Chapter 4

Stress Coping Mechanisms
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OBJECTIVE

The present chapter highlights the concept of ‘Stress Coping mechanisms’ and various techniques identified by a number of research scholars both at the individual and at the organizational levels, which help in coping with stress and thereby reducing its harmful effects.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The last twenty years have seen a steady accumulation of evidence from research and from work statistics to demonstrate the link between stress and impaired physical and mental health on the one hand, and decreased performance at work and individual quality of life on the other. There seems no doubt that stress can cause illness and impair performance. Knowledge of the factors which can cause stress when it occurs should, therefore, be an essential part of management education. Senior management requires this knowledge in order to utilize human resources under their control to the best advantage, while the manager has a stake in both his health and that of his staff. Modern living is stressful. Coping mechanisms are techniques for relieving accumulated stress or for offsetting some of its adverse effects. The application of these techniques is analogous to the approach to management. Any program for the effective management of stress must take into consideration both the inevitability of stress and its dual nature—eustress and distress. Recognizing its inevitability, the employees should seek, not to eliminate it, because such effort would be futile, but to manage it so as to maximize its benefits and minimize its deleterious effects. Recognizing its dual nature, employees should learn to seek out methods for utilizing their eustress to improve their creativity and productivity, while minimizing their distress so as to reduce personal suffering.

Stress impairs one’s ability of immunity system to fight for the disease and increase the risk of various problems (physical and mental). Stress and anxiety includes the following:
• Physical and health problems;
• Psychological problems; and
• Lack of satisfaction from life.

The goal of coping includes maintaining personal integrity and achieving personal control. In each situation, a person uses physical, cognitive, social, and emotional resources to understand what is needed. Then, they modify certain conditions or individual self so that person environment matching can easily be attained.

4.2 CONCEPT OF COPING

The link between stress and coping is an inevitable feature of the human condition. In everyday language, an individual ability to cope refers to their successfully accomplishing a task of dealing with a situation.

“Coping involves person’s active effort to resolve stress and to create new ways of handling new situations at each stage of life (Erikson, 1959)”. This idea emphasizes the importance of personal resources and competencies that are used to deal with new challenges. Coping emphasizes mastery of the situation while defense emphasizes protection of the self. The coping process requires an effective person who actively engages himself in each challenge of life. Persons coping ways are actually matched according to their personality, and, not by the ways, they say or do something.

Coping means dealing with stressors to eliminate; reduce or minimize their harmful consequences. Coping is done to master the conditions, which are perceived to be harmful, threatening, or challenging. “Coping consists of intra-psychic or action oriented efforts to manage the internal or external demands and conflicts (Lazarus & Launier 1978, cited in Srivastava (n.d.))”.

White (1974) identified three components of coping. First, the coping requires that a person should be able to gain and process new information. New information is needed to understand a difficult situation more fully or to establish, a new position in the face of threat. Second, coping requires that the person should be able to maintain
control over his or her emotional state. Third, coping requires that person should be able to move freely in his or her environment.

Pinkerton et al. (1985) defined coping as the minimization of emotional distress.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as “the process of managing demands (external or internal) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person”.

Maddi and Kobassa (1984) discussed two forms of coping (1) Transformational coping in which alteration of events are done, so that they become less stressful. For performing this, one needs to interact with those events optimistically by taking decisions in such a way so as to minimize their effect. (2) Regressive approach to coping includes a strategy wherein pessimistic views of the situations are made by an individual and efforts are made to avoid such situations.

Houston (1986) defined coping as a response or responses where purpose is to reduce or avoid psychological stress (negative feelings).

4.3 COMPONENTS OF COPING

Mathery et al. (1986) defined coping as “any effort, healthy or unhealthy, conscious or unconscious, to prevent, eliminate, or weaken stressors, or to tolerate their effects in the least hurtful manner.”

The stressors are fabricated by a person using his/her coping skills. As a result of effective coping, some of the potential stressors may get dissipated and not result in stressful situations (Igodan & Newcomb 1986).

