
BLOCK 3

TOWARDS STRESS AND TIME MANAGEMENT



UNIT 7 TIME-WASTERS AND TIME-SAVERS*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Time-wasters
- 7.3 Time-savers
- 7.4 Conclusion
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7.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of time-wasters and time-savers in life and work;
- Enumerate the kinds of time-wasters;
- Discuss the reason and remedies for procrastination;
- Highlight the useful steps for reducing time-wasters; and
- Describe the significant time-savers in life and work.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare's character King Richard II laments in his old age: "Oh, I wasted time, now doth time wastes me." Little wonder, one has to pay a heavy price for the wasted time. Time is the most precious commodity. It can buy anything, but nothing can buy it. Time is like an irreversible river, flowing incessantly and incapable of moving back. That is why there is no compensation for the wasted time. Hence, while investing time (or spending it), one must be highly cautious and careful. It is generally believed that those who respect time, time respects them, and those who disrespect time, time disrespects them.

7.2 TIME-WASTERS

Wasting time involves not using it appropriately and adequately, leading to its under-utilisation, un-utilisation or even wrong-utilisation. However, there can be no exact objective analysis of what a time waster is! A particular activity may be a time waster for someone, but not so for somebody else. Likewise, a particular action taken may be unproductive at a particular time, while it may be useful at some other time. A time-wasting activity – deliberate, imposed or borne in ignorance – can be dysfunctional, that is having negative consequences for the goal, in view. Since time is the most precious resource, for its wastage, individuals as well organisations have to pay a heavy price in terms of squandering away of financial resources, non-achievement of goals and targets, dissatisfaction of the beneficiaries of a project and lowering of discipline and decorum. In sum, time is considered to have been wasted when:

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- a) Its productivity is less than the usual standards.
- b) It has cost more than the set norms.
- c) Benefits accruing from a particular slice of time are less than anticipated.
- d) Satisfaction coming from it, is meagre and below expectation.
- e) It has an adverse consequence, resulting into loss, conflict or damage to goodwill of a person or organisation.

Time-wasters can be broadly classified into four categories:

- i) Personal controllable Time-wasters
- ii) Personal uncontrollable Time-wasters
- iii) Official controllable Time-wasters
- iv) Official uncontrollable Time-wasters

i) **PERSONAL CONTROLLABLE TIME-WASTERS**

These Time-wasters relate to personal habits, orientation, attitude and approach of people towards life and work. These can be controlled to a great extent, but there is generally a lack of will to do so. Sometimes, it is seen that some people waste time because there is no or low risk involved in doing so. One's family background, upbringing, education and experience influences the personal attitude of a person towards utilisation of time. Lack of a sense of responsibility, low accountability, weak supervision, absence of fear of punishment, affluence and a focus on one's own comforts and interests can create carelessness and a sense of irresponsibility towards work. Parental over-liberalism, pampering, over-indulgence, over-security, luxurious living, too much freedom, lack of discipline – one or all of these conditions can create a sense of casualness about time. When freedom and autonomy are misused without any fear of punishment, the consequences for life and time management are damaging.

What do we mean by the 'controllable' category? It implies that such Time-wasters can be controlled, avoided, mitigated and even eliminated through proper will, discipline, planning and action. Time-wasters in this category are generally man-made and therefore, can be minimised or overcome through human effort and resolution. But a person would mitigate her/his personal Time-wasters, only when there is high motivation to transform one's style of life management and time management. There should be either motivation for the best use of time or demotivation against using it carelessly. Transformation of one's approach to time management is a complex process and it is difficult to pinpoint the impact of a particular factor, situation or motivator on this process of change.

There are several Time-wasters that are caused by individual habits orientation and casualness. Broadly, the sources of such Time-wasters are as follows:

a) ***Poor Self-management***

When we do not manage our life thoughtfully and in a disciplined manner, wasting of time is a natural outcome. Lack of balance between physiological, mental, emotional, spiritual, familial, social and professional dimensions of life leads to gross time-wasting.

b) ***Flawed Habits***

Irregularity in waking up, sleeping, eating, relaxing and negative thinking cause wastage of time. Carelessness about health and hygiene cause gross wastage of time.

c) ***Unorganised Time-utilisation***

Unplanned day, absence of to-do list, not using time-intervals, not

maintaining a diary, ignoring deadlines for various tasks to be completed, not meeting deadlines in the completion of various tasks and procrastination cause wastage of time. Besides, long phone calls, social networking and over-entertainment are big Time-wasters

d) ***Inter-personal Behaviour***

Ego battles, misunderstanding, faulty communication, inattentive listening, desire to over-dominate family decisions, anger, jealousy, over-expectation, intolerance, impatience, over sensitivity, over-socialisation, lack of cooperation and coordination among family members and being unaware of others' feelings lead to avoidable Time-wasters.

e) ***Lack of Systems***

Unorganised purchases, poor inventory management, unsystematic accounting of expenses, misplacing things, belated payment of bills, fee and insurance premiums are among factors that cause wastage of time. Besides, old, unusable, unrepaired domestic utility services are bound to waste one's time.

ii) **PERSONAL UNCONTROLLABLE TIME-WASTERS**

There are Time-wasters that result from factors beyond our control. We feel helpless in such situations or can do very little about them. These factors include illness of family members, uncooperativeness of our relations, centralisation of decision-making with a particular person, sporadic conflicts, untimely visits of friends, power failures, traffic jams, accidents, resource-crunch, excessive social demands and unreliable domestic assistants.

iii) **CONTROLLABLE OFFICIAL TIME-WASTERS**

We generally complain about the slow functioning of organisations, particularly the government offices. Red-tapism has roots in lengthy procedures, but there are factors that cause time-wastages, but which can be controlled with personal will and skill.

a) ***Ambiguity about Goals and Priorities***

In an organisation, performing a number of activities, operations and objects, there is a requirement for clarity of goals, priority among tasks, and the strategies for implementing goals. Whenever any of these requirements remain unfulfilled, time is bound to be wasted. When priorities for tasks are not fixed, certain essential tasks are bound to be neglected, while low-value tasks gain importance.

b) ***Poor Work Culture***

Poor work culture involves lack of punctuality, low productivity in offices, avoidable, lengthy and indecisive meetings, low motivation for work, poor morale, inadequate delegation of tasks, insufficient monitoring and unsatisfactory performance appraisal. Such poor work culture can be improved with intelligent action.

c) ***Low Competence***

Untrained or poorly trained personnel in an organisation are bound to have a negative impact on its performance. Human resource management (including recruitment, placement, compensation, training and appraisal) is a key factor determining administrative effectiveness. Any indifference on this front is bound to waste time.

d) ***Lack of Planning***

When projects are initiated and implemented without planning, there is gross wastage of time. Every year, quarter, month, week and day requires rigorous planning for the entire organisation, its divisions and sections, groups and even individuals. When processes of plan implementation and evaluation get low weightage, time is bound to be wasted.

e) ***Systems and Procedure***

Ambiguous rules, procedures, ambiguity in communication, inefficient systems, conventional record-keeping, unnecessary paperwork, unproductive meetings, flawed space management, poor technology, unskilled information management, poor inventory control, cluttered desks and over-centralisation of authority are Time-wasters, but with effort, these can be controlled.

iv) **UNCONTROLLABLE OFFICIAL TIME-WASTERS**

Poor financial resources, shortage of space, understaffing, less experienced staff, multi-tasking, manpower shortage, overburdened workforce, poor salary-structure, low motivation, outdated infrastructure, rigid regulations, tardy procedures, power failure, decisional centralisation and archaic Management Information System are some of the uncontrollable official Time-wasters, which are generally noticed in a variety of organisations. However, with appropriate action, these can be moderated and even overcome.

A BRIEF CATALOGUE

It would be useful to have a glimpse of common Time-wasters as a check-list to evaluate our time management style.

i) ***PERSONAL CONTROLLABLE TIME-WASTERS***

- Late day-start
- Unplanned day: oversleeping/ excessive sleeping/ unorganised sleeping; no daily plan or to-do list
- Laziness
- Addiction to entertainment (TV, social networking, movies, light fiction)
- Visiting friends aimlessly; over-socialising
- High frequency of taking eatables, drinks, tea etc.
- Spending unduly long time on reading newspapers in the morning (except when reading them is a professional necessity)
- Unnecessary interference in others' affairs
- Being critical or irritable or angry as a matter of habit
- Gossiping
- Long phone calls
- Incomplete communication
- Poor hygiene habits and carelessness about health; avoiding regular exercise/ walking / yoga resulting in debility
- No regular medical check-up
- Frequent smoking and chewing tobacco, alcohol and over-intake of tea and coffee
- Avoiding relaxation at the right time; fatigue
- Brooding about the past

- Worrying about the future
- Excessive day-dreaming
- Postponement of crucial activities
- Not trusting others in task-assignments
- Fault-finding nature
- Not maintaining a diary
- Habit of playing cards, chess etc.
- Being oversensitive
- Not keeping things at proper places
- Being unnecessarily argumentative
- Lack of assertiveness and frankness: not telling others even when there is some urgent assignment for which you want to be excused
- Lack of decisional ability
- Ego battles
- Postponing the repair of domestic utilities
- Spending time: doing non-priority work
- No deadlines for various major tasks
- Starting new projects without completing the old ones
- Not being a good listener
- Absent-mindedness
- Doing work in fits and starts
- Attempting too much at one time
- Personal disorganisation: lack of self- discipline.

ii) ***UNCONTROLLABLE PERSONAL TIME-WASTERS***

- Power failure
- Waiting inordinately for guests on special occasions
- Unsatisfactory performance of household staff/ assistants
- Carelessness of family members about their health and hygiene
- Over-demanding family members
- Unscheduled visitors: guest who overstay
- Traffic jams
- Accidents

iii) ***CONTROLLABLE OFFICIAL TIME-WASTERS***

- No daily plan
- Lack of clarity about goals: no written goals
- Unplanned operations
- Incomplete communication
- Low level of technical competence or job knowledge: Inadequate training
- Wrong persons on jobs; defective placement policy
- Unbalanced distribution of work
- Unscheduled visitors

- Not saying “no” when it ought to be said
- Forgetting to save data on computer; improper keeping of documents and files
- Late coming to office
- Poor attitude towards job: lack of interest in it
- Complaining attitude towards the boss, the peer group and the subordinates
- Visiting people in office or outside without proper appointment or at wrong time
- Trying to be an ultra-perfectionist; over-attention to details
- Slowing down the pace of work in case the deadline is distant
- No regular and periodical appraisal of the work performed
- Indecisiveness
- Avoidable argumentativeness, ego-clashes
- Empire-building, lack of coordination
- Making silly mistakes for lack of concentration and correcting them again and again
- Spending time doing non-priority work
- Relying on mental notes of proceedings
- Delaying distasteful tasks
- No provision for ‘quiet hour’
- Not having facts, telephone numbers and reference, dictionaries etc., at hand
- Not using time saving gadgets
- No self-imposed deadlines
- Leaving tasks unfinished and resuming them afresh
- No follow-up system
- Inattentive listening
- Time-consuming rules and procedures
- Too many reports
- Countless committees
- Poor writing skills
- Lack of job specifications/ job charts
- Attempting too many jobs at one time
- Chasing subordinates for follow-up
- Excessive paperwork.

iv) ***UNCONTROLLABLE OFFICIAL TIME-WASTERS***

- Manpower shortage
- Machinery breakdown: breakdown of computer, printer, scanner, etc.
- Power failure
- Poor record-management and filing
- Office politics
- Frequent, long and unorganised meetings

- Centralisation in office: inadequate delegation
- Ineffective control mechanism
- Lack of proper coordinative mechanism
- Job insecurity
- Lack of incentives and motivation in one's job
- Poor inventory control
- Overcrowded work place
- Unrealistic targets imposed from above
- Cluttered desk, overflowing drawers
- Untrained subordinates
- Unhelpful staff
- Unpunctuality of the staff: Absenteeism
- Over-engagement with routine work at the cost of important tasks
- Lack of information for making decisions or solving problems
- Lack of a proper infrastructure
- Lack of coordination and team spirit in the organisation
- Resource constraint
- Lack of synchronisation between authority and responsibility
- Poor work culture at work place
- Low stress on punctuality
- Low staff morale and motivation
- Lack of feedback on project implementation
- Violating the principle of unity of command: conflicting instructions
- Belated response received on files referred to the legal finance and HR departments.

PROCRASTINATION

Perhaps the most common time waster around the world, and more particularly in developing countries, is procrastination, which means postponing any action that should be done now or soon. In other words, it implies delaying action or keeps on putting off. According to Merrill E. Douglas and Larry B. Baker of the US Time Management Centre, procrastination is:

- Doing low-priority tasks rather than higher priority ones.
- Straightening your desk, when you should be working on an important and crucial project report.
- Spending time with a friendly customer who buys little instead of preparing a presentation for more potential but tough customer.
- Postponing the time you know you should spend with your family.

Procrastination is the thief of time and can destroy career, happiness and even lives. Some of the causes of procrastination are as follows:

- **Natural laziness:** taking life casually and squandering away time.
- **Incompetence or inexperience** in handling a task, doing things randomly and without adequate knowledge.

- **Unpleasant tasks:** tasks that one dislikes to perform.
- **Cluttering of routine activities:** engaging excessively in performing low-value activities at the cost of higher value action.
- **Lack of will power:** timely, uncertainty and lack of courage to do a particular thing.
- **Fear of the unknown:** entering a new area of activity without having adequate knowledge or experience about its nature, strategies and likely impact.
- **Fear of failure:** lack of confidence about success in the activity undertaken.
- **Bad habits:** habits that cause harm to an organisation, family or to one's personality.
- **Waiting for more information:** inadequate understanding about a particular project and its intricacies are likely to lead to failure.
- **One may think that someone else will do a particular task:** Assumption that one is not really needed for a particular project or activity and that anyone else can do it.
- **Excuses:** giving hollow arguments about shortage of financial resources, personal competence, lack of manpower etc.
- **Lack of motivation:** low motivation and enthusiasm to initiate a work on a particular enterprise.

