and feel relieved of feelings distress and frustration. This method will go a long way in helping SW professionals, overtaken by the problem work overload, to conquer stress and continue on his/her job.

9.4 Regular Exercises

Ours is a country where people do not give due importance to exercises. But in most of the developed nations, both men and women, regularly exercise their body and keep them quite for any androus job. However, in our country too in recent years, Yoga practices and regular physical exercises in work places are assuming significance. It is widely believed that even those whose lives are in peril can emerge with sunshine on their faces, dispensing the awe inspiring gloom of stress, if they devote some time in their work places for Yoga practices and some in door game. SW firms have set apart a sizeable portion of the top most floors of their buildings for exercises. The simple idea behind this gesture is that companies which generate stress and related problems should certainly try to find out an escape route for those who are caught in the whirl pool of such ills. So, instead of succumbing to stress and trying to strike a retreat from the highly challenging and glamorously
rewarding jobs in the SW field. They can continue with renewed vigours on their jobs and turn out to be major contributors to the noble task of nation building. If those who are in the SW field are given splendid opportunities to overcome stress, they can work harder than before and promote their own interests and those of their companies of which they are an inextricable part.

9.5 The Relaxation methods followed and the exercises advocated in Software Companies

The exercises sought to be popularized in most of the software firms are, breathing exercises, abdominal exercises and exercises for muscles. They have been tried with tremendous success in work places and educational institutions. They include:

9.5.1. Common place breathing exercise

a. Sitting cross legged.

b. Being in a deep breath stage from five to ten seconds.

c. Releasing oneself from the deep breath stage, counting up to 100.

d. This breathing exercise should be repeated 5 times in a day.

9.5.2. Simple exercise for abdominal health

a. Sitting quite relaxed and calm preferably cross lagged.

b. Breathing with both the hands on the stomach.

c. Inhaling for a moment by expanding the abdomen with out exerting pressure.

d. Repeating this process for five minutes with out break.
e. Gently and slowly inhaling and exhaling continuously for 7 minutes.

f. Practicing this exercise for 14 minutes every day.

9.5.3. Relaxation in a passive mode

a. Sitting cross lagged very much relaxed and calm.

b. Breathing with eyes closed.

c. Focusing attention on any thing one likes most, forgetting all worries and problems. This is what is called inward focusing.

d. Allowing the feeling of relaxation to flow freely from head to toe.

To be specific, the process should start from ones forehead.

e. Telling ones inner mind that one is relaxed. It means that you must have the feeling that you are fully relaxed.

f. Then, taking a deep breath, relaxing the body and slowly opening eyes.

9.5.4. Relaxation done progressively

a. Sitting cross lagged, calm and relaxed.

b. Slowly carefully and conveniently relaxing the hands, shoulders, neck, jaw, forehead, back pain, abdomen, legs, toes and thighs.

c. Doing normal breathing several times sitting relaxed.

d. Taking a deep breath ten times casually and then opening the eyes.
This is a relaxation exercise which the SW professionals are encouraged to take for 20 minutes everyday by experts in the SW companies stressed professionals quite feel, we quite optimistic that stress could be got rid of by means of exercises and relaxation activities.

9.6 Learning to view problems in the right perspective

It is true that work overload is a major problem for both the young and experienced SW professionals alike. The only way to get out of the problem of stress accompanying work overload is, to feel relaxed and not worried about the consequences of being involved in executing certain technically intricate jobs or the flaws pointed out in the work done and the enquiry likely to follow. In the perception of any professional, if these matters are too simple and common place to be concerned about, stress could be hidden farewell to. For such people the sky will be the limit for their growth. This is indeed one of the possible ways of getting over stress.

9.7 Introducing the software professionals to library habits

In countries, the world over, there is a group of people called welfare seekers. In their opinion any problem of stress could easily be got over by taking to, certain well known practices like, reading, writing and playing. Great warriers have allowed themselves to be operated upon with out anesthesitics while concentrating on books. The most noteworthy examples are Musolini, the Italian leader and Mosthee Dayan the former Defense Minister of Israel. On the basis of such historical events, it is being increasingly realized
that a mini library with facilities for reading, video conferencing and watching
T.V. Programmes is absolutely essential for software firms, to take the over
worked software professionals into world of ecstasy and relief from stress.

Thus it becomes very clear that in SW jobs which are target oriented
there is very little room for a comfortable work life balance what is expected of
the SW professionals is hard work and a change in their perceptions and mind
set, to emerge as victors and achievers. It is very often said that “the way out is
the way through. Most of the fast developing nations around us have proved to
the world that there is no substitute for hard work. Unless we learn to scorn
delight and live laborious days, we can not shoot into prominence. So in the
SW field what is needed is a positive mind set and a spirit of hard work to
vanquish our foes in the international markets and blaze new trails of progress
for the software industry. Those who are battling stress should continue to do
so with the hope that “we will overcome some day”.