Coping is a complex process having three main components (Naughton 1997) as follows:

A) Biological Component: When an individual encounters a threat or challenge, his/her body triggers two separate responses:

1) Message goes from the brain to adrenal medulla through the sympathetic nervous system to secrete catecholamine’s (epinephrine; nor epinephrine) to prepare for fight or flight response (Cannon 1929), increasing the blood
flow, and pulse rate, breathing rate, and sweat gland activity increase. Blood is shunted from extremities to larger muscles to prepare for fight or flight response, making hands and feet colder. Rational, creative, and problem-solving centers in the brain have reduced blood supply to pump extra blood to muscle activity increases, thinking becomes cloudy.

2) Hypothalamus is stimulated to produce and send Corticotrophin Releasing Factor (CRF) through the blood veins to the pituitary gland enabling it to release and send Adrenal Corticotrophin Hormone (ACH) to the adrenal cortex. Adrenal cortex then secretes cortisol hormone which signals to the concerned brain centers and body organs to cut down the whole cycle and restore normalcy. Cortisol is a very potent hormone. Its prolonged secretion is dangerous for musculoskeletal, digestive, and cardiovascular systems. If the stressor is sufficiently strong and continues for long, both catecholamine and cortisol get depleted. The organism does not have a chance for recovery and is pushed to the stage of exhaustion (Selye 1956).

B) Cognitive Component: This represents the mental process of appraising the situation by the individual. There are two stages of appraisal as follows (Glanz et al. 2002):

1) **Primary Appraisal:** This appraisal is done to evaluate the significance of the potential stressor (as relevant or irrelevant, controllable or uncontrollable, positive or negative, challenging or stressful) after which the potential stressor becomes a real stressor or it gets dissipated.

2) **Secondary Appraisal:** Secondary appraisal is done only if a potential stressor is not dissipated after the primary appraisal and is converted as a real stressor. Secondary appraisal is done to evaluate the whether the stressor is controllable or not and the individual concerned coping mechanisms. Coping resources include physical resources (state of health and level of energy), social resources (family, friends, and support network), psychological support (self-esteem of the person), and non-human support (adequate funds, equipments, and infrastructure). Secondary appraisal addresses what the person concerned can do about
handling the stressful situation and enables him/her to decide on options available to him or her for coping with stress. Individuals perceiving themselves in control will experience lesser stress as compared to those perceiving situations uncontrollable. From the cognitive perspective of coping, it is apparent that constructive thinking (Epstien & Meier 1989), optimism (Taylor 1991), high self-esteem, and high self-efficacy (Bandura 1982) would lead to lesser stress as compared to destructive thinking, pessimism, low self-esteem, and low self-efficacy respectively.

C) **Learned Component:** Learning from own or other’s experience, through education, training, experiential reinforcement or otherwise influences coping. This comprises learned helplessness, perceptions about stressors originating from cultural implications, and various stress management techniques, which include relaxation techniques (exercise, meditation, and, yogic breathing), cognitive restructuring (changing how we cognitively process a situation), behavior modification, and biofeedback. In parlance with computer terminology, a brain is similar to computer hardware and minds the cognitive and learned components. Brain and mind mutually influence each other. Both of them influence stress and coping. Both stress and coping influence brain and mind. Stress influences coping and coping influences stress. Stress and coping are also influenced by the personality characteristics (Bolger 1990), situational demands (Heim et al. 1993), and socio - physical characteristics. (Mechanic 1978).