REMEDIES

In a well-known book, *Eat That Frog!*, eminent management expert, Brian Tracy suggests 21 practical ways to stop procrastinating and get more work done in less time. Briefly these suggestions are as follows:

- Have clear goals, write them down, set deadlines and sub-deadlines for achieving them, make a plan of action, and do something every day that takes you nearer your goals.
- Plan every day in advance: The 10/90 Rule prescribes that 10 percent of time for any project should be spent on planning and 90 percent on executing it.
- Tackle the more important and difficult tasks first: apply the 80/20 rule to everything.
- Things that matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least.
- We may procrastinate on performing low-priority activities. This is called 'creative, procrastination'.
- Take action according to the priority of things to be done.
- Focus on Key Result Areas (KRAs) or crucial segments of planned operation.
- Focus on three most important activities in each action area: the selection of these three areas will depend on you.
- Prepare thoroughly before you begin.
- Take one step at a time.
- Upgrade your skills that are pertinent to the particular project at hand.
- Continuously upgrade your talents.
- Identify your important weaknesses and limitations and overcome them one by one.
- Put pressure on yourself to achieve the targets.

- Maximise your personal powers (remain healthy and energetic).
- Motivate yourself into action.
- Gradually, learn and use modern technology for improving work-performance.
- Break your tasks into parts.
- Use time planner and make every minute count.
- Develop a sense of urgency in performing a task.
- Discipline yourself to working non-stop on a single go.

REMEDIAL STEPS TO MINIMISE TIME-WASTERS

Although certain units on time management deal with a series of steps that can help in better utilisation of time, a few suggestions minimising Time-wasters may be given in a gist form, which is as under:

- Periodical review of time-management practices in personal and professional life is a requisite to curtailing Time-wasters.
- We should make a list of the positive aspects of time management practices followed by us. This would motivate us to become better time managers.
- Likewise, a list of time management practices that require reform should be drawn. This would give warning signals for introducing reforms.
- In personal life, optimum stress should be placed on self-management, self-discipline and on leading a well-balanced life.
- Families should set example of mutual cooperation, coordination and support.
- Constant emphasis on competence building among all members of the family and workplace should be an integral part of our behaviour. Training is a pre-requisite to better management.
- Habits in personal life and professional career, ought to be effective and uplifting.
- Rules, procedures, guidelines, communication channels, delegation and monitoring systems, appraisal, rewards and punishment system at workplace should be in tune with the requirements of highest effectiveness.
- Motivation is the key to enthusiasm, organisational loyalty, and positive work culture. Motivation should be extrinsic as well as intrinsic. Self-motivated individuals are the kingpins of any dynamic system.
- Managerial aspects of organisations (Human Resource Management, financial, inventory, production, operational) should be upscaled continuously.
- Clarity in goal-setting, planning, time scheduling and preparing to-do list can greatly help in minimising Time-wasters.
- Time and work studies can facilitate rational work distribution and reduce time wastage.
- Fixing deadlines are catalysts to work-accomplishment. Procrastination must be overcome; and decisions should be prompt and their execution expeditious.
- Work culture in an organisation ought to be inspiring; the personnel should love their work and be devoted to it.
- There should be a climate of pleasantness at home and workplace. We need happy families and happy organisations.

Let us now move to the theme of time-savers.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) What are the official Time-wasters?

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- 2) “Procrastination is a thief of time and can destroy career, happiness and even lives”. Examine the statement and suggest remedies to stop procrastination.

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7.3 TIME-SAVERS

There is a common saying “Money saved is money earned”. Is it possible to apply this idea to time and say, “Time saved is time earned”? To an extent, it is possible. There are 24 hours in a day for everyone. That way, God is a socialist. However, we can ‘earn’ extra time by saving it from being wasted and by making its best use. Thus a person who wastes his time, notionally, s/he might have a day of 20 hours while a person who is very rational about time management, might have a day of 28 hours. In other words, one can have a less productive day or a more productive day depending on the way one uses time—carelessly or carefully. But, yes, it is possible to save time with wisdom and well-designed strategies.

VARIOUS MODES OF SAVING TIME

By using the maxim, of time management explained in Unit 2, time can be used optimally and even ‘maximally.’ Nevertheless, a few suggestions in this respect need to be highlighted briefly:

- i) Planning the tasks to be performed and goals to be achieved for long-term, medium-term and short-term saves time. ‘Plan your work and work your plan’ is a sound maxim. Five-year, two-year and one-year plans can be supplemented by monthly and weekly plans. And at the top is the daily to-do list, which helps in organising a day prudently.
- ii) Having focus on one task at one time helps in getting the best results. ‘One thing at a time and that done well is a very good rule that many can tell’ is a wise principle to follow. Even in a situation of multi-tasking at one particular slice of time, one can concentrate only on one task. With focus and concentration, the quantum as well as the quality of work will improve.
- iii) Delegate tasks to the right people and monitor the work done by the delegates. A leader should not overburden herself/himself, s/he should be engaged in most crucial work and develop a team of skilled and dedicated workers whose work s/he should oversee intelligently.

- iv) The best time of the day should be reserved for the most important and crucial tasks. By studying one's own work rhythm and that of the work place, picking up right work at the right time becomes possible.
- v) Cleaning the clutter helps in performing tasks quickly. Table drawers should be neat and clean with only the most essential things therein. Likewise, the work-table should be spick and span with only the most essential items placed on it. Moreover, unnecessary and out-dated papers and files should be weeded out.
- vi) Use of appropriate technology helps to save time. Paper and pen type planners of time are useful; however, of late, enormous technological devices have come up to help in the process of time management. A few of such devices are as under:

a) ***Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Annual Planners***

These are mostly paper and pen type, pre-printed formats offered by many office stationery brands and companies these days. The most common ones have a tabular layout with time slots/ days/weeks/ months across the captions and days as stubs. Electronic versions of same are also found in the electronic diaries, multi-media cell phones and other digital organisers. These planners help to record appointments, deadlines and other important items in time charts.

Visual day planner is an easy to use printable calendar planner that provides a quick and easy way to schedule appointments, meetings, occasions, and holidays.

Set your planner as your Desktop Wallpaper, so you can always see what event is coming up, what appointments are scheduled today or tomorrow, and you don't even have to run the programme! Set the wallpaper timer to update your planner as the desktop wallpaper at fixed intervals. For instance, update it every one-hour.

b) ***Handheld PDAs/ Cell Phones***

Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) are handheld devices that were originally designed as personal organisers, but became much more versatile over the years. The many uses and tasks of a basic PDA include many features: calculating, use as a clock and calendar, playing computer games, accessing the internet, sending and receiving e-mails, use as a radio or stereo, video recording, recording notes, use as an address book, and use as a spread-sheet. Newer PDAs also have both colour screens and audio capabilities, enabling them to be used as mobile phones (smartphone), web browsers or media players. Many PDAs can access the internet, intranets or extranets via Wi-Fi, or Wireless Wide-Area Networks (WWAN). One of the most significant PDA characteristic is the presence of a touch screen.

c) ***Personal Information Manager***

Used on a desktop computer or PDA Personal Information Manager (PIM) software is a programme that enables you to take the daily stream of information that comes across your desk and organise it in a manner that suits your personal style, e.g., appointments, weekly meeting reminders, to-do lists, etc. The PIM software programmes are designed to run on computers or PDAs that help you keep track of addresses, appointments, phone numbers and notes to yourself. The basics of a good PIM are a calendar, address book and scheduler. New

PIMs integrate with e-mail and office suite software, and also include Web access. Two most commonly used PIM softwares are Microsoft Outlook and Lotus Organiser.

d) ***TABLET PCs***

A Tablet PC is a notebook or slate-shaped mobile computer. Its touchscreen or digitising tablet technology allows the user to operate the computer with a stylus or digital pen instead of a keyboard or mouse. The form factor offers a more mobile and productive way to interact with a computer. Tablet PCs are often used where normal notebooks are impractical or unwieldy or do not provide the needed functionality.

One should not be afraid to learn new Technology. Constant practice helps in making one adept in certain innovative skills. Focus on one source helps more than depending on multiple sources.

- e) Modern techniques like Total Quality Management, 5-S and Six-Sigma augment efficiency and promote the quality of products and services.
- f) Clear and creative thinking, including the lateral thinking of eminent scholar, Edward de Bono can help in deciding correctly and swiftly. New solutions emerge to old problems before us and these help in saving time.
- g) Skills like speed reading, precise writing, and memory-sharpening can help in better comprehension, communication and more rational decision-making.
- h) Prioritising the tasks to be done facilitates a focus on important as well as urgent assignments. The 'urgency' syndrome should give way to the 'significance' syndrome meaning that more important tasks should be handled prior to the less important thought apparently urgent.
- i) Time auditing helps in evaluating the way we have used time in a particular week or month. Thus, the less important tasks gradually get de-emphasised.
- j) Good habits surely help in saving time. Bad habits in personal and professional life automatically exist from our system when we try to 'embrace' effective habits.
- k) 'Selective' procrastination is a useful time-saver. It involves postponing the low-priority tasks until they vanish or gain high priority.
- l) Use 80/20 rule, which states that 20 percent of our tasks account for 80 percent of results. High pay-off tasks should be given higher priority in our scheme of time management.
- m) Grouping the tasks or disposing off similar tasks in batches saves time. One is able to avoid redundancy and duplication.
- n) Proper use of 'conventional' time-savers like diaries (including electronic diaries), e-mails, scanners, and the various apps in a smart phone can save enormous time.
- o) Planning continues to be the most important time-saver. Effective plan-formulation, plan-implementation and plan-evaluation can help save time and reduce Time-wasters. The 10/90 principle demands that ten percent or functioning office time should be used for planning, while the rest should be used for its proper implementation.

- p) E-Governance has become the greatest tool for effective and efficient governance. Its vast scope and deep impact has already transformed the governance system throughout the world.
- q) Digitalisation in administration has brought about a qualitative change in the governance system. The Digital India mission has brought a revolutionary change in the citizen-centric administrative system. For instance, Jan Dhan Yojana , the DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) and NEFT (National Electronic Funds Transfer) have not only made financial transactions prompt but have also given a push to ethical governance.
- r) E-Office is the most recent and most feasible time-saver in the government systems, particularly in the Government of India. Its essential features and benefits are as follows:

E-Office

The e-Office aims to support Governance by ushering in more effective and transparent inter and Intra-Government processes. The vision of e-Office is to achieve a simplified, responsive, effective and transparent working of all Government Offices. The Open Architecture on which e-Office has been built, makes it a reusable framework and a standard reusable product amenable to replication across the Governments at the Central, State and District levels. The product brings together the independent functions and systems under a single framework.

Benefits of e-Office

- Enhance transparency – files can be tracked, and their status is known to all at all times.
- Increase accountability – the responsibility of quality and speed of decision- making is easier to monitor.
- Assure data security and data integrity.
- Provide a platform for re-inventing and re-engineering the Government.
- Promote innovation by releasing staff energy and time from unproductive procedures.
- Transform the Government work culture and ethics.
- Promote greater collaboration in the workplace and effective knowledge management.

Features of e-Office

- *eFile*
- *Knowledge Management System*
- *CAMS*
- *eLeave*
- *eTour*
- *SPARROW*
- *PIMS*

For more information, please visit: <https://eoffice.gov.in/>

Above are only a few examples of significant time-savers. One can add to their number with wisdom and experience.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) Explain the various modes of saving time.

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2) Highlight the benefits and features of e-Office.

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7.4 CONCLUSION

It is evident that time is the most precious commodity. It can buy anything, but nothing can buy it. That is why there is no compensation for the wasted time. Hence, while investing time (or spending it), one must be highly cautious and careful. It is generally believed that those who respect time, time respects them, and those who disrespect time, time disrespects them. In this Unit, we have explained the meaning of time-wasters and time-savers in life and work, kinds of time-wasters, reasons and remedies for procrastination, useful steps for reducing time-wasters, and significant time-savers in life and work. We have reached to the conclusion that as time is the most precious commodity, therefore time management is necessary for success and happiness in personal and professional life.

7.5 GLOSSARY

- **Six Sigma:** It refers to a set of management techniques intended to improve business processes by reducing the probability that an error or defect will occur.

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7.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Controllable Official Time-wasters; and
 - Uncontrollable Official Time-wasters.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 7.2 for your answer

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 7.3 for your answer
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - For more details, refer to Section 7.3 [vi (r)]



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UNIT 8 STRESS MANAGEMENT: APPROACHES AND TECHNIQUES*

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Approaches to Examine Stress Management Interventions and Techniques
- 8.3 The Preventive Stress Management Model
- 8.4 Stress Audit
- 8.5 Preventive Stress Management Techniques for Individuals
 - 8.5.1 Stress Management Techniques at the Primary Stage
 - 8.5.2 Stress Management Techniques at the Secondary Stage
 - 8.5.3 Stress Management Techniques at the Tertiary Stage
- 8.6 Preventive Stress Management Techniques for Organisations
 - 8.6.1 Stress Management Techniques at the Primary Stage
 - 8.6.2 Stress Management Techniques at the Secondary Stage
 - 8.6.3 Stress Management Techniques at the Tertiary Stage
- 8.7 Conclusion
- 8.8 Glossary
- 8.9 References
- 8.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the nature and importance of stress management;
- Describe the approaches to examine stress management interventions and techniques;
- Highlight the preventive stress management model;
- Examine the components of stress audit; and
- Discuss the primary, secondary and tertiary stress management techniques for individuals and organisations.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Rising work demands and the pressure to accomplish better outcomes have become an important part of work life today, leading to stress. The adverse consequences of stress not only affect employees, but the general functioning of organisations as well. Consequently, effective stress management has become an indispensable part of achieving success in our work life and living a healthy and harmonious life.

Stress management can be defined as any activity, technique or intervention that an organisation applies to eliminate and/or reduce stressors and assist employees to manage stress (Ivancevich et al., 1990). The understanding of stress management

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itself covers the following: (a) eliminating/reducing stressors; (b) decreasing the intensity of stressors; and (c) helping employees to overcome problems caused by stress (Grawitch & Erb, 2015).

There are several advantages of stress management for the organisation such as focused employees, a community feeling and trust in the workplace, superior interpersonal relationships, fewer employee absenteeism and healthier communication between employees from diverse organisational units (Stranks, 2005). Besides, stress management techniques have also been found to reduce employee health care expenses and an increase in productivity (Mills, Kessler, Cooper & Sullivan, 2007).

8.2 APPROACHES TO EXAMINE STRESS MANAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS AND TECHNIQUES

The techniques and /or interventions applied to manage workplace stress can be considered from various perspectives. In this unit, two approaches will be discussed to examine stress management interventions and techniques.

One standpoint classifies interventions according to the 'focus' of stress management and the application of these actions to the preventive stress management framework. The 'focus' of stress management, interventions are categorised as primary, secondary or tertiary. The aim of primary interventions is to prevent stress from occurring by removing the sources of stress and enhancing the causes of well-being. Secondary interventions are required to reduce the severity or duration of stress after it has occurred to prevent the stress level from becoming taxing to the individual. Tertiary interventions seek to rehabilitate and maximise functioning for those who are already experiencing or suffering from psychological ill-health (Holman et al., 2018).

