

Chapter 2

Managing Stress and Time

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Managing stress and time management are critical not only for employee well-being but also for performance and organizational effectiveness. Unmanaged stress costs employers billions of dollars each year. This chapter presents models of stress that focus on the primary sources of stress and how to combat them. Additionally, as time pressures are a major source of stress, the chapter presents strategies for effective time management.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

KNOWING OBJECTIVES

1. Know the most common causes of stress and identify effective stress management interventions for them
2. Identify and describe evidence for effective stress management interventions
3. Recognize the most common time management traps and the effective time management techniques to avoid them
4. Identify the characteristics of workplace cultures that reduce stress while retaining high performance

DOING OBJECTIVES

1. Diagnose your own (and a colleague's) sources of stress and apply evidence-based strategies to manage stress
2. Adapt research-supported strategies to minimize choking in pressure situations
3. Implement effective time management techniques
4. Facilitate workplace characteristics that promote high performance, health, and low stress

KEY STUDENT QUESTIONS

Students will approach this chapter asking these questions:

1. What are problems associated with excessive stress?
2. What can organizations do to minimize stress while also encouraging high performance? And what can I do to personally minimize my stress and better manage my time?

In answering these questions, the instructor might start with what students already know about stress from their own personal experiences. Ask students to list their top 5 stressors (the things that cause stress). Next ask them to list the emotions and physiological reactions they experience in the moment of stress (e.g., racing heart, fear). Next ask them to list any long term outcomes (strains) they might have experienced as a result of long-term stress (e.g., headaches, illnesses after final exam periods). Upon reflection, students already know a lot about what stress is like and the negative effects it can have on a personal level. Students may not realize, however, that stress can be harmful on an organizational and societal level. Students might buy into one of the common “stress myths” addressed in the chapter (i.e., “Stress is a personal, non-work issue and should not be a concern in a work organization”). As such, students might feel that stress is something of a “soft” topic that is not worthy of rigorous attention from management. Thus, the instructor may wish to have students explore the internet and academic journals for evidence of the harmful effects of stress. An abundance of research exists showing that stress results in billions of dollars of losses in productivity annually. Moreover, stress can increase accidents, injuries, and healthcare costs.

There are many stress management techniques that people employ – the instructor may wish to have students create a list of healthy (e.g., exercise) and unhealthy strategies (drinking alcohol) for managing stress. The list could be further divided into primary prevention strategies which aim to eliminate the stressor and secondary intervention strategies which aim to cope with unavoidable strategies. Research supports the benefits of several stress management techniques in particular: these are exercise and physical well-being, having a strong social support network, and meditation/relaxation techniques.

With regard to time management techniques, students may already be aware of some of the suggestions in the chapter. However, because many people suffer a “knowing-doing gap” in this domain, it will be important to reinforce that when it comes to time management, the *implementation* of the knowledge is crucial. As detailed in some of the Tool Kits and Management Live exercises below, the instructor might assign a project in which students keep a record of how they spend their time during one week. Students should identify the biggest time drains in their schedule and create an action plan to address these time drains in the following week. Students should write a report detailing the effectiveness of the action plan and recommend any modifications for the future.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Introduction

A. Definitions

- A. Stress = the physiological and psychological states of arousal (e.g., rapid heartbeat, sweating, anxiety) activated when we encounter a stressor
- B. Strains = outcomes (usually long-term) of stress (e.g., tension headaches, depression)

II. Personal and organizational consequences of stress

- A. Managers under stress have been shown to selectively perceive information, fixate on single solutions to problems, revert to old habits to cope with current situations, show less creativity, and overestimate how fast time is passing.
- B. Medical researchers estimate that 50 - 70 % of disease and illness are in part due to long-term stress (e.g., heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, and lung disease).
- C. Costs of stress are estimated to be as high as \$300 billion annually in U.S.
- D. Some stress is good
 - A. Eustress = a controlled or optimal level of stress that gives us our competitive edge and enhances performance
 - B. Research shows that a moderate amount of stress can actually protect health in some ways

III. Stress is personal: Individual differences and their relationship to stress

- A. Transactional theory suggests that the negative effects of stress are a function of the interaction between the person and the environment
 - 1. Primary appraisal = the person examines the potential stressor and determines whether it is a threat - if not, they do not experience stress
 - 2. Secondary appraisal = if the stressor is viewed as a threat in primary appraisal, the person assesses their capabilities to handle the stressor
- B. Type A behavior pattern
 - 1. First identified by cardiologists, Friedman and Rosenbaum in the 1950's
 - 2. Describes a cluster of characteristics: perfectionism, impatience, ambitiousness, hostility, and time urgency
 - 3. The hostility component of Type A is related to cardiovascular heart disease

C. Locus of control

1. The extent to which people believe they control their own environments
 - a. Internal locus of control = belief that we control our own lives
 - b. External locus of control = belief that things outside of us control our lives
2. In general having an internal locus of control is beneficial
3. However, too strong an internal locus of control may erroneously think they can control things they cannot and put themselves in danger

D. Self-efficacy

1. A personal assessment of one's own ability to execute the necessary actions to handle a particular situation
2. In general, higher self-efficacy is beneficial – the belief that one can succeed is motivating and leads to persistence in the face of obstacles