**4.4 METHODS OF COPING**

Psychologists have found two important ways used by the people to deal with stress. First, in which a person decides to suffer or deny the stress experience (a passive approach). Second, when a person actually deals with the stressor and uses a negotiation approach; with other members to deal with it (an active approach). ‘Strategy adopted for coping with stress is known as coping strategy” (Taylor et al. 1998). It comprises behavioral and psychological efforts made by people to handle stressful events encountered by them and to minimize their harmful consequences. Coping strategies can be classified as follows:
4.4.1 **Cognitive Coping Strategies:** We can cope with a stressor or our emotion by problem solving, self talk and appraisal. Problem solving involves analyzing the situations to generate possible courses of action to evaluate the efficacy of the actions and to select an effective plan of action (Janis & Mann, 1976). Self talk refers to covert statements or thoughts that are used to direct our efforts at coping with the stressful event and its associated emotional arousal. Reappraisal involves reducing the impact of a stressful event by altering how that event is interpreted. In other words, the event is given a different meaning.

4.4.2 **Behavioral coping Strategies:** A person also responds to stress behaviorally. There are four general classes of behavioral responses to stress. Seeking information, direct action, and, inhibition action, and turning to others. Seeking information refers to gathering data on the type of stressor and related possible coping strategies. Direct action refers to overt verbal and motor responses that alter stressors or stress related emotional arousal. Turning to others is a social support. Our relationship with other persons provides an important resource in dealing with stress. We can gain material, emotional and informational support from others.

4.4.3 **Problem-Focused Coping Strategies (Del Mar College):** It aims at managing or changing a stressful situation by Confrontive Coping or Planful Problem-Solving. Confrontive Coping is a use of anger and rash behavior, involving dangerous act to deal with the stressful situation. Planful Problem-Solving comprises systematic analysis of the situation, identification of the most suitable solution, and careful implementation of the selected solution. Problem-focused coping strategies are used when problems are perceived as controllable (e.g., work or family-related problems) and not when problems are perceived to be uncontrollable (e.g., death or terminal illness of a close relative).

4.4.4 **Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies (Del Mar College):** It aims at regulating the psychological response to a potential stressor or stressful event for minimizing their harmful consequences by changing how the individual
concerned thinks about them. Such strategies are used for problems perceived as uncontrollable and not when they are perceived as controllable. Though comforting during short-run, these are harmful for a long run, leading to depression and anxiety, doing nothing to resolve problems, which compound and multiply. Emotion–focused coping has the following forms:

a) **Escape–Avoidance:** The individual concerned escapes from negative emotions by avoiding a potential stressor or stressful situation. Constructive way of escape-avoidance could be immersing oneself in one’s hobby, work or studies. Fantasizing, wishful-thinking, consuming drugs or alcohol are maladjusted forms of escape-avoidance.

According to Holahan & Moos (1986), “avoidance coping is a response to threatening situation when personal and contextual resources are scarce”. Also when severe stressors persist, individual may gradually lessen their use of problem solving coping and increase their reliance on avoidance strategies (Moos, 1992). In avoidance coping, a personality to reduce tensions by drinking more alcohol, eating more and taking tranquilizing drugs.

b) **Distancing:** The individual concerned tries to distance himself/herself from the potential stressor or stressful situation by discussing it in a dispassionate manner or by joking about it. Distancing minimizes the negative emotional impact on the potential stressor or stressful situation.

c) **Denial:** The individual concerned denies the very existence of problems resulting in stress.

d) **Adaptive Coping:** The individual concerned attempts to minimize the negative impact of a potential stressor or stressful situation while creating a positive meaning for himself / herself, focusing on personal achievement and growth. It needs realistic situational-evaluation, emotional balance, and tolerance for failure and negative life events, maintaining self- esteem, and preserving important relationships during stressful encounters.

(Source: http://www.delmar.edu/socsci/Faculty/Weir/chapter12.htm)
4.4.5 **Functional Coping Strategies** are positive strategies for managing stress as they provide lasting solutions for handling potential stressors or stressful situations, while promoting individual well being and effectiveness.

4.4.6 **Dysfunctional Coping Strategies** are negative strategies for managing stress as they provide only temporary relief from stressful encounters. In the long run they are harmful for the individual.