Another viewpoint refers to the 'level' at which the intervention takes place, the individual level or organisational level (Frank & Cooper, 1987; Jonge & Dollard, 2002). The individual-level interventions give emphasis to help employees to develop skills to manage stress, while organisational-level interventions pertain to systemic modifications to organisational practices affecting all employees or any specific group (Holman et al., 2018).

Thus, categorising stress management interventions (SMI) according to their focus as well as level implies that both individual and organisational-level interventions can be primary, secondary and tertiary in nature and different techniques can be used in each of these stages to manage stress. In the various sections of this unit, we will be discussing the different types of stress management techniques according to this classification.

Since the focus of all interventions refers to the application of the various techniques to the preventive stress management framework, we now briefly examine the preventive stress management model in the ensuing section.

8.3 THE PREVENTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT MODEL

The concept of Preventive Stress Management in the organisational context has been borrowed from the public health perceptions of prevention, employed in the field of preventive medicine. The Preventive Stress Management (PSM) is an organisational philosophy about employees and organisations sharing

accountability for promoting individual and organisational health. It has been described as a set of principles that employs explicit methods for promoting individual and organisational health while preventing individual and organisational distress (Quick et al., 1997). Preventive Stress Management fosters the health of organisations and their employees, leading to higher firm performance (Hargrove et al., 2011). As stress influences both the organisation as well its members, an effective preventive stress management strategy evaluates the stressors affecting both the individual members of an organisation as well as the organisation as a whole. This prevention approach comprises of three stages: primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention (Quick et al., 1997). A framework for understanding preventive stress management is presented in Table 8.1, which includes the three stages of prevention in the individual and organisational context, and the various techniques used in each of the stages.

Table 8.1: A Typology of Preventive Stress Management Interventions and Techniques

Type of Intervention	Individual Stress Management Techniques	Organisational Stress Management Techniques
Primary Prevention	Positive Thinking	Job Redesign
	Learned Optimism	Goal Setting
	Time Management	Role Negotiation
	Leisure Time Pursuits	Selection, Placement and Mentoring
		Improving Organisational Communication
Secondary Prevention	Physical Exercise	Team Building
	Relaxation Training/ Meditation	Social Support at Work
	Diet	
	Perceived Spiritual Support	
Tertiary Prevention	Opening up	Employee Assistance Programme
	Professional Help - Counselling and Therapy	Wellness Programmes

Adapted from Holman, Johnson & O'Connor, 2018

It has been suggested, that to design an appropriate stress management programme, it is essential to conduct a stress audit or psychological risk assessment (Sutherland & Cooper, 2000). We now discuss the components and advantages of conducting a stress audit in the following section.

8.4 STRESS AUDIT

The components of a stress audit include identifying the sources of stress; stressor outcomes; identifying individual differences, which may be moderating or mediating the stress response (such as age, gender, occupation, education level or socio-economic status); recognise predictors of stress; and finally, ascertain and measure staff attitudes, i.e. what employees need and want in order to reduce stressors in their workplace (Sutherland & Cooper, 2000). Once data is collected through face-to-face interviews with the staff or by the use of a questionnaire, decisions can be taken on the interventions that will be most effective to manage stress.

Some of the benefits of conducting a stress audit include using a diagnostic tool as a practical approach to stress management; identifying organisational and individual strengths and weaknesses in order to help the organisation focus on limited budgetary and time resources; offer a baseline measure in order to appraise any successive interventions and also to help create an awareness about stress related issues in the workplace (Sutherland & Cooper, 2000). However, the audit should preferably be conducted by a designated group, such as a senior manager trained in stress management.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) “Preventive Stress Management fosters the health of organisations and employees, leading to higher firm performance.” Elucidate.

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- 2) What are the benefits of conducting a stress audit?

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8.5 PREVENTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR INDIVIDUALS

Individuals may use a variety of techniques to help prevent distress and enhance positive well-being at the primary, secondary or tertiary stages. The primary prevention techniques are positive thinking, learned optimism, time management, and leisure time activities. The secondary prevention techniques include physical exercise, relaxation, diet and perceived spiritual support. Likewise, the tertiary prevention methods are opening up and professional help.

8.5.1 Stress Management Techniques at the Primary Stage

The notion behind primary prevention is to remove or lessen the source of a stress problem. Hence, it is planned to decrease, transform, or eradicate the demand or stressor causing stress, and promote positive stress responses and create conditions of eustress. With the increasing interest in positive psychology, researchers have begun to investigate the effectiveness of positive psychology techniques such as positive thinking and learned optimism as well.

i) Positive Thinking

Several scholars have studied the favourable results of positive thinking, positive feeling, positive emotions and positive behavioural qualities on psychological as well as physical well-being (Fredrickson, 2001; Seligman & Csikszentmihaly, 2000). Positive thinking is viewing the brighter side of circumstances, making a person constructive and creative and is associated with positive emotions. There

is an association between positive thinking and stress reduction. For example, Cognitive restructuring is a technique that has been effectively utilised to assist individuals to modify the way they think. When applied to stress management, the objective is to substitute stress-creating thoughts (cognitive distortions) with more balanced or objective thoughts that do not produce stress. The occurrence of daily positive emotions serves to moderate stress reactivity.

Further, research on coping with stress has revealed, that resilient individuals were less likely to experience depression and more likely to report increase in psychological growth after the September 11, 2001, terror attacks in the United States (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003).

ii) Learned Optimism

Learned optimism is a non-negative thinking style used by people to explain the good and bad events in their lives to themselves (Seligman, 1990). As demonstrated by Seligman (1998), optimistic individuals prevent distress by attributing the adverse events in their life to external, temporary, and situation-specific factors and they interpret positive events to internal, permanent, and global causes. In contrast, a person with a pessimistic explanatory style would interpret positive events with external, temporary, and situation-specific attributes, and explain negative events in terms of personal, permanent, and pervasive causes. However, learned helplessness and pessimism can be changed through cognitive training techniques and individuals can learn optimism (Seligman, 1998).

iii) Time Management

Constantly working under time pressures to achieve tasks over which there is restricted control can be especially stressful for some individuals (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997) and therefore, training that facilitates them in making better use of their limited time can reduce some of the pressures. Some of the principles of time management include:

- Identifying time robbers
- Making daily list of activities to be done
- Prioritising activities by importance and urgency
- Scheduling activities according to the priorities set
- Knowing your daily cycle
- Doing high demanding jobs when you are alert and active.

iv) Leisure Time Pursuits

Leisure related pursuits offer employees an occasion for rest and renewal from various happenings at work or at home. People, use their leisure time in different ways such as cleaning the house or engaging in some hobby like gardening, cooking, painting etc. These activities are good, if the person gets the benefit of stress-reduction or derive pleasure from them, as enjoyment is the answer to the effective use of leisure time. Leisure time actions can be used for spontaneity, happiness, and bonding with others in our lives.

8.5.2 Stress Management Techniques at the Secondary Stage

i) Physical Exercise

Evidence has steadily demonstrated the effectiveness of exercise or any non-competitive physical activity in reducing stress and its related symptoms. Some examples include brisk walking, jogging, swimming, rowing, biking, dancing etc. Mild or moderate exercise tends to improve energy and mood (Salmon, 2001).

Stressful conditions frequently increase the body's level of stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol. As these hormones are metabolised during physical activity it helps in reinstating the body and mind to a quieter and relaxed state. Regular exercise tends to warm and relax tight muscles and tissues, which contribute to stress feelings. It also helps in releasing hormones such as endorphins, the 'feel good', hormone. Besides, it also tends to distract a person's attention from the stressor. However, it is essential to choose any activity that one enjoys and do it regularly to increase fitness and decrease stress.

ii) **Relaxation Training**

The words relax originated from the Latin word relaxare, which means to loosen and truly relaxation implies loosening up or letting go. By this technique people can preserve and restore energy, which has been lost in daily work life activities. The relaxation response is thus, usually a counter response to stress.

Various methods are used to induce relaxation and focus on reducing the symptoms of stress. Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and then relaxing each of the major muscle groups in a prescribed order. In Autogenic training, the person visualises being in a peaceful abode with pleasing body sensations. The person concentrates on the body and tries to make parts of the body feel heavy, warm or cool. Breathing is examined and the heart beat is regulated. In Mindfulness training, the individual focusses on body sensations and thoughts that occur in the moment. The person attempts to observe sensations and thoughts without judging them. In Biofeedback, several electronic instruments are utilised to monitor certain changes in the body like skin temperature or brainwaves and the information helps the person to relax deeply. In Guided Imagery or "Visualisation", the individual learns to visualise objects, scenes, or events that are associated with relaxation or calmness and attempts to produce a similar feeling in the body.

iii) **Meditation**

Meditation is an effective stress management technique that can arouse an intense state of relaxation and quieten the mind. It is an added relaxation technique, which focuses on a mental instead of the physical process and helps to control or remove the negative thought patterns, which are frequently the primary source of stress. Additionally, it helps to improve a person's resilience level, while also decreasing a reactive inclination to stress.

Broadly, five clusters of meditation practices have been identified (Hussain & Bhushan, 2010):

- (a) Mantra meditation (including Transcendental Meditation, relaxation response, and clinically standardised meditation).
- (b) Mindfulness meditation (involving Vipassana, Zen Buddhist meditation, mindfulness-based stress reduction, and mindfulness based cognitive therapy).
- (c) Yoga (based on Indian Yogic tradition developed by Patanjali, which integrates various techniques like body postures, breath control and meditation).
- (d) Tai Chi (Chinese martial art that includes various slow rhythmic movements that highlight force and complete relaxation).
- (e) Qi Gong (Chinese tradition that combines breathing patterns with numerous physical postures, bodily movements, and meditation).

iv) **Diet**

Evidence indicates a close association between stress, stress management and

diet. While for people who are stressed, a more nutritionally rich diet is essential, ironically, they often choose comfort foods (like sugary and fatty foods), which are lacking in the crucial nutrients thus, stimulating a situation of nutrient depletion, which further compromises their metabolic system (Singh, 2016).

A diet, which contains excessive sugar content can stimulate the stress response, and foods with excessive cholesterol can undesirably influence blood chemistry. A well-balanced nutritive diet plays an important role in an employee's overall health. It is widely accepted that serotonin, a chemical present in the brain promotes calmness. Hence, if a person's diet includes food that assists the brain in producing it or contain food with this compound, it can aid in stress management.

v) **Perceived Spiritual Support**

Spirituality and faith have been found to be important for individual well-being and health. Perceived Spiritual Support, has been defined as "perceived support in the context of an individual's relationship with God, and includes focusing on perceptions and experiences of God's personal love, presence, constancy, guidance, and availability for thyself". Research findings have consistently indicated that spiritual support has a stress-buffering role to play during adverse circumstances and people under high levels of life-event stress have benefitted from perceived spiritual support (Maton, 1989).

8.5.3 Stress Management Techniques at the Tertiary Stage

i) **Opening Up**

The action of opening up or sharing one's feelings concerning negative events and confessing, tends to neutralise the damaging effects of stress. We all encounter some traumatic, demanding, or agonising incidents in life. One of the best therapeutic and beneficial responses to such an event is to confess in another person (Pennebaker, 1997). Self-disclosure has health benefits such as boosting the immune system, and healing. Besides, writing in a dairy or keeping a journal, can also be beneficial to manage stress as it helps in catharsis or emotional release of negative thoughts and feelings. For example, it has been found that people who once a week wrote in their diary about their traumatic experiences had substantial health benefits and decrease in absenteeism as compared to those who wrote about non-traumatic events (Francis & Pennebaker, 1992).

ii) **Professional Help**

Professionals in helping professions such as counseling, career guidance, physical therapy, medical treatment, surgical intervention, and other therapeutic techniques are valuable for employees who need healing. Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) may be very beneficial in referring employees to the appropriate caregivers. The early detection of distress and strain responses, alongside speedy professional treatment, is the key to prevent severe physical and psychological damage (Nelson et al., 2013).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) Describe the primary preventive stress management techniques at the individual level.

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- 2) Enumerate the stress management techniques at the secondary stage.

8.6 PREVENTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR ORGANISATIONS

The prevention and management of workplace stress requires organisational level interventions, because it is often the organisation that generates the stress. Certain organisations are low-stress, healthy settings, while others are high-stress surroundings that may place their employees' health at risk. Most organisational stress prevention is largely primary in nature.

8.6.1 Stress Management Techniques at the Primary Stage

i) Job Redesign

The majority of primary organisational-level interventions reported in the literature are job redesign interventions that aim to modify job characteristics (e.g., job discretion, workload, ergonomic design) as a means of enhancing employees' well-being.

According to the Job Strain Model (Karasek, 1979), the combination of high job demands and constrained autonomy to take job decisions leads to a high-strain job. Job redesign thus, helps to increase employee control, which in turn reduces distress and strain without necessarily reducing productivity. Greater autonomy can be granted for the structuring of work activities such as the programming of work schedules, the collection and sequencing of work tools, or the choice of work teams. Another objective of job redesign is to lessen uncertainty and increase predictability in the workplace. Additionally, work responsibilities can be designed to have some meaning for employees and offer encouragement and opportunity to practice skills (Cooper & Cartwright, 1997).

ii) Goal Setting

Goal setting activities can be designed to increase task motivation. Helping employees to clearly understand goals and perceiving them as challenging, can help them to channelise their energy into realising them. Moreover, it is significant that the goals are ambitious but realistic and achievable and set in a participative manner to help employees accept their work goals (Nelson et al, 2013).

iii) Role Negotiation

In relationships at work, employees sometimes have conflicting expectations of one another leading to role ambiguity and role conflict, which causes work-related stress. It not only leads to lack of motivation but also strained relationship with managers or colleagues (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997). Role negotiation is a significant stress management technique as it permits employees to adapt to their work roles and helps them to meet and explain their psychological contract. Thus, the expectations of each party are made clear and negotiated. Consequently, role negotiation leads to better understanding between the two parties. When both

parties mutually agree on expectations, there is little scope for role ambiguity. In organised negotiations between two or more parties, it is obligatory for each party to agree in writing to change certain job related behaviours in exchange for changes in job associated behaviour by the others. When the sources of team ineffectiveness are centered on people's behaviour of reluctance to change due to loss of power or influence, role negotiation can help to a large extent. Conflicts are perceived as opportunities for explanation and resolution. The final outcome of the role negotiation process is usually a well-defined focal role with which the incumbent and all team members are at ease (Nelson et al., 2013).

iv) **Selection, Placement and Mentoring of Employees**

Certain jobs are more stressful than others, and every employee responds distinctively when exposed to stressful situations. Through the selection process, applicants can be carefully selected according to their psychological and personal characteristics. Employees who favour routine jobs and clear rules and practices could be assigned such jobs, while those who are self-motivated and prefer a great degree of autonomy and dynamic work can be given jobs with such features. Individuals with little experience or an external locus of control tend to be more prone to stress. Hiring experienced individuals with an internal locus, may be helpful as they may adapt better to high-stress jobs and perform more effectively. Similarly, training can increase an individual's self-efficacy and thus, lessen job strain.