4.4.7 **Proactive Coping Strategies** are modern and forward-looking. Multi-dimensional in nature, they integrate managing quality of life with self-regulatory goal accomplishment (Greenglass 2001). Proactive coping strategy involves anticipating potential stressors and acting in advance to prevent them or to minimize their adverse influence. It eliminates a great deal of stress before it occurs. It also prepares individuals in advance to face the stress when it occurs. Proactive coping strategy is generally the result of perceiving the internal or external demands as challenging opportunities.

4.4.8 **Reactive Coping Strategies** are traditional coping strategies, dealing with stress after it has occurred. They are aimed at minimizing the harm and loss created by stress. Reactive coping strategy is generally the result of perceiving the internal or external demands as threatening.

Thus an individual who is experiencing stress does something to deal with this and what is done to deal is referred to as coping. Several coping strategies are there and there is no agreement who will choose which coping strategy (cognitive, behavioral or avoidance). A person may use a mixture of several coping strategies.

4.5 **EFFECTS OF COPING**

Coping can have an effect and its three kinds of outcome can be - psychological, social, and physiological.

From a **psychological perspective**, coping can have an effect on the psychological reactions, e.g., strain, anxiety, non-positive aspects of life and converting these
aspects into positive side, etc., (Bradburn 1969), the positive effects on psychological disorders on performance.

From a **social perspective**, an effect of coping can be measured by using social support such as employment, social commitments and involvement, promotions at social level, helping others, the desire to have improved relations outside work etc. (Renne 1974)

From a **physiological perspective**, the effects of coping manifest the positive outcome of overcoming various types of biological disease and thereby, improving ones health.

### 4.6 STRESS COPING MECHANISMS

Each individual needs a moderate amount of stress to be alert and capable of functioning. The consequences of stress are multifaceted, most of them are interdependent i.e., an outcome of psychological effects due to stress situations may develop in the form of physiological problems, and this in turn, may affect individuals behavior at home and at workplace, thus, organization suffers from these bad effects of stress, that could be more dangerous. Many researchers sought to find what could be done to counteract stress so as to prevent its negative outcomes. Normally, coping is known as a response that intends to reduce the factors that cause stress or to modify the behavioral reaction of an individual towards stressful circumstances in a beneficial way.

Stress does not have to be viewed as a bad thing, for there is only one kind of person without conflicts—a dead one. However, too much stress is harmful and measures should be taken to tackle it with the hope of eventually reducing it (Wood Men and Hellriegel 2001). Many strategies have been developed to help manage stress in the work place.

Individual and organizational factors are the reasons for stress and the consequences may found to be negative at both individual and organizational levels. On this basis, stress management mechanisms have been identified as under:

i) Individual stress coping mechanisms; and

ii) Organizational stress coping mechanisms.
4.6.1 Individual Stress Coping Mechanisms

The variety of ways of preventing, diverting, or controlling stress is probably as great as the variety of stressors and such measures and techniques may be directed at any one or more of the three factors in the stress situation: stressors, context, vulnerability. Individual stress management includes a training to be given through education and employee assistance programs to deal with the stress. In such programs workers are taught about nature and sources of stress, its effects, and the use of personal skills to help them reduce and manage their stress. Coping ways are adopted by individuals to reduce stress continually in order to be in a free state of mind always. Pareek (1993) has “distinguished between effective and ineffective coping strategies; effective coping strategies are approach strategies, which confront the problem of stress as a challenge and increase the capability of dealing with it by including efforts to increase physical and mental preparedness for coping through physical exercises, yoga and meditation”.

The various individual stress management mechanisms are:

1. **Time Management:** If an individual inadequately and improperly utilizes the time, it causes anxiety. If one follows a proper time scheduling as mentioned below, it is easy to overcome and reduce stress.

   - Make a list of daily activities;
   - On the basis of the urgency and importance of the task, arrange the activities;
   - A logical schedule of activities should be prepared;
   - Time allocation to various activities is to be done on the basis of the importance and time demands; and
   - Some minor task can be delegated to the subordinate for effective use of time.

2. **Physical Management:** Physical exercises are of great help in relieving tension and stress. Physical exercises include practice of deep breathing and relaxation skills that helps in diverting one’s mind from work stress and becomes a source
to “let off stream” (Keily and Hodgson, 1990). A physical exercise helps body to inhale oxygen in a right way, thereby, increasing blood flow to the entire body that helps in promoting a healthy secretion from body glands keeping body organs active. It increases the immunity of the individual to deal with the stress. Physical exercise includes walk, swimming exercises, dancing, lifting, and outdoor games, etc., that provides a body to deal with stressful situations.

3. **Psychological Management:**

It manages stress arising because of psychological tensions. To manage this type of stress, the following are the techniques that one can use are stated as follows:

- **Relaxation**- The relaxation of the mind can be done through meditation, hypnosis, biofeedback, Antigenic training, and progressive relaxation. Relaxation can be achieved in a variety of ways, like listening to music, going for walk, vocation, biofeedback or meditation. The purpose is to get that stage where there is a deep physical relaxation thereby detaching one from the stressful situations (Forbes & Pekala 1993). There is some research evidence that much meditation can have a desirable physical (Robert et al. 1972), mental (Terri 1972) impact on the people. A brief description of various relaxation techniques is given below:

  - **Transcendental Meditation:** The practice of Transcendental Meditation (TM) was introduced into the US in late 1960s by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, is a widely used form of meditation wherein a person sits comfortably relaxing all muscle groups concentrating on a single thought and repeating a special sound (a mantra) for 15-20 minutes. Research evidence proves that TM can reduce heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen consumption.

  - **Biofeedback:** Another technique used for muscle relaxation, monitoring devices is used to train an individual to relax by giving visual or auditory feedback; about the degrees to different muscle groups are relaxed.
Vipasana: It is now a very popular technique used worldwide by individuals as well as organizations to overcome stress by observing things as they are in reality, use as a remedial measure for illness.

Progressive Relaxation: A method of physical relaxation focused on the major muscle groups. People learn to systematically tense and relax muscle groups sequentially. Require a quiet place, low lighting, and comfortable position.

- **Behavioral Self Control-** It means control over one’s behavior through self introspection, correct perception, being a good listener, having a creative attitude, self control, and developing an attitude to have a peace of mind through positive feelings and thoughts. Behavioral approaches include scientific investigation of the interaction of organisms with the social environment. The behavior of living organism is altered as a function of what happens following a response.

- **Cognitive Approach-** A positive technique which helps an individual to exercise self control over the factors that is responsible for causing stress. Cognitive approaches regulate human action. The instructions in such cases are external stimuli that regulate verbal and non verbal behavior. With the help of self observations, individuals come to know about the stress causing factors creating anxiety and strain. This approach can be used to prevent the effects of stress in several situations. For example, depressed patients can be helped by cognitive therapy. Positive thinking and mental purgation of course for normal’s can have the positive effects on their spiritual and emotional health.

- **Yoga Learning-** This is one of the most effective technique in relieving stress involving number of yogasanas that relaxes muscles, reduces blood pressure, controls asthma, regulate blood supply in a body, thus, providing ease from strenuous conditions. Studies have revealed that Yoga has cured or helped control several stress related diseases – reducing blood pressure, controlling asthma and neuroticism (Ivanicavich et al. 1990).
• **Social Approach**- Research also supports that having friends, family, or work colleagues to hear problems can help better cope with tension. This increases social support to individuals. The various such ways in which social support can be increased and stress can be reduced are social gatherings, friend’s party clubs, and use of social networking sites to make friends and do chatting, community connections and formal gatherings.

• **Self Awareness Approach**- It is a way to know oneself in which one gets to know about his/ her own deficiencies. It involves identification, understanding, and analyzing one’s own skills, strengths and weaknesses and try getting response in the form of feedback from others on their work. One should monitor immediate feelings in problem situations, especially in those involving possible interpersonal conflict. Individuals can learn and create self management programs to create skills and increase their capacities to overcome limitations.