Mentoring is viewed as a very good development tool and successful support mechanism, to assist employees to adjust more readily to the changing times (CranwellWard et al., 2004) and a positive relationship has been identified between mentoring and reduced stress (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Mentoring helps to release career related frustrations, allowing mentees to discuss incidents that influence their professional lives (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Besides, it provides psychosocial assistance in the work place (Kram, 1985), which assists mentees to deal effectively with role ambiguity, role conflict and perceived environmental uncertainty (Thomas, 2009). Techniques that may be suitable for executives include executive coaching.

v) **Improving Organisational Communication**

The strengthening of formal channels of communication within an organisation lessens the level of uncertainty and ambiguity of employees' roles. Arranging frequent team meetings and different team-building activities can improve communication within the company. Precise communication, particularly the assurance of senior management and a readiness to listen to employee's opinions, is critical to the success of any preventive stress management initiatives. It is also important to support individuals to participate in the process (Schabracq, Cooper, Travers, & Van Maanen, 2001).

However, to be effective, these primary level prevention techniques require time, energy, financial and technical resources and more significantly commitment from the top management. Besides, it also needs to be a part of the planned change intervention in the organisation.

8.6.2 Stress Management Techniques at the Secondary Stage

Secondary Prevention is intended to modify the individual's or the organisation's response to a demand or stressor. Two important organisational stress prevention techniques include team building and social support at work, which are explained below:

i) Team Building

Team building helps in improving supportive social relationships in the workplace. However, team building is largely task oriented, not socio-emotional, in organisations but some socio-emotional support at work is also needed for psychological health. Teams enduring quantitative demands are more effective when they are more tightly structured while teams facing qualitative demands are more successful when they are loosely structured (Zahavy & Freund, 2007).

ii) Social Support at Work

Managers play a critical role to create a psychologically supportive and healthy work environment. This is accomplished through effective interpersonal communication, which provides emotional caring, information, evaluative feedback, modeling, and instrumental support. Social support may decrease the intensity and duration of stressors by safeguarding individuals from sources of stress (Quick et al., 1997). For example, a woman manager being sexually harassed by her colleague may experience less severe stress stimuli, if she perceives that her other colleagues and her boss are supportive. Likewise, if a woman employee does not receive such support she may encounter a far more severe stress stimulus. Instrumental support is useful to reduce stress if it helps people to meet job demands, receive appraisal support, role clarity as well as concrete performance feedback.

8.6.3 Stress Management Techniques at the Tertiary Stage

i) Employee Assistance Programmes

As organisations have become conscious of the effects of stress, they have introduced EAP for employees who may experience problems originating either from the work environment or from their personal lives. In some organisations, programmes such as counseling, advice, or referral for specialist treatment and support are services made readily available for individuals.

ii) Wellness Programmes

Organisations are progressively embracing several wellness programmes as a means for healing the negative outcomes of distress and strain. These plans are often designed as a form of help and advisory support for employees to quit cigarettes, alcohol, regulate their weight and improve their diet, or learn yoga, meditation, etc. Some programmes also benefit employees to improve their psychological well-being. Largely wellness programmes presume the onus is on the employees to take personal responsibility for their physical and mental health and that the organisation is simply a means to that end.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) Discuss the primary preventive stress management techniques at the organisational level.

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- 2) Explain the significance of team building and social support at work in stress management.

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8.7 CONCLUSION

Effective stress management has become a crucial part of achieving success in our work life. In this Unit, we have explained the nature and importance of stress management. Besides, the approaches to examine stress management interventions and techniques have been elucidated along with the preventive stress management model. Thereafter, the benefits and components of a stress audit were examined.

Individuals may use a diverse set of techniques to prevent distress and enhance positive well-being at the primary, secondary or tertiary stages. There are different stress management techniques for individuals and organisations across the three levels. The primary stress management techniques at the individual level include positive thinking, learned optimism, time management, and leisure time activities. The secondary prevention techniques comprise physical exercise, relaxation, diet and perceived spiritual support. Likewise, the tertiary prevention methods considered are opening up and professional help.

The management of workplace stress requires organisational level interventions as well, since maximum stress is usually generated at the workplace itself. Certain organisations are low-stress, healthy settings, while others are high-stress environments that may place their employees' health at risk. Most organisational stress prevention, is basically primary in nature such as job design, goal setting, role negotiation, selection, placement, mentoring of employees and improving organisational communication. The secondary prevention techniques comprise team building and social support at work. At the tertiary level, the techniques include employee assistance programmes and wellness programmes. The primary level prevention techniques in order to be effective should be part of a planned change intervention in the organisation, which requires time, energy, financial and technical resources and most importantly, commitment from top management level.

8.8 GLOSSARY

Transcendental Meditation: It refers to one form of meditation, focused on transcending the mind to achieve pure awareness, which promotes a new sense of peace, creativity and self-realisation. Thus, meditation trains people to try and transcend their targets altogether.

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8.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 8.3 for your answer.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 8.4 for your answer.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - The primary stress management techniques at the individual level include positive thinking, learned optimism, time management, and leisure time activities.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Physical Exercise
 - Relaxation Training
 - Meditation
 - Diet
 - Perceived Spiritual Support.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Most organisational stress prevention is basically primary in nature such as job design, goal setting, role negotiation, selection, placement and mentoring of employees and improving organisational communication.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 8.6 (8.6.2) for your answer.

UNIT 9 TIME MANAGEMENT: APPROACHES AND TECHNIQUES*

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Approaches to Time Management
- 9.3 Techniques of Time Management
- 9.4 Conclusion
- 9.5 Glossary
- 9.6 References
- 9.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the main approaches to the study of time management;
- Examine the major techniques of time management that can help in promoting efficiency and effectiveness in government organisations as well as private sector system; and
- Suggest the appropriate techniques to be used for a particular situation of organisational functioning, when the time comes for applying such techniques.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

We have observed in Unit 2, 5 and 7 that time management is very important for an employee/ individual to achieve success and happiness in personal and professional life. It may be aided by a range of skills and techniques, which are used to manage time when an employee/individual has to accomplish specific tasks and goals within a stipulated time frame. In this Unit, we will explain the main approaches and major techniques of time management that can help in promoting efficiency and effectiveness in government organisations as well as private sector system, and suggest the appropriate techniques to be used for time management.

9.2 APPROACHES TO TIME MANAGEMENT

An 'approach' is the analysis of a branch of a particular subject or theme is viewed and observed and then explained systematically. It is a way of looking at a system, subsystem or process from the viewpoint of its major concerns, logical construction, methodology and conclusion. It is different from a 'theory', which is more rigorous in its construction and methodology; and is arrived at through deeper empirical research. Theories are common in natural science, while approaches are more common in social sciences.

In the domain of time management, there have been no theories or even well-constructed approaches. Therefore, in this Unit, an attempt has been made to

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broadly categorise various approaches to the analysis of time management. The narration in the following sections pertains to middle or large scale organisations. Only at certain places, references to personal life of an individual are made.

i) The Efficiency Approach

Efficiency means getting the most out of the available resources. This notion also applies to time management. In this context the following concerns gain importance and deserve consideration:

- a) Well-organised management systems use time rationally and leave little scope for time-wastage. In such organisations, time-savers are employed intelligently.
- b) The procedures employed in organisational functioning are simplified; emails are sent and responded to promptly; and phones are used as instruments of Time-savers.
- c) Technology is used optimally to enhance productivity. Technology for saving time is employed skillfully.
- d) Work is delegated to competent personnel and its proper use is ensured through monitoring and supervision.
- e) Wherever needed, outsourcing of services is undertaken. This saves the time of regular executives, which can be utilised for more crucial purpose.
- f) There is neatness in offices; tables are clean, and table-drawers are uncluttered.
- g) Official meetings are well-organised. The meetings are well drafted and decisions executed proficiently.
- h) Training of employees is organised periodically, in order to facilitate capacity building of personnel.
- i) The Management Information System is rationally planned and executed, and there is no information overload.
- j) All work is done on time; there is very little procrastination.
- k) Punctuality is a part of time management culture in the organisation.
- l) People work according to the principle of 'work rhythm' under which the various categories of work are performed at the most suitable time during a day.
- m) Time auditing is adopted as integral tool for ensuring the best use of time.
- n) Economy in expenditure becomes a natural outcome of the Efficiency Approach.
- o) Useful techniques like speed reading, travel management, diary maintenance and effective writing are skilfully used in organisational functioning.

ii) The Effectiveness Approach

This approach relates mainly to the process of goal-management. The salient aspects of this approach are as under:

- a) The vision and mission of an organisation are clearly defined, and in their backdrop are formulated the goals of the organisation. These goals are related to important segments of the organisation, which may be long-term, middle-term and short-term in duration.
- b) Priorities are drawn for various objectives and tasks from time to time. The principle followed is: "First Things to First".

- c) The stress is evident on SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound-goals.
- d) There is a great stress on scientific methods of plan-formulation, plan-implementation and plan-evaluation.
- e) For the achievement of goals, responsibilities are specified of various functionaries in the organisation.
- f) Deadlines for the achievement of various goals are fixed.
- g) There is great emphasis on ‘results’ rather than ‘activities’.
- h) Policies and decisions are made in tune with the mission and objectives of the organisation.
- i) Daily to-do lists are prepared for the organisation, its various departments and by the individual personnel.
- j) Work culture is positive. People are dedicated to the performance of their duties

Efficiency and effectiveness are integrated rationally in an organisation following the maxims of sound time management.

iii) **The Excellence Approach**

In a system adopting proper time management design, the following characteristics are evident:

- a) The 80/20 principles is followed where at least 20 percent of time is used for more valuable and crucial activities. The rest 80 percent is used for undertaking routine activities.
- b) Great stress is laid on innovation and creativity.
- c) Total Quality Management practices are adopted systematically in all segments of the organisation.
- d) The objective of all subsystems in the organisation is to ensuring optimal excellence in their functioning and operations.
- e) Encouragement is given to the processes of ‘reflection’, ‘introspection’ and ‘quiet time’ for creative thinking and strengthening the organisation for future planning.

This approach distinguishes the finest organisation from the ordinary. In contemporary competitive times, this approach is most effective for attaining higher performance.

iv) **The Equilibrium Approach**

The approach emphasises the value of work-life balance in the time management styles of individuals. Its crucial concerns are as follows:

- a) Individuals should find time for their physical health, which alone can give them energy to lead a life of purpose at home and at workplace. Walking, yoga and exercises boost the physical health of a person.
- b) Time for breath-control (pranayama) exercise should be earmarked on a daily basis
- c) People should be fond of reading and developing their knowledge and awareness about the contexts of their life and work. Positive and motivational reading is a prerequisite to positive living.
- d) Meditation and prayers should be integral to a positive time management system of a balanced person.

- e) Family should be given quality time by professionals. Family happiness has a positive impact on organisational happiness. Leisure-time also needs to be well planned.
- f) There should be a climate of motivation and enthusiasm in personal and professional life. People should love their work and draw satisfaction from it.
- g) Stress should be managed with equanimity and wisdom.
- h) Over-work should be avoided. There should be no burn-out of people at work place.
- i) Time should be found for nurturing friendships. Recent researches underscore that friendships are most effective for happiness and longevity.
- j) Time should be found for performing social responsibilities such as rendering service to the less privileged sections of society.

In the above backdrop, we move to a discussion of important techniques of time management.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) Explain the approaches to time management.

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- 2) Distinguish between the Efficiency Approach and Effectiveness Approach to time Management.

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9.3 TECHNIQUES OF TIME MANAGEMENT

i) To-Do Lists

All responsible executives in government and managers in private enterprises prepare 'to-do' lists everyday. A to-do list has columns for all important activities to be undertaken during a particular day. For instance, activities can be classified as under:

- a) Urgent tasks to be performed.
- b) Meetings to be attended.
- c) Emails to be sent.
- d) Phone calls to be made.
- e) Visits outside.
- f) Domestic work.

There can be other categories of tasks, depending on the needs of each organisation. Another important part of a to-do list is mentioning the specific time, when each task listed for the day will be performed. For instance:

9.30 am: Reaching office
10:00 am: Disposal of files
11:00 am: Evaluation of work of officers
12:00 Noon: Planning for projects on building infrastructure
1.30 pm: Lunch
2.15 pm: Meeting with the Finance Section
3.15 pm: Meeting with Vendors
3.45 pm: Meeting with the Grievance Committee
4:30 pm: Meeting at the Secretariat
6:00 pm: Disposal of files
6:30 pm: Leave for home
8:00 pm: Dinner
9:00 pm: TV with family
9:30 pm: Reading the book on Positive Thinking
10:30 pm: Sleep

All the above details, may not be necessary in a to-do list. May be domestic activities can be excluded from it, and only official matters may be listed.

In Japan, to-do lists are prepared according to the priority of various tasks on different coloured chit pads or stick-ons. Each colour has a specific connotation of importance and it is expected of a person that s/he will first focus on the most important tasks of a to-do list, and then move on to the others in importance. As an alternative, we can have one page for the to-do list and note down various tasks in different colours of ink. For instance, the most important task could be mentioned in red ink, followed by the lesser ones in importance in green or blue ink.

ii) **The 80/20 Principle**

Eighty percent of official time is generally spent on activities that have only 20 percent value. Such activities are routine activities in administration. With only 20 percent of the time, when crucial or most significant tasks are undertaken with focus, we attain 80 percent of the results. Thus, the 20 percent of time used in a systematic manner and with well-planned strategies, 80 percent of profits, benefits or outcomes can be achieved.