• **Inter Personal Management Approach**- This mechanism reflects on improving the interpersonal relationships at workplace by having the knowledge of others behavior so that one can avoid or understand all sorts of problems relating to misunderstanding, workplace politics, etc. The techniques that help to develop and improve such interpersonal relationships are Transactional Analysis, Johari Window, and Grid techniques.

• **Doing something different at different speed**: Pestonjee (1992) has referred to this as “Changing Gear”. If a person has had a heavy workload, he should take a day or two off and do something entirely different from his work.

### 4.6.2 Organizational Stress Coping Mechanisms

Each individual needs a moderate amount of stress to be alert and capable of functioning. Most of the stress in the organisation is caused by the climate and strategies of the organization. The coping mechanisms and regulatory measures are the tactical means for dealing with the stress; they may be implemented as needed for
the short term relief of occasional undue stress. If one is seriously interested in managing one’s own stress levels so as to enjoy maximum benefits of eustress while reducing to a minimum the adverse effects of distress, a more comprehensive approach, a long term strategy may be required.

At organisational levels, stress levels of employees can be reduced by actually, giving them the job as per their capabilities and skills. A total removal of stress is impossible at workplace, rather, certain amount of stress is desired to be active and work properly. Enthusiasm is very much required in life, whether at home or workplace, to be fit and for leading a good life, and also to develop a happy atmosphere all over, thereby, reducing stress. Stress levels should be reduced to a particular level of patience of an individual and should not be fully eliminated. The following stress coping mechanisms can be adopted by the organisation:

1. **Selection and Placement**- The job of the individual must match with his /her personality characteristics otherwise; it will be a major cause of stress. For this, proper individual selection and placement is required.

2. **Goal Achievements**- If goals are not set clearly in the organisation, then challenging and unattainable goals causes stress in individuals. To eliminate stress arising out of this, organisation can involve employees in setting targets through participation, thus, motivating them and reducing their frustration and lack of clarity of goals. The technique of Management by Objectives (MBO) can be used for goal setting.

3. **Unambiguous Role**-If roles are not clear to individuals in the organisation, then role stress increases that may be in the form of role ambiguity, role overload, and role conflicts. To reduce role stress, role should be defined clearly by the organisation that helps in reducing the chance of role conflict. Guiding, negotiating, and sharing can be used to avoid stress.

4. **Communication and Counselling**-Formal communication in organisation is a cause of number of problems related to inter-personal misunderstandings leading to stress. Various methods such as building a communication path, etc., can be used to deal with the stress. The client gets an opportunity to deal with
his own problems creatively and to look for solutions himself. Support and
guidance from professionals like psychiatric social workers and psychologists is
necessary. One way in which firms can give managers the opportunity to spot
stress in their staff is the organisation of once or twice yearly ‘appraisal and
counselling sessions’. Such sessions enable and should provide an opportunity
for the employee to raise problems without having to take the initiative to
approach his senior colleague. The employee under stress must be tactfully
encouraged to admit his problem and accept help. In general, such counselling
should be non directive, and consist of patient and sympathetic listening rather
than the provision of slick answers.

5. **Career Planning and Guidance**- Organisation must aim at employee career
guidance and development. If one gets overburdened, it should be possible to
turn to an easier, but nevertheless satisfying job, in which one’s knowledge and
experience is of special value. A company policy can be made to keep
employees for a shorter period in specialist jobs than we do now, and to reserve
a number of those specialist jobs for our older employees. This means that in
specialist functions the ‘practical experience in a management function’ element
may be brought in more strongly, while management positions in the line
organisation will be occupied by more vital, younger subordinates and with the
technical and social developments taking place in the line departments. Efforts
should be made by the organisation to develop career programs, education, and
development programs.

6. **Organisational Structure and Climate**- If organisational climate is not good,
e.g., bureaucratic, autocratic, authoritative, and ambiguous administration, it
will lead to high stress levels. One can think of altering the organisation’s formal
structure by making it less bureaucratic by ‘flattening’ the organisation in order
to shorten the chain of information or by integrating various departments in
order to facilitate the smooth functioning at workplace.