Richard Koch, in an interesting book, *Living the 80/20 Way*, believes that the objectives of sound time management should be: work less, worry less, succeed more, and enjoy more. The ground-breaking research into the well validated 80/20 principle underscores that 80 percent of results flow from 20 percent of efforts. For instance, 80 percent of sales usually come from 20 percent of customers. Importantly, this principle is not just confined to commercial operations but has great relevance even in the personal lives of people. The crux of the 80/20 principle is that we should work out first the things that are most important and which will help us to achieve our important goals. This would require ignoring the mass of trivia that crowds our lives. Thus, it is possible to apply the maxim of 'less with more' and 'more with less' to the domains of success, money, relationships,

good life and personal action plan for self-transformation. The implication of this principle for time management is that we should place higher importance and value on activities that can produce the most and the best results with the least cost in terms of human and material resources and time.

Following the 80/20 principle enables anyone to get extraordinary results without making extraordinary efforts. Thus, a small portion of our time can lead to enhancement of happiness and fulfilment.

Other main lessons from the 80/20 Rule are:

- a) Select the best 20 percent people who can give 80 percent results.
- b) Assign tasks to people that they would love to perform.
- c) Focus on the strong points of the organisation.
- d) Attempt the most difficult tasks first.
- e) Spend considerable time in selecting the goals and their priorities.
- f) Self-discipline and concentration are the key to excellent performance.

iii) **Prioritising**

An important technique of time management is prioritising, i.e. classifying tasks according to their importance and urgency and then arranging them according to their significance. This way, the most important and most urgent tasks will be at the top of the list of assignments to be undertaken. Conventionally, there are four types of tasks to be performed in a particular period (day, week, month etc.).

	Important	Not important
Urgent	Urgent and important	Urgent but not important
Not urgent	Important but not urgent	Neither urgent nor important

This classification for daily to-do list is a most meaningful exercise. Next to the “urgent as well as important” tasks would be either “urgent and not important” or “important but not urgent” tasks. There is a general tendency to undertake urgent but not important tasks because of the immediate pressure of the former. In this process, the more important tasks, which may not be urgent, get pushed to the background. Therefore, a better way in this respect would be to assign deadlines to all important tasks and meet them with highest attention.

iv) **Optimum Excellence**

Excellence means continuing betterment and improvement in one’s performance. Time should be so utilised that it generates qualitative products or services. Sometimes, we misinterpret excellence as ‘perfection’. This is not correct. Excellence is a feasible objective, while perfection is an idealistic goal that cannot be reached in totality. In other words, perfection is the ultimate state of qualitative attainment; it is the peak of excellence and represents the highest state of human endeavour. There is an innate desire in every human being for being perfect. Even if we are unable to reach perfection, aiming for it in itself is commendable.

One must, however, understand the difficulties in treading on the path of perfection, we may not have all the resources necessary for achieving perfection; we may not even know the best strategies to attain it; and, on top of it all, we may not have a team of people who would possess the acumen and skills required for achieving perfection. Some define a perfectionist as a person who takes great pains and gives pain to others. Understanding the limits to perfection is a sure sign of wisdom.

The debate between excellence and perfection should not be misunderstood. We should certainly aim for zero-defect levels in the operation and maintenance of the machinery in accordance with the principle of Total Quality Productivity; but until we are able to achieve that goal, we cannot stop the production process and reject the products outright. In attaining goals that are non-measurable and qualitative, the endeavour should be aimed at registering constant improvement—a commitment to excellence. This would enable the most optimum use of time. The philosophy of excellence implies moving from well to better always. That is why excellence should be treated as a constant journey and not an ultimate goal.

v) Do It to a Finish

Whenever any important assignment is given to a competent and responsible person, it is expected of her/him to finish it at the earliest. Yet, when the tasks are complex in nature, there is a hesitation on the part of the responsible person in initiating them. Perhaps, serious preparation is needed before starting them. In such a situation, there is no harm in waiting for some time and using that waiting time for arranging appropriate resources and competent personnel to perform the task effectively. However, once the task gets started, it should be taken up and performed without breaking its rhythm. For that, it should be allotted regular chunks of time on all working days (or even holidays, when needed) and there should be continuity in doing it, until it is finished satisfactorily.

This “single shot” handling helps in devoting a big chunk of time entirely to one important activity and in preventing fragmentation of efforts and time. In case a work is undertaken in fits and starts and with breaks and discontinuities, it is not likely to be finished on time. Whenever possible, important tasks should be completed at one go, that is without a break in its operational schedule. However, if the work is to be performed in various stages, during one phase, then the total task should be divided into specific parts and then performed systematically.

Thus, there are two techniques involved in the process of task performance: first, “at one go” and the second, “divide and do”. Which of the two techniques will be used will depend on the nature, and quantum of work, coordination required among the various segments of work and the resources available to perform them. In either situation, work should be continued to be performed until it is done to a finish.

A related subject is of “one time touch”. As far as possible, simple letters, representations, enquiries, files for disposal etc. should be handled through one time touch. The reply may be dictated to the stenographer immediately or instructions may be given to the subordinates concerned to dispose of the matter in a particular manner. The ‘officer-oriented’ system in certain departments of the Government of India and the British White Hall (secretariat) follow a pattern where an officer dealing with a particular group of subjects, disposes them of at her/his level and thus, channels of official procedure in such cases is considerably reduced.

vi) Time Auditing

While auditing of financial expenses and investment is a common practice in government as well as private organisations, time-auditing is undertaken only rarely. Yet, it cannot be desired that the auditing of time spent can be most useful in enhancing economy and effectiveness in an organisation. An objective and dispassionate look at how an organisation is spending its time will help it to reinforce the habits of the personnel and organise work patterns that are useful and meaningful, and discard or modify the time-spending behaviours that give

least satisfaction or generate dissatisfaction. This could be done through a logbook having details of the time spent during a day. There may be three columns on a long-page, one each for the time, the activity undertaken and the remarks. For each hour spent, a major activity undertaken during that period ought to be mentioned, and when full details are given of the time spent, then one can evaluate whether the time spent has been according to the plan and goals outlined or whether there has been any waste of time that could have been prevented. Comments on the utility or futility of the time spent can be mentioned in the remarks column.

It is not necessary to fill in a log-page every working day. May be even once or twice a week would be considered sufficient for the purpose of identifying the strong and weak areas in the time-utilisation practices of an organisation. A few executives keep a regular performance diary in which brief details of the major activities undertaken during a specific day are mentioned. Not only does it become a record of events but it also acts as a source of motivation to do something more meaningful and satisfying every day.

Many executives conduct work studies to determine how time is spent in performing the operations they supervise. Such studies help in enhancing the overall efficiency of the organisation and more particularly of the subordinates. The time and motion studies of F.W.Taylor, for instance, revolutionised the orientation towards time management in industrial organisations.

vii) **Getting Organised and Self-management**

A good time manager does the right job in a right manner. S/he tries to master the art of work and attempts to find the best possible way of working. Undoubtedly, there is a need to work harder, but there is an equal need to work smarter. Well-organised executives are capable of getting the best work done in the minimum possible time.

Busy people are happy people. If we want something done, let us go to the busiest person. A busy person does not show that s/he is busy. Disorganised people appear to be over busy, while calm and effective people, in spite of being busy, have peace on their face. No doubt, the scientific method of work is stressless, productive and satisfying.

Sound self-management leads to effective time management. An individuals' life style and her/his approach to the conduct of official and non-official business decides considerably the speed and quality of work performed by her/him. Good habits are the best source of sound time management. Those who are particular about the maxim like 'A time for everything and everything at its time' and 'A place for everything and everything at its place' will be able to minimise the wastage of time that results from mismanagement.

Let us keep a watch on our lifestyle and working habits and try to improve upon them as much as possible. A few principles of organised working are as under:

- a) Every activity ought to be linked to the ultimate goal.
- b) Ensure the maximum utilisation of resources in achieving the goals.
- c) Tackle all tasks and activities in a phased and sequential manner.
- d) A time for everything and everything at its time.
- e) A place for everything and everything at its place.
- f) If a work is worth doing, it is worth doing well.
- g) Time-wasters must be minimised and time-savers multiplied.

- h) Constant monitoring of the results of actions in each successive phase reduces the chances of flaws and imperfections.

viii) **Motivational Work Culture**

Work culture refers to the attitudes, norms, habits and behaviour of the personnel towards work. In course of time, a culture of work performance develops in an organisation that characterises its functioning. When there is lethargy, unpunctuality, procrastination, red-tapism and passing the buck in organisation, this symbolises negative work culture. On the other hand, a positive work culture is marked by dedication to work and a sense of responsibility.

An organisation with a positive work culture will have a positive impact on the performance of an organisation. Hence, its top management should endeavour to create and nurture features that improve its overall environment. What are those characteristics?

- An idealistic vision and mission.
- Well-defined multi-level goals.
- Clearly defined authority and responsibility of personnel.
- Stress on efficiency and effectiveness.
- Emphasis on good quality of products and services.
- Creativity.
- Respect for individuals.
- Client or citizen-orientation.
- Motivation linked with performance.
- High job satisfaction.
- Open communication.
- Inspiring leadership.
- An appreciative climate.
- A stressless environment.
- Challenging jobs.
- Healthy employer-employees relations.
- Team spirit.

In a positive work culture, time is utilised most rationally. And this applies to organisations as well as individuals.

In contemporary progressive organisations, there is great stress on developing positive work culture. The success of Microsoft, Infosys, Tatas, Wipro, Ford Motor Company, Suzuki or Sony is primarily the outcome of this positive work culture. The same is true of Wharton, Kellogg, Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford or Yale schools, and IIMs and IITs in India. There are several government organisations that are known for sound work culture. These include Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), the Prime Minister's Office and several Chief Minister's Offices. India needs to focus on creating a vibrant work culture in all its organisations, including the government systems, in order to emerge as a major world power.

ix) Well-organised System

Time management is influenced by the styles of the personnel working at different levels in an organisation. In a well-planned or management system, attention is paid to developing devices for enhancing efficiency and effectiveness. There is a need to constantly improve the procedures and methods at the work place, upgrade equipment, improve staff-skills, systematise record management, make financial management fool proof, streamline human relations in administration, cut operational delays, reduce paperwork and speed up the disposal of routine tasks. An important requirement of efficiency is minimising paperwork and using electronic methods of data retrieval increasingly. Unnecessary paperwork leads to avoidable clutter on desks, in almirah and in drawers. The Digital India movement is transforming the official work pattern in government systems.

It would really be advisable to examine system periodically, and make improvements wherever required. It may even be useful to consult the office personnel from time to time in this respect so that they also feel involved in the process of organisational change.

x) Being More Productive

A few guidelines in this respect are as follows:

- Always keep in view the goals and policies to be followed.
- Have daily and weekly plans of work for yourself and your subordinates.
- Check everyday whether the organisation is moving nearer its goals.
- Make procedures simple; cut the red tape.
- Prepare job-descriptions of all personnel.
- Conduct work studies.
- Use O & M (Organisation and Methods) techniques.
- Make correct decision, efficiently.
- Avoid filing useless and irrelevant information.
- Develop a systematic and scientific filing system.
- Break big jobs into parts and distribute them to people and give a deadline for each component.
- Do regular follow-up, get feedback, take corrective action swiftly.
- Keep desks and drawers clean.

xi) Effective Delegation

Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France, used to proclaim: "I multiply myself through delegation". Truly, a good executive can multiply herself/himself by wisely delegating responsibilities to her/his team members. No doubt, there are certain tasks that have to be handled by the top man herself/himself. Yet, a large number of functions can be reasonably and safely delegated to the various members of the organisation.

While delegating responsibilities, concern should be shown for:

- The nature of the task, its complexity and sensitivity; and
- The competence of the person to whom the task is delegated.

An effective executive is able to identify the distinctive qualities of her/his team members and delegate responsibilities to them accordingly. Once the delegation is made, there should be the least interference by the boss, i.e. s/he

should avoid interfering with the delegated tasks except when the situations demand otherwise. What her/his team members can do well, the boss should not do herself/himself. Thus, a good executive entrusts her/his team members with appropriate responsibility. Only then, people will feel really responsible towards their obligations.

When tasks are delegated, they require constant and effective monitoring and supervision to ensure that the delegated responsibilities are performed faithfully and corrective action is taken from time to time. And when it is observed that a particular person is unable to fulfil task and her/his responsibilities in an effective manner, reallocation of task becomes necessary. There are executives who by nature are centralisers or they do not fully trust their team members. Their approach restricts the scope of delegation and adds to their own burden. With a very wide span of attention, a centraliser may not be able to handle her/his obligations satisfactorily. Although there may be certain personnel who do not come up to the expectations of their seniors, yet the solution lies not in ending delegation but in mending it.

An important principle of management is that authority and responsibility should go together. A proper fit between the two is an important feature of effective delegation. A delegation plan should be formulated and implemented with skill. No person should be delegated authority in excess of her/his responsibilities. Such a situation can lead to irresponsible behaviour on her/his part.

By delegating tasks to her/his team members and freeing herself/himself of routine details, an executive can spare considerable time for more important work. In this regard, delegation process has been depicted in figure 9.1 for more details. By keeping free from routine tasks, an executive adds to the time available to her/him for introspection, creativity and expansion of the relationship network.

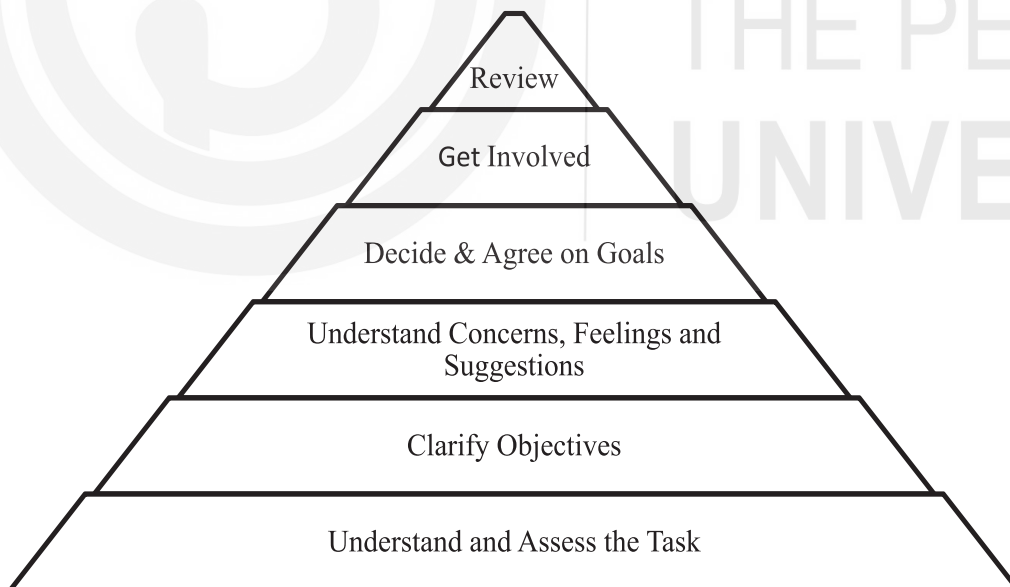


Figure 9.1: The Delegation Process

xii) **Managing Subordinates' Time**

A good manager is one who makes the best use of her/his team members; s/he assigns work to them as per their competence, guides them, supervises, monitors and counsels them from time to time. And when everyone has an appropriate amount of work according to her/his competence and liking, productivity in an organisation improves. Rational delegation of authority and responsibility is the key to appropriately use the human resources.