7. **Welfare Programs**- Wellness programmes are activities that organizations
sponsored to promote good health (Gebhart & Crump 1990). There are three
main types of wellness programmes (Robert & Harris 1999; Jeffrey 1986). The
first are programmes aimed at raising awareness and providing information. The second type of wellness programme involves employees in ongoing efforts to modify their lifestyles. The third type of wellness programme has as its goal the creation of an environment that will help employees maintain the healthy lifestyle developed in the other programme. These programs are directed towards employee’s physical and mental conditions. Such program aims at developing a positive attitude in employees towards life.

8. **Management of Functioning**- Being prepared to look continuously for indication of employee’s dysfunctioning enables us to take action at an early stage. Building up a clear picture of how someone typically fulfils his or her job of his or her capabilities and incapabilities, gives us a chance to notice relatively minor deviations or crisis with more substantial impact. We may thus be prompted to discuss their functioning with employees and so work towards attacking problems and setting new goals. It might be a suggestion, if someone is exposed to stress, not to focus on what he still does, but on what he neglects. It is very probable that his problems are in this area.

Stress management is increasingly drawing attention of the management experts not only as a remedial measure but also as a way to resource management. If the workplace can be made little better, the increase in the achievement of the organisation may be many times more.

Pestonjee (1997) suggested a number of **proactive interventions** to reduce stress which an organisation can adopt.

1. **Undertaking Stress Audit**- A stress audit refers to the attempt organisation make to study, explore, and control the various types of stresses which an individual executives experience by virtue of their organizational membership (Pestonjee, 1992). A stress audit should include collection of data pertaining to organisational climate, role stress, job anxiety, etc.

Stress audit is a four-stage OD intervention designed to minimise and mitigate stresses in the organisation. At the first stage, data are generated on 'Stress Tolerance Limit (STL)' factors, as also organisational role stress factors. These
may be observational or through psychometric instruments. The second stage includes a study of interrelationships (through correlations, regressions, etc.) between the factors. At stage three, more data, especially qualitative data are obtained by interviews and other methods to get a first-hand feel of stresses and stress effects in the organisation. The final outcome, stage four, is to suggest to the organisation what type of remedial measures will help them overcome the stress effects.

2. **Routine Check With Company’s Doctors** - Doctors act as a valuable resource to their organisation members for coping with identified stresses. They also have valuable information about inter-personal and organizational conflicts. Murphy (1988) has suggested three different forms of stress management techniques which are stated as follows:

   a) **Employee Assistance Programme** – McLeod (1985) estimated that in USA, there are at least 800 companies offering this form of stress management techniques that basically involves employees counselling. It can enable employees to have an easy access to trained counsellors getting personal insight and practical solutions. Today, the most common form of EAP’s is counselling of mental health among employees with special emphasis on alcoholism and drug addiction.

   b) **Stress Management Training Programme** - This programme refers to training courses designed to provide employees with improved coping skills, including the Concept and System of training in techniques such as meditation, biofeedback, muscle relaxation, and stress inoculation (Newton, 1992). In a typical SMT, the employees are informed about the basics of stress. They are warned about the ill effects of stress, its physiological basis awes the relationship between stress and work. This training program helps organisations in developing and promoting workforces who are committed to being effective copers, the definition of which is directly related to their job performance.

   c) **Stress Reduction Intervention Programmes** - This program is denoted by interventions designed to change the level or form of job stressor
experienced by employees, usually through job design or work reform. Stress intervention refers to those organizational interventions, which are aimed at lowering the level of stressors experienced by the employees. These are listed below:

- Changing organizational structure;
- Changing job design; and
- Changing leadership practice.

Jackson (1983) was one of the first few to report stress reduction intervention in organizational literature.