All personnel working at various levels in an organisation should be encouraged and guided to plan their own time and rationalise their tasks. Accordingly, every person in an organisation should have her/his daily time schedule properly drawn up. A sound culture of time management has a positive impact on the entire organisation. It has been observed, for instance, that if the boss has the habit of making a to-do list every day, her/his subordinates emulate their boss.

A good boss is one who values his subordinates' time as much as s/he does her/his own. S/he recognises that s/he and her/his team members play complementary roles. A good time manager pays special attention to the training of her/his personal assistants. This is perhaps the best investment of time. No executive can be truly efficient without an efficient personal staff. Therefore, subordinates should be groomed to be competent, well-organised, alert and skilful in behaviour. Moreover, the values of loyalty, sincerity and punctuality should be inculcated in the staff. For this purpose, apart from the exemplary behaviour of leaders constant guidance and good counselling by them will be essential.

A good executive is not the one who herself/himself works competently, but who is a good player as well as a good captain of her/his team. A self-motivated individual supported by a motivated team is capable of deriving the maximum from all the resources available to her/him.

xiii) Work Studies

Work study is a technique to ensure that the amount of work being performed in an organisation is rationally distributed among all its sections and personnel. There should be no overburdening of work with some personnel and likewise, there should be no employees who have very little work to do. In other words, every person or section should have sufficient work to be performed and completed during the time available of seven to eight hours a day. No doubt, one has to put in extra hours of work sometimes, more particularly during crucial periods like the end of a financial year or during certain crises like COVID-19.

What is being underscored here is that in normal times, there should not be an imbalance between work and time. When there is a lack of competence in some personnel, their work is transferred to those who are relatively more competent. This situation should not be allowed to persist. The untrained employees should be trained methodically so that they become capable of performing their responsibilities satisfactorily.

When an additional burden is placed on certain employees, it might cause them fatigue. They might feel being discriminated and if that happens, their level of motivation gets diminished. At other times, when certain employees have spare time, they are likely to waste it and become casual about their responsibilities. Such imbalances are observed in some large-scale organisations, where the seniors prefer to bring into their work teams 'brighter' juniors, leaving the less bright employees marginalised.

A sound system of work-study, therefore needs to rationally distribute work among the various work units and individuals according to prudently determined norms to ensure the best use of time at all levels and the need to achieve higher standards of job performance.

xiv) Planning

Planning is a programme of action for a specific period for the achievement of certain pre-determined goals. It facilitates the best possible utilisation of available resources, enhances efficiency, checks wastage of material and human resources,

helps in making the best use of time, and creates a favourable environment for higher productivity.

Planning makes us proactive and the lack of it makes us reactive. There is an old saying: “Those who fail to plan, plan to fail”. Truly, planning is considerably essential for organising personal as well as professional life. Anything to be done properly requires systematic planning. Experience shows that those who are high achievers and peak performers always believe in the maxim “Plan your work and work your plan”.

The planning process has three stages: formulation, implementation and evaluation, which is evident in figure 9.2. Formulation involves matching resources with goals. The time duration for a plan might vary from a long period of 15-20 years to a feasible period of five years or even shorter periods of one year, half a year, a quarter, a month and a week. Planning can be for one single day as well. In fact, planning for one day (more particularly “today”) can be most realistic. What we should keep in mind is that there is an integral relationship between the various levels of planning. Today’s plan should have an organic relationship with the weekly, monthly and quarterly plans. This approach helps us in moving smoothly and purely towards the broader goals of an organisation.

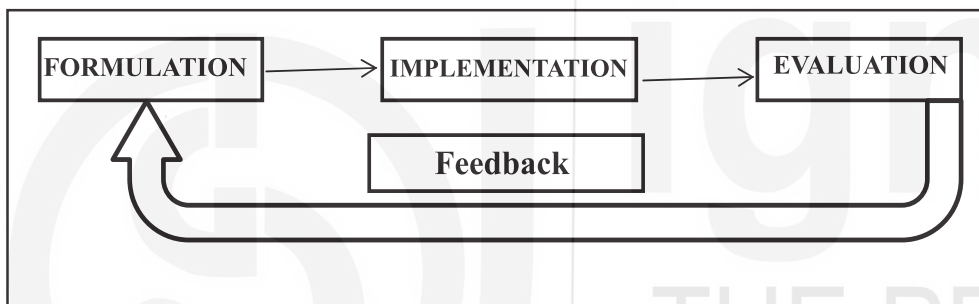


Figure 9.2: The Planning Process

xv) **Goal-Setting and Achievement**

The skill of goal-setting is the key to organisational development. The goals may relate to the following aspects of organisational functioning:

- a) Structural development and reorganisation.
- b) Functional diversification.
- c) Human resource management.
- d) Financial planning.
- e) Quality improvement.
- f) Customer Satisfaction.
- g) Advertising and branding.

Likewise, in personal life also, goals should be designed for the various facets of life like improved physical health, mental development, refining emotional intelligence, enriching family relations, evaluating spiritual intelligence, strengthening social relations and ensuring professional excellence. A balance among all these facets will help attain success and happiness in personal and professional life.

There could be other kinds of goals, but all such goals should have specific period, such as in figure 9.3 the following:

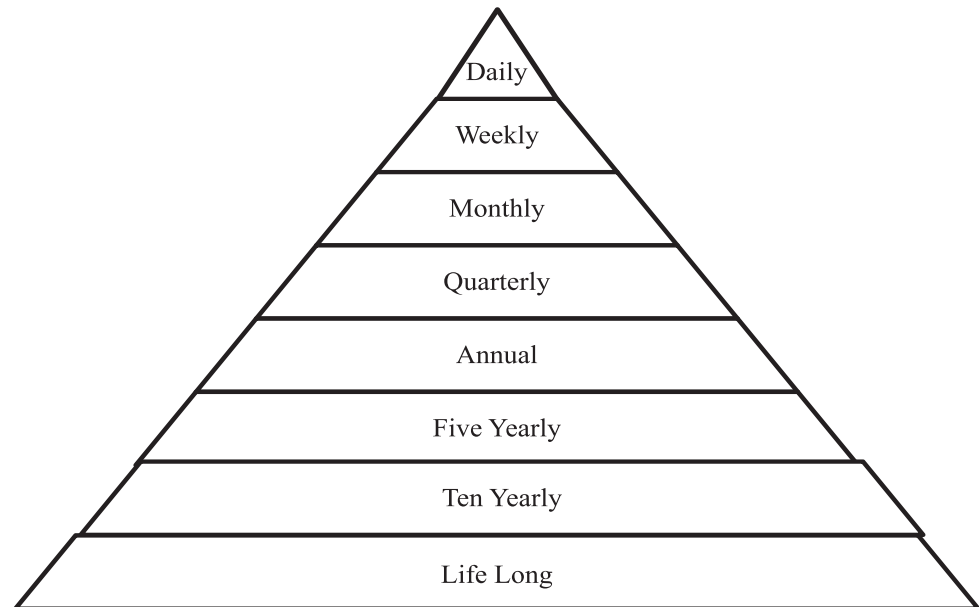


Figure 9.3: Hierarchy of Goals

There should be proper synchronisation between all the above types of goals, whether related to functional areas or time-slots. Only then an excellent goal plan will be drawn. All the goals ought to be integrated and inter-twined in such a manner that the achievement of one goal helps in the fulfilment of other goals. For instance, the fulfilment of daily goals helps in the achievement of goals for weekly and monthly durations.

While drawing up a goal-scheme, all the concerned stakeholders should be brought together for holding systematic discussions. This will help in drawing upon the collective wisdom in strategising goals. When all the concerned actors and groups are consulted, the goals become more practical and implementable.

Once the goals have been specified and the time-line of their achievement designed properly, then concerned departments, sections and individuals should be informed about them and their respective responsibilities are made clear. At the decentralised level, the goals are converted into ‘targets’, which are more specific and time-bound.

xvi) **Smart Goals**

All goals, whether personal or organisational, ought to be ‘SMART’, that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound. Specific goals are clear and they have no ambiguity. Measurable goals are quantifiable and thus can be evaluated systematically. Achievable goals are as per the human and financial resources available to achieve them. Realistic goals are based on their practicality and implementability in a particular time span. And time-bound goals have identified deadlines for achieving various targets. If no deadlines are specified, the tasks are likely to be postponed. It is a well-accepted principle that “Goal without deadlines are dead goals”.

Besides being SMART, the goals should be challenging or moderately difficult; otherwise individuals or organisations will not grow. Challenges create energy and resources to face them. This characteristic is a key feature of achievement and motivation. Further, it may be stressed that goals should not be rigid. There should be enough flexibility in order to allow adjustments as per emergent situations.

xvii) **Self-Management**

Self-management involves breaking old unproductive and negative habits and creating and strengthening new positive ones. More than a hundred years ago,

William James, the famous American philosopher, suggested a strategy for replacing bad habits with good ones. He recommended that one should:

- a) Be clear about one's desired goals.
- b) Understand that change of habits is a difficult process.
- c) Launch the new habits strongly.
- d) Practise the new habits often.
- e) Not allow even one exception until the habits are firmly ingrained.
- f) Move ahead again with determination, in case there is any lapse, any time.

Self-management is a concept, that is gaining newer dimensions every day. Besides developing discipline in life and meticulousness in the job at hand, it involves regulating one's nature, controlling moods, reducing anger, behaving rationally and most notably, managing time wisely.

The above narration of various time management techniques is not exhaustive. There are several other techniques that can make time management an effective instrument for enhancing the capacity and performance of individuals as well as organisations, yet the most significant and popular ones have been briefly discussed in this unit. A careful selection of techniques for the right purpose and in a right situation will be the key to their effectiveness at personal as well as professional levels.

Check Your Progress 2

- Note:**
- i) Use the space given below for your answer.
 - ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) Explain the major techniques of time management.

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- 2) How work study technique ensures that the amount of work being performed in an organisation is rationally distributed among all its sections and personnel?

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9.4 CONCLUSION

The study highlights that time management is very important, which may be aided by a range of techniques, which are used to manage time when an employee/individual has to accomplish specific tasks and goals within a stipulated time frame. In this Unit, we have explained the main approaches and major techniques of time management that can help in promoting efficiency and effectiveness in government organisations as well as private sector system; and suggested the appropriate techniques to be used for time management.

9.5 GLOSSARY

First Things First: It refers to prioritising effectively and avoiding time wasting. In other words, organising and executing around your most important priorities. It is living and being driven by the principles that an individual values most, not by the agendas and forces surrounding her/him.

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9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - The Efficiency Approach
 - The Effectiveness Approach
 - The Excellence Approach
 - The Equilibrium Approach.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 9.2 [(i) and (ii)], for your answer.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - To-Do Lists
 - The 80/20 Principle
 - Prioritising
 - Optimum Excellence
 - Do it to a Finish
 - Time Auditing.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 9.3 (xiii), for your answer.

UNIT 10 STRESS AND TIME MANAGEMENT: TOWARDS HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS*

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Manage Stress through Better Time Management
- 10.3 Stress Management for Happiness and Success
 - 10.3.1 Successful People's Approaches to Manage Stress for Success
 - 10.3.2 Stress Management and Happiness
- 10.4 Time Management for Happiness and Success
 - 10.4.1 Time Management for Success
 - 10.4.2 Time Management for Happiness
- 10.5 Conclusion
- 10.6 Glossary
- 10.7 References
- 10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the role of better time management in managing stress for holistic and happier life;
- Describe the ways through which effective stress management can help a person in achieving success in life;
- Highlight the relationship between the process of stress management and success in professional life; and
- Examine the impact of effective time management on success and happiness in life.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

While we discuss the issue of stress management for success, it will be logical to analyse how better time management can help in reducing stress. In this Unit, we will focus on significance of stress and time management for happiness and success in personal and professional life. In the following section, the interdependence between stress management and time management will be discussed briefly, before looking at the means and methods that successful people employ for managing stress.

10.2 MANAGE STRESS THROUGH BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT

The world of poor time management comprises missing deadlines, nagging problems, breaking of promises and painful harassments. Let us look at a few symptoms of poor time management:

* Contributed by Prof. Ramesh K. Arora, Former Professor of Public Administration, Rajasthan University, Jaipur

- Constant rushing and hurrying
- Rushing from one task to another, without completing any
- Frequently missing deadlines
- Working non-stop without adequate break for rest or relaxation.
- Feeling tired and dull, resulting in low productivity
- Being a perfectionist and not being happy with the work performed by oneself and others
- Feeling short of time on most occasions.

No wonder, poor time management creates and worsens stress. And, when there is stress in life and it is not controlled properly, it leads to poorer time management. We are well aware that oversleeping, dullness, withdrawal, brooding, anxiety, anger, frustration and tension reduce our energy and eat into our precious time. Poor time managers might suffer from burnout, chronic fatigue and immense deficiency syndrome.

Here are a few factors that might lead to greater stress:

- i) Unbalanced time management is likely to cause poor health, dull mind, loss of creativity and less time for family.
- ii) Work without proper prioritisation might marginalise the more important tasks, thus leading to lower productivity. Moreover, the neglected tasks are likely to generate feelings of guilt and stress.
- iii) Putting an enormous burden on oneself on account of poor delegation, can unduly tax one's body and mind.
- iv) Attempting too much at one time adversely affects the quality of work.
- v) Excessive workload will force an executive to concentrate on routine tasks at the cost of more crucial tasks. The result will be greater stress.
- vi) Unplanned and unfinished work in the office will force one to carry his anxieties home.
- vii) Unscientific time-utilisation may cause physical and mental fatigue which, in turn, might trigger hypertension.
- viii) Dissatisfaction with one's time management style and the outcome thereof may lead to anger and irritation.

Tips for Stress Management through better Time Management

Brain Loomis and other experts suggest ways to control stress through certain practical strategies of time management:

- i) Maintain work-life balance.
- ii) Follow the guidelines of good health, pranayam, relaxation and meditation.
- iii) Be realistic about multi-dimensional goals.
- iv) Plan your work and work your plan.
- v) Prepare daily to-do list as per priorities.
- vi) Tackle complex problems with care and caution.
- vii) Delegate and monitor the work delegated effectively.
- viii) Do time-auditing. Cut Time-wasters. Employ time-savers.
- ix) Develop a habit of happiness.

10.3 STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS

10.3.1 Successful People's Approaches to Manage Stress for Success

Besides employing better time management techniques, the business or government executives use well-tested strategies for managing stress for sustaining their success in personal and professional life. There have been massive researches in this domain. Many methods of stress management have been discussed in other units of this course. Here, only a few common approaches to manage stress are being discussed. The emphasis here is on the strategies adopted for creating and sustaining success.

i) *Keeping Problems in Perspective*

Stressful situations, though of different kinds and intensity, are experienced by all individuals and organisations. Successful people understand the consequences of stress and do not let its ill effects of subdue themselves. They are objective in analysing their thoughts and feelings coloured by stress and become more realistic in addressing them.

ii) *Self-Awareness*

Strong executives are aware of the sources of their stress and their warning signs. Thus, they are able to prepare themselves for facing various kinds of stresses and responding to them with calmness. They also adjust their activities and lifestyles in order to manage stress effectively.

iii) *Self-Reassurance*

Successful people who are mentally strong invoke their self-assurance and self-confidence and give a message to themselves: "I am not going to be disappointed and frustrated. I know I can and shall handle stress wisely, no matter what happens".

iv) *Controlling Situations*

There are two kinds of sources of stress: a) those which can be controlled, b) and those which cannot be controlled. Successful people know what they cannot control, and then focus on things that they can control. Thus, they clearly define the domain of their responsibility. They do not blame others for their stress instead they prepare themselves for taking appropriate action to rectify a situation. Accordingly, they spring into action and engage themselves objectively in problem solving and do not waste energy on things that they cannot control.

v) *Company of Positive People*

Effective executives try to create around them positive social support. When they are in the company of positive, optimistic and supportive people, they gain mental strength to manage stress rationally. They try to keep pessimists away from their role-set and thus, avoid negative vibrations.

vi) *Relaxation*

Positive executives spare time for relaxation with their families, leisure and hobbies. They can create a sound work-life balance and maintain their tranquility.

vii) *Healthy coping Skills*

Amy Morin remarks that strong people use healthy coping skills such as walking, exercise, reflection and meditation to deal with their stress. They also write 'journals' and analyse their problems objectively.

viii) ***Resilience***

Strong executives are not disturbed by failures. They take failures as opportunities to grow for, in their view, every setback has lessons to offer. They believe in what Swami Vivekananda exhorted, “Even if you fall a thousand times, rise up once again”.

ix) ***Focus on Progress, not Perfection***

Effective executives are keen on supporting progress of their respective organisations and make efforts to enhance the capacity of their team members. These executives are not perfectionists or over-demanding from their personnel, nor are they obsessed with self-perfection. Being realistic, they successfully steer their organisations towards achievement of organisational goals.

x) ***Realistic Goals***

Effective executives have realistic goals to achieve for their organisations. Having lofty goals that are difficult to attain, creates stress. It is better to elevate the goals step by step, say five to ten percent, from one phase of development to the next.

xi) ***Developing affinity among Team-Members***

When the members of various teams in an Organisation have mutually friendly relationships, stresses accruing on account of conflicts in inter-personal behaviour are minimised. Even when there are stresses, they get resolved through mutual understanding and cooperation.

The above operational guidelines are not exhaustive. There are many more strategies that have been discussed in the other units of this course, which the learners will find useful.

10.3.2 Stress Management and Happiness

Stress is considered as a ‘killer’ of happiness, whether in personal, familial or professional life. Stress in individuals is defined as any interference that disturbs a person’s healthy mental and physical well-being. It occurs when the body is required to perform beyond its normal range of capabilities.

Physiologically, it can have the following symptoms:

- i) Get the constant feeling that something is wrong or missing.
- ii) Have a change in appetite so that one eats more or less than usual.
- iii) Have stimulants like smoking, drinking or drugs.
- iv) Experience rapid, irregular heartbeats or heart pounding.
- v) Experience rapid breathing or hyperventilation.
- vi) Get muscle aches, headaches, or migraines.
- vii) Have high blood pressure.

Psychologically, it has the following symptoms:

- i) Inability to relax at any time
- ii) Irritability and short temper
- iii) Intolerance to noise
- iv) A poor memory
- v) Inability to concentrate
- vi) Reduction in will power
- vii) Lower performance

- viii) Uncontrollable emotions
- ix) Inability to finish tasks
- x) Impulsive behaviour
- xi) Over-reacting to little things
- xii) Feeling of inadequacy and diffidence.

Despite the above symptoms, we cannot call stress as the enemy of happiness. Stress also have positive outcome: it makes us aware of our weaknesses and limitations and warns us about the possible and potential challenges and dangers we are likely to face. This awareness and caution make us prepared for meeting untoward events and setbacks. After overcoming such difficult situations, we feel happy that we could escape serious problems in life and work, just because stress made us careful and cautious.

However, in most situations, stress can diminish or block our happiness and therefore, it would be advisable to employ practical strategies to regulate and control it in order to ensure that it does not affect our happiness adversely. Although the learners have already studied the techniques of stress management in other units, the following section highlights the steps that can be useful in managing stress, and safeguarding and enhancing our happiness:

i) ***Self-care***

Physical exercise, walking, pranayam, healthy diet, regulated life and self-discipline can help in managing stress. Besides, good sleep has a most soothing impact in the overall physical and mental health. Further, impulsiveness and moodiness can be controlled through breathing exercises or pranayam.

ii) ***Tranquility***

A calm and cool temperament with habits of positive thinking and positive imaging can be efficacious in managing stress. Self-analysis can also help in understanding the causes of stress and in managing it rationally.

iii) ***Auto-suggestion***

Positive affirmations given to oneself once or twice a day can rekindle our self-confidence and capacity to face challenges. When we reinforce our mental and emotional strength through auto-suggestion, negative feelings tend to fade away, while positive feelings generate happiness.

iv) ***Positive thinking***

Cultivating a positive view of the self, family, friends and profession adds to the immunity against pessimism and depression. Optimism is a very powerful force to combat stress in life. As Norman Vincent Peale believes, optimism makes a great difference in our orientation and approach to life, people, situation and events. Looking to the brighter side of life is not only overcomes stress, but also augments happiness. It may be emphasised that positive reading and positive company reinforce positive thinking which, in turn, can sustain happiness. Hence, a regular dose of positive thinking is essential in developing a habit of happiness.

v) ***Gratitude***

Psychologists as well as philosophers of life believe that a constant and habitual expression of thankfulness and gratitude can not only prevent the flow of negativity in life but also sprinkles happiness around us. In fact, happiness emerging from a sense of gratitude can create happy families and happy organisations. Psychologists believe that through gratitude, positive outlook in

life gets reinforced and there is a check on the generation of stress hormones. As a consequence, one becomes happier and more productive.

vi) ***Emotional intelligence***

Positive emotions like love, acceptance, tolerance and happiness are effective stress-relievers and thus can become chief catalysts to happiness. It should not imply that positive emotions start where negative emotions end. In real life, it is observed that both categories of emotions co-exist. Yet, the extent of their power is determined by the support that a person extends to either of them. Undoubtedly, stress can be mitigated through a calm and hopeful mind.

vii) ***Mindfulness and Meditation***

For evolving and sustaining mental calmness, perhaps the most effective means is mediation. Psychologists and physician opine that meditation, yoga and breathing control can transform our nervous system from restlessness and confusion to peace and productivity.

In sum, stress management is the key to attaining professional success and personal happiness. A totally stress-free environment is not attainable, for stress is an integral part of life. The need is to minimise the level of stress in life and work and remember that an optimal level of stress can be useful in guiding us towards greater success and enhanced happiness.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) Enumerate the important tips for stress management through better time management.

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- 2) “Executives use well-tested approaches to manage stress for sustaining their success in personal and professional life”. Elaborate.

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10.4 TIME MANAGEMENT FOR HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS

10.4.1 Time Management for Success

“Time is your most precious resource”, observes eminent management consultant, Brian Tracy. “It is the most valuable thing you have. It is perishable, it is irreplaceable, and it cannot be saved.” Eminent management thinker Peter Drucker emphasises that time management is the first problem for all managers. Further, there is a unanimous view that time management is prerequisite to success in life

and work. While the issue of ‘success in life’ is being dealt within the section on time management and happiness, in this section, we will focus on the major time management skills practiced by successful people. In a separate unit, the most important techniques of time management have been discussed. In the following paragraphs, we are revisiting the techniques and looking at them from the point of their adoption by successful people in their working styles.

i) ***Prioritising***

As has been explained in unit 9, generally tasks, whether in personal or professional life, are of four kinds: ‘Urgent and Important’, ‘Urgent and Not Important’, ‘Important but Not Urgent’ and ‘Neither Urgent, Nor Important’. While the first category of tasks that are ‘Important and Urgent’ will attain first priority, there is a problem sometimes in selecting the tasks that need to be tackled as the second priority. Normally, the ‘Urgent and Not Important’ tasks are given a second priority, the reason being that their urgency becomes overwhelming and therefore, a manager is forced to accord such tasks high priority. In this process, the third type of tasks, that is ‘Important but Not Urgent’ get marginalised and relegated to the low priority zone. This approach can have a harmful effect on Organisational effectiveness. Ideally, important tasks should not become secondary to the less important tasks even though the latter may be urgent. Hence, the need is to assign deadlines even to those important tasks, which may not be urgent. Lastly, the fourth category of tasks, i.e. ‘Neither Urgent, Nor Important’ should be addressed only if there is spare time.

ii) ***Split the Time***

Some career coaches recommend splitting time into ‘focus’ days and ‘buffer’ days. The ‘focus’ days should be used for big-picture or most significant tasks, while the ‘buffer’ days can be used for tackling nitty-gritty or routine tasks like file work and accounting. The routine tasks generally take a big chunk of time, while the innovative and creative endeavours are generally starved of time. That is why ‘focus’ days become crucial to the effectiveness and productivity of an Organisation. Little wonder, a few successful managers keep aside a day of the week as ‘no meeting day’. This saves time for undertaking more creative work.

iii) ***Early day Start***

As mentioned in unit 7, a large number of successful executives start their day early. The Apple CEO Tim Cook starts his work at 5.00 a.m.; the legendary anchor Oprah Winfrey wakes up at 5.00 a.m., does meditation for 20 minutes and rushes on the treadmill before reaching the studio. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ratan Tata and Narayan Murthy are among those who start their day quite early.

iv) ***Focus on One Task at a time***

“One thing at a time and that done well is a very good rule that many can tell”. Neuroscientist Earl Miller views that, for the most part, we simply cannot focus on more than one thing at a time. Multi-tasking has its own limitations. True efficiency lies in finishing a task at one go and then moving to the next one.

v) ***Keeping Time for Distractions and Interruptions***

Time scheduling for a day should not be unduly tight. At least one hour should be left each day for taking up unplanned and unexpected tasks. This hour can also be used for collaborating with colleagues and doing something new and creative. No doubt, efforts should be made to reduce distractions as much as possible.

vi) ***Reducing Stress***

Stress management and time management go hand in hand. A stress-free mind can help in getting the best results out of the time spent. Likewise, sound time management can help in controlling stress. This way, we are able to meet deadlines and conduct our tasks more efficiently. Successful people know that they can't be on the clock 24/7. They need time away to distress, recharge and focus. One should have time for reading, writing, learning something new, socialise and build one's network.

vii) ***Less re-work***

When an administrator is well organised, focused and efficient, s/he would not make many mistakes and the chances of forgetting important items get minimised. As Bill Gates observes, "Don't make the same decision twice. Spend time and thought to make a solid decision the first time so that you don't revisit the issue unnecessarily". Right decisions are not made under pressure. When an administrator is not pressurised for time, s/he can reflect, analyse the available information and thus, make the best decision possible.

viii) ***Effective Delegation and Monitoring***

Selecting the best people in one's work-team and delegating to them important tasks is a great time-saver. In fact, people with specialised talent can do things much better than done by generalists who are over-burdened with sundry work. However, the leader of the team will have to monitor the work of all the personnel and guide them to excel in their performance.

ix) ***Developing reputation***

A good administrator is punctual, meets deadlines, fulfills her/his promises and thus, is respected as a reliable person. There is predictability about her/him and hence, s/he gains a reputation, which helps her/him in being considerably successful.

x) ***80/20's rule***

As has been explained in Unit 9, the successful people employ the Pareto Principle (i.e. the 80/20 rule). As per this rule, 20 percent of actions produce 80 percent of results, while the rest of the 80 percent time accounts for only 20 percent of results. Accordingly, the successful people focus on the top 20 percent activities that will produce 80 percent results, and delegate the rest to the right persons in the Organisation.

The above is not an exhaustive list of time management practices employed by successful administrators or managers. In fact, all techniques of effective time management lead to success. Each executive can devise his or her own strategy for managing time, which may lead to successful outcomes. Time teaches everyone to improve and excel.

10.4.2 Time Management and Happiness

Since time management is life management, it has close relationship with happiness or disappointment in life. Poor time management leads to poor life management, which is bound to lead to unhappiness. On the contrary, sound and positive time management can enrich happiness in life.

The human life has seven facets: physical, mental, emotional and behavioural, religious and spiritual, familial, social and professional. Positive time management style apportions adequate time for all the seven dimensions of life. In case

sufficient time is not invested in any one of the dimensions noted above, that particular dimension suffers and the resultant imbalance can lead to personal and professional ineffectiveness. Thus, there is need for striking a proper balance among all the seven dimensions in a scheme of time management. A lapse on any of the fronts may cause unhappiness or dissatisfaction.

The Rainbow Life

Let us metaphorically call a complete or holistic life as a “Rainbow Life”. As is well known, a rainbow has seven colours; likewise, life too has seven dimensions, which have been enumerated above. A wise person invests time on all the seven facets, after deeply assessing the priority of each. But, let us understand the implications of a rainbow life for time management. It is assumed that a balanced personality is a happy personality. Let us take all the seven dimensions (figure 10.1) from the perspective of time management.