Stress may become apparent in individuals either as change in their performance and habits, or as change in their health. These changes occur at first slowly and insidiously, but if the situation is left unaltered, deterioration into real and also severe physical and mental ill health can occur. The important principle, treatment is, therefore, that it should be early. A stress free life is not possible in today’s environment. All that we can manage is to reduce it to a reasonable level, even to the level where it can play a positive role rather than adversely affecting the health and well being of the individuals in the organisation. It is also practically difficult to change the structure of the organisation, its redesigning, and administrative reorientation in today’s changing environment. The best way to help anyone under stress is to give them the chance to talk about it. The functional and dysfunctional strategies to deal with stress are shown in the following table 4.1

Table 4.1 Functional and Dysfunctional Strategies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Stresses</th>
<th>Dysfunctional Strategies</th>
<th>Functional Strategies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-role distance</td>
<td>Role rejection, self rejection</td>
<td>Role integration</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Inter-role distance</td>
<td>Role partition, role elimination</td>
<td>Role negotiation</td>
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<td>3. Role stagnation</td>
<td>Role fixation</td>
<td>Role transition</td>
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<td>4. Role isolation</td>
<td>Role boundness</td>
<td>Role linkage</td>
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<td>5. Role expectation</td>
<td>Role prescription</td>
<td>Role clarification</td>
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<td>6. Role expectation conflict</td>
<td>Role taking</td>
<td>Role making</td>
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<td>7. Role overload</td>
<td>Role reduction</td>
<td>Role slimming</td>
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<td>8. Role erosion</td>
<td>Role visibility</td>
<td>Role development</td>
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<td>9. Resource inadequacy</td>
<td>Role atrophy</td>
<td>Resource generation</td>
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<td>10. Personal inadequacy</td>
<td>Role shrinkage</td>
<td>Role linkage</td>
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4.7 FRAMEWORK FOR MEASUREMENT OF COPING STRATEGIES

To find out the use of coping strategy on the basis of the observation of individual behavior in stressful situations, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) developed an instrument for measurement of coping strategy, called Ways of Coping, based on the new approach. They included 68 items in their instrument. Respondents were required to indicate against each item, whether they used it or not in their stressful encounters.

Ways of Coping Checklist

‘Ways of Coping’ was modified after factor analysis of 68 items on data collected from 750 observations. The new instrument called Ways of Coping Checklist (WCCL) (Folkman & Lazarus 1985; Folkman et al. 1986) employed 50 items signifying potentially dangerous stressful events. WCCL measures the following eight coping strategies on a four point Likert scale (zero signifying ‘not used’ and three signifying ‘used a great deal’).

1) **Confronting Coping:** Anger and other rash ways aimed at changing the stressful situation.

2) **Distancing:** Ways for disengaging oneself from the stressful situation.

3) **Self-Controlling:** Ways to control feelings of self.

4) **Seeking Social Support:** Ways to call for social and emotional support.

5) **Accepting Responsibility:** Accepting oneself as the problem creator for situation.

6) **Escape-Avoidance:** Wishful thinking.

7) **Planful Problem-Solving:** Systematic ways of solving and addressing for the problems causing stress.

8) **Positive Reappraisal:** Ways of developing a positive approach for a situation for the personal achievements.
CONCLUSION

There are many methods and approaches to coping and managing stress depending on the source activated and the interface between these sources and the individual. The aim was to provide background information on strategies used by the employees that were in the survey questionnaire. At the most management can identify the stress areas and formulate preventive stress management tactics. It is the individual employee that must develop his own coping strategy to combat stress. Stress is necessary positive force that adds anticipation and excitement to life. One cannot work effectively or ever maintain a good health and a sense of well being without a fair amount of stress; however, stress becomes a major problem when one is over stimulated or bombarded with too much work or too many disruptions. Thus, inefficient stress acts as a depressant and may leave simply ‘RUSTOUT’. On the other hand, greater stress levels may leave up feeling ‘tied up in knots’ or ‘BURNOUT’. The need is to have an optimal level of stress and maintain life and work styles to avoid ‘rusting out’ as well as ‘burning out’. Our goal should not be to eliminate stress but learn how to manage stress and use it to help us.