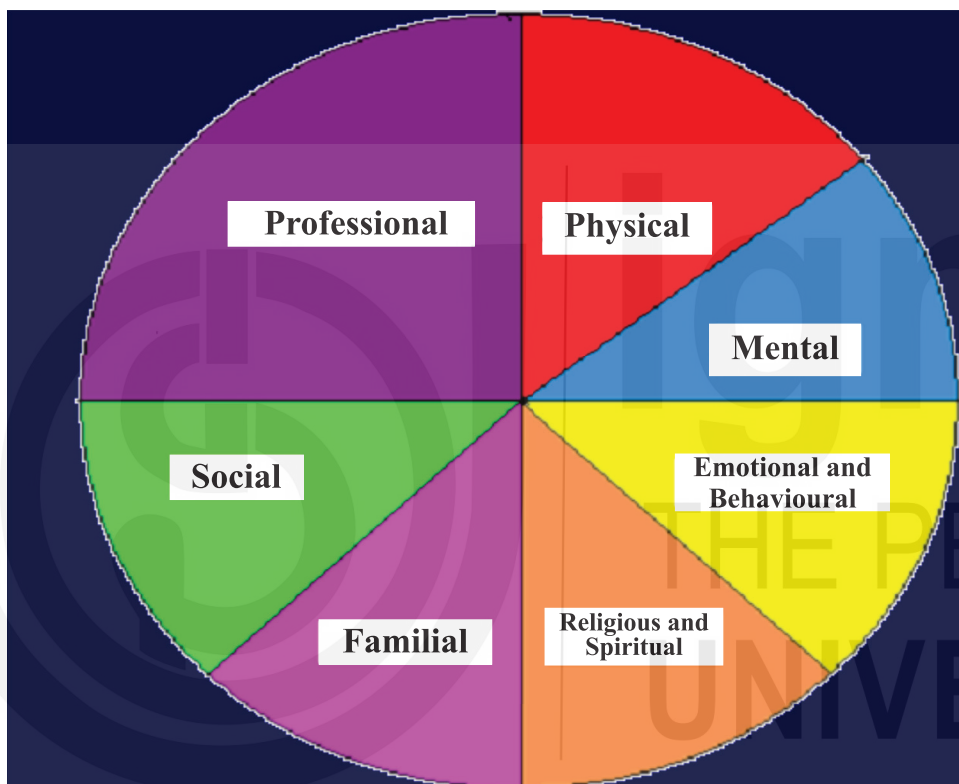


Figure 10.1 : Seven Dimensions of Life

i) *Physical Excellence*

Adequate time needs to be spent on regular meals, walking, exercise/yoga, relaxation, rest and sleep. As far as possible, there should be a fixed time for specific physical activities. Working overtime at the cost of health may lead to stress and burnout. Mahatma Gandhi was a great advocate of regularity in physical activities. He believed that we are all trustees of our bodies and hence, it is our solemn duty to remain healthy. However, several persons do not follow the maxims of balanced time management. The following flaws in the domain of physical excellence are generally noticed in the time management style of quite a few persons:

- a) Meals timings are not regular.
- b) Walking and physical exercises are undertaken in fits and starts. Yoga is not practiced regularly.
- c) Relaxation time is either very little or excessive.

- d) Sleep hours are either too short or too long.

As a result, immunity and energy of individuals get compromised and debility or illness consumes considerable. All this has an adverse impact on the happiness of individuals.

ii) ***Mental Excellence***

Adequate time ought to be given to mental and intellectual growth of a person. Everyone should spare time to read positive, purposive and creative literature every day. Sound ideas ought to percolate into the conscious and subconscious states of mind. Therefore, good reading must be considered as a requisite for sound mental development. "Reading maketh the man," remarked eminent essayist Francis Bacon. Finding time for reading good literature, philosophy or any other purposive books or periodicals is a most satisfying pursuit. Bill Gates, Narayan Murthy, Ratan Tata and others are devout readers of good books. Gates reads on an average 50 books every year. Since happiness is a state of mind, it gets reinforced through positive thinking. The famous book, *Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale, underlines that positive thoughts boost mental energy and lead to a happy disposition. Time for reflection, introspection and self-analysis generate a soothing and joyful disposition. The following limitations are generally noticed in the time management of most people in regard to mental excellence:

- a) Unduly long time is spent on reading multiple newspapers, watching negative news on the electronic media and reading low-quality fiction. Books on positive thinking, positive living and happiness are read only rarely and superficially.
- b) Adequate time is not spent on the analysis of one's life-events, reflection and introspection.
- c) Hardly any time is given to writing to journals or diaries. Gandhi ji once remarked that the greatest impact on his life was through his diary that he wrote regularly.

iii) ***Emotional and Behavioural Dimensions***

Nurturing positive emotions like love, faith, hope, joy and calmness enhances happiness. This becomes possible, among other things, through introspection and pranayam. Negative emotions like anger, hatred, jealousy and fear must be gradually banished from mind through introspection (looking within), catharsis (getting rid of troublesome feelings by expressing them) and self-analysis. Unless one analyses the root causes of negative emotions, they are difficult to be eliminated.

Emotions of a person influence his or her behaviour. Positive feelings prompt positive behaviour, while negative emotions trigger negative behaviour. Cool, congenial and cooperative behaviour helps build affable relations among people and leads to happiness. On the contrary, stressful human relations become Time-wasters. Positive human behaviour is characterised by love, respect, appreciation, empathy, compassion, tolerance, patience and acceptance. These attitudes help in strengthening mutual inter-personal bonds, and thus lead to happiness. On the other hand, jealousy, hatred, criticism, indifference, impatience and feelings of revenge drastically reduce happiness. A good time manager reflects on his behavioural styles and makes necessary modifications in them, if found necessary. Such time spent on self-analysis is a great happiness-booster.

It has been noticed that certain emotional and behavioural practices cause wastage of time. For example:

- a) Avoidable conflicts, jealousies, acrimony, interferences in others' affairs consume considerable time and generate unhappiness.
- b) Anger is a big time-waster and an impulsive behaviour causes damage to mutual understanding and trigger unhappiness.
- c) People in India are highly sensitive and take little setbacks or to heart. They get depressed very easily.

These problems can be addressed through proper pranayam or breathing control and meditation, yet adequate time is not invested in such life-transforming practices.

iv) ***Religious Life and Spiritual Development***

Religious rituals like visiting places of worship, reading scriptures, listening to devotional music and visiting saints and gurus are quite common in India. Such practices undertaken in a balanced manner help in making mind peaceful and enhancing happiness. Besides the 'ritual,' there is the 'spiritual' dimension of life, that is supported by deep reflection and meditation. Spiritual growth helps us to conquer negativity and promotes positivity in life. It makes us strong, patient, tolerant, courageous and fearless. Moreover, spiritualism makes life meaningful and vitalises the altruistic and moral fiber of man.

In recent years, there has been a great stress on community prayers, devotional music, chanting and celebrating religious festivals. These practices may give relief to mind, yet the most effective tool for kindling happiness remains the ancient practice of meditation. In spite of its utility, it has not become popular with masses. The 'ritual' is more easily accepted than the 'spiritual', even though meditation can bring equanimity, tranquility and happiness.

v) ***Familial Facet***

One must give adequate time to one's family, including parents, spouse and children. Likewise, others in our extended family who need our help and association also should be given adequate time. There are two greatest joys in life: the joy of family and the joy of work. A happy family life is a great motivator for excellence even in professional life. When parents spend time with their children, they instill in them a feeling of security and a sense of belongingness. In the absence of adequate quality time for the family, avoidable complaints, misunderstandings and conflicts occur that are serious time-wasters and impediments to happiness. Prudent time management, thus is a veritable source of family happiness.

For the people who are exceedingly committed to their profession or are overburdened with official work, giving quality time to family becomes difficult. This comes in the way of work-life balance and eventually, diminishes happiness in life.

vi) ***Social Excellence***

There are two kinds of people around us – those who need us and those whom we need. Both are important and both need our time. One must, however, refrain from being either over-social or under-social. Those who are over-social waste time and money, and those who are under-social deny themselves the pleasure of good company and support. A balanced social life is a life of fulfillment. There is no greater service in life than giving love, support and solace when they are genuinely needed by people around us.

vii) *Professional Excellence*

A valuable portion of our active life is spent in fulfilling our professional responsibilities. One needs to be efficient, creative, committed, responsible and responsive in one's job. Punctuality and integrity are the foundations of sound professionalism. Besides the main job, there could be other associated professional activities that are important for overall professional growth. A congenial atmosphere at workplace creates feelings of happiness among its members. And this inner joy gets transmitted to the family and social circles. Conversely, undue office politics, bickering and blame-culture shrink the scope of professional happiness. We should try to cultivate happy individuals as well as happy organisations that are characterised by trust, congeniality and cooperation.

It should be well appreciated that equal time cannot be given to all the seven dimensions of life. Depending on situations and circumstances, flexibility is the only feasible strategy of time management while striking a balance among all the seven dimensions. Illness, job interviews, examinations, visits of guests, celebrations, festivals, family and social engagements, travel, financial year ending pressures etc. demand extra time. Therefore, during normal times, one has to be adjusting in creating a balance among all the seven dimensions and ensuring that no facet of life is ignored in the processes of life-management and time-management.

The above mentioned seven colours of life make it a 'rainbow life'. An important point to be noted is that there is no black colour in a rainbow. Here 'blackness' means negative feelings, thoughts, habits and patterns of behaviour and work. Thus, one has to work on enhancing the positive side of life and containing the negative one. Truly, happiness is a difficult goal to be achieved, but prudent time management undoubtedly makes happiness an achievable goal. Balanced time management, therefore, is key to making a person a 'complete' being, that is able to generate and experience happiness in life.

Time Management Skills for Happiness

The most significant aspect of nurturing happiness is through leading complete or a rainbow life. However, a few other essential following tips can be useful in this respect:

i) *Know your Work Zones*

One should be aware of the right time for the right tasks. When can a person work most and in which areas? There are tasks that require a lot of thinking, while others need only physical labour. Thus, there is need to apportion appropriate time to various tasks according to their nature and importance.

ii) *Clarity about Priorities*

Tasks should be classified according to their importance and urgency. Important tasks are those which take us nearer to our goals. Besides, there will be tasks that have deadlines to meet. Priority has to be given to these two kinds of tasks. Everything else goes into the category of "other things", which can be tackled at appropriate time. Sometimes non-urgent but important tasks have to be made urgent and put first, as has been suggested by Stephen Covey.

iii) *Create a Time Map*

All the doable tasks should be assigned specific time slots during a day. Francesco Cirillo has developed the "Promodovo Techniques" where one sets a timer and only work on that task during that amount of time. We should put time limits on the

amount of time we spend on things that normally take too much time. Generally, emails, social networking and official meeting take too much time. Putting a time cap on such activities will save time for other more essential activities.

iv) ***Time to Drift and Relax***

We need 'brain time' to relax, rest, daydream, imagine, plan, create and read. Such breaks give new energy to body and mind. Sometimes, it is fine to stop work and go for a walk, stretch, watch a good video, read interesting books or listen to a favourite song.

v) ***Smile while doing Anything***

A habit of keeping a smile on your face while doing work, driving, relaxing, reading and listening to others will give a boost to our energy and help to become more peaceful and cheerful.

vi) ***Keep a Time Diary for Week***

Keeping a time-log in a diary is the best strategy for time auditing. A person doing so will know the strengths and weaknesses of her/his time management style and decide what to focus on and what to de-emphasise. This can be done on a weekly basis.

vii) ***Avoid Overburdening and Excessive Multitasking***

One should learn the art of saying 'no' to things that one cannot do on account of time-pressure. Excessive work has a negative effect on body and mind. One should do what can be done efficiently and within the time available. Stresses and pressures should be avoided whenever possible.

Time Management Practices that diminish Happiness

In unit 7 of this course, mention has been made of several time-wasters that reduce administrative effectiveness. Yet, a brief reference to time management practices that have a negative impact on happiness may be attempted. A few of such habits and practices are as follows:

- Unclear goals
- Excessive multitasking
- Unplanned work
- No to-do lists
- Unfinished tasks
- Unfulfilled promises
- No attachment with work
- Overburdening with work
- Burnout
- Undisciplined life
- Procrastination
- Lack of a sense of responsibility
- Incomplete or flawed communication
- Unpunctuality
- Poor work culture.

Detailed reference to the above factors has been made in other units.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) Examine and suggest any five significant techniques of time management that can be adopted for success.

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- 2) “Positive time management style apportions adequate time for all the seven dimensions of life”. Comment.

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10.5 CONCLUSION

In the narrative above, in this Unit, we have examined the features of sound time management and the manner in which these can lead to success in professional life and augmentation of happiness in personal and social life. Since time management is life-management, the skills and strategies employed in this respect are bound to influence happiness and success.

Stress generally has a negative influence on the state of our body and mind. It can and should be controlled and regulated. A positive outlook on life, care for physical, mental and emotional health, a sense of gratitude, mindfulness and meditation, among other things, are essential instruments for controlling stress and promoting happiness. There are no rigid techniques of time and stress management that will work in all situations. One has to be selective and choose the most appropriate ones for augmenting happiness and promoting success. That will be real wisdom.

10.6 GLOSSARY

Diffidence: It refers to quality or state of being unassertive or bashful, which reflects a lack of self-confidence. The noun diffidence comes from Latin word diffidere which means “to mistrust” or “lack of confidence”. It is often mistaken for snootiness because people generally don’t understand that the diffident person is shy and lacking in confidence.

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10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Maintain work-life balance.
 - Follow the guidelines of good health, pranayam, relaxation and meditation.

- Be realistic about multi-dimensional goals.
- Plan your work and work your plan.
- Prepare daily to-do list as per priorities.
- Tackle complex problems with care and caution.
- Delegate and monitor the work delegated effectively.
- Do time-auditing. Cut Time-wasters. Employ time-savers.
- Develop a habit of happiness.

2) Your answer should include the following points:

- Keeping problems in perspective
- Self-awareness
- Self-reassurance
- Controlling situations
- Company of positive people
- Relaxation
- Healthy coping Skills
- Resilience
- Focus on progress, not perfection
- Realistic Goals
- Developing affinity among team-members.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Your answer should include the following points:

- Prioritising
- Split the time
- Early day start
- Focus on One Task at a time
- Keeping time for distractions and interruptions
- Reducing stress
- Less re-work
- Effective delegation and monitoring
- Developing reputation
- 80/20's rule.

2) Your answer should include the following points:

- For your answer, refer Sub-section 10.4.2

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