IV. Common sources and causes of stress

A. Traumatic events versus daily hassles

- A. Both traumatic events (e.g., divorce, death of loved one, layoff) and daily hassles (e.g., computer crash, long commute, deadlines) are stressful
- B. Research shows we tend to overestimate the effects of traumatic events and underestimate the effects of daily hassles
- C. Daily hassles are highly related to mood, fatigue, and perceived workload

B. Role conflict and role ambiguity

- A. All of us have numerous roles (e.g., employee, student, daughter/son, spouse, friend, volunteer, pet owner)
- B. Role theory examines how these roles relate to stress
- C. Role ambiguity = occurs when people are not sure what their roles are or how to fulfill them
- D. Role conflict = occurs when our multiple roles conflict with each other
 1. Work-family conflict = a form of interrole conflict when roles of work and family are incompatible with each other in some way
 2. Work-interferences with family (WIF) = when work roles prevent someone from fulfilling the family role
 3. Family-interferences with work (FIW) = when family roles prevent someone from fulfilling the work role
- E. Research on role theory shows that role ambiguity, role conflict, and work-family conflict are associated with stress and worse well-being

C. Exhaustion of resources and burnout

- A. Conservation of resources (COR) is a model suggesting that stress results from 3 possible threats to our resources
 - 1. The threat of losing a personal resource
 - 2. The actual net loss of a personal resource
 - 3. The lack of resource gain following investment of other personal resources
- B. Burnout is a syndrome that can occur after prolonged stress that has exceeded ones resources to address
- C. 3 components of burnout
 - 1. Emotional exhaustion = the state of being psychologically “drained” or “used up”
 - 2. Depersonalization = feeling cynical, psychologically detached, and indifferent to one’s work
 - 3. Reduced personal accomplishment = feeling one’s work no longer matters
- D. Research on burnout
 - 1. Can occur in any job (although may occur more in “helping” professions)
 - 2. More educated workers are more prone to burnout
 - 3. Married employees show less burnout than single employees

D. Emotional labor

- A. Emotional labor = the process of regulating emotions and expressions for the benefit or organizational goals
 - 1. Surface acting = managing one’s observable expressions (e.g., smiling at a customer even when irritated)
 - 2. Deep acting = managing one’s actual emotions to be consistent with what is needed on the job
- B. Research on emotional labor
 - 1. Emotional labor can occur in any job but may be more common in helping professions or jobs requiring extensive interactions with others
 - 2. Emotional labor is related to stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and turnover intentions

E. High demands and low control

- A. Demand-control model of stress shows that stress is especially likely when people simultaneously experience high demands and low control
- B. Demands = physical, intellectual, and emotional requirements of a job
- C. Control = the amount of personal discretion and autonomy a job provides
- D. Social support may help buffer the negative effects of high demands and low control

V. The importance of matching strategies with causes

- A. Different people and types of stressors call for different coping strategies
- B. Primary prevention strategies = prevent stress by removing the stressor or cause of the stress
 - A. Enhancing control and predictability
 - B. Social connectedness – having support helps us manage stressors
 - 1. Instrumental support = tangible and practical support
 - 2. Emotional support = sympathy, empathy, caring
 - 3. Informational support = information that helps solve a problem
 - 4. Appraisal support = feedback that develops someone else’s self-esteem
- C. Avoiding choking
 - A. Choking = suffering from performance decrements under pressure circumstances
 - B. Two antidotes for choking
 - 1. Pressure practice = practice under high pressure situations
 - 2. Focused, automated behavior = train until a behavior becomes automated
- D. Coping strategies = secondary interventions that do not remove the stressor but try to minimize its negative effects (e.g., exercise, meditation)
 - A. Psychological Hardiness = the ability to remain psychologically stable and healthy in the face of significant stress.
 - 1. Four factors distinguish those with psychological hardiness:
 - a. Physical fitness: People who are fit are less likely to be ill and are more resilient to stress
 - b. Commitment = the ability to persevere through hard times, and a sense of connection beyond a single domain
 - c. Control: Psychologically hardy people gain control of difficult situations by taking action, and intentionally maintain a positive outlook.
 - d. Challenge: Seeing problems as challenges rather than a threats makes it easier to look for (and find) solutions
- E. Dealing with Stress in the Moment
 - A. Muscle relaxation: Tense then relax all major muscle groups starting with feet and working up to head
 - B. Deep breathing: Take deep, slow breaths from diaphragm several times to activate the relaxation side of the autonomic nervous system

- C. Mood repair: Learn what puts you in a positive mood and use it when experiencing stress

VI. Managing Time

- A. Start With Written Goals
 - 1. Goals that are written down are more concrete and specific, and therefore more effective, than unwritten goals.
 - 2. Goals should be reviewed and prioritized
- B. Follow the 80/20 Rule
 - 1. Roughly 80% of the value comes from 20% of the tasks you perform.
 - 2. Analyze which tasks make up the most important 20% for you and focus on them.
- C. Use the Time Management Matrix
 - 1. Categorize activities based on importance and urgency
 - 2. Urgent activities demand immediate attention
 - 3. Important activities are tied to your goals and produce a desired result
- D. Just DON'T Do It - Learn to Say "No"
 - 1. If you say no to less important tasks, you will be able to devote yourself fully to more important tasks.
 - 2. Examples of ways to say no:
 - a. "I'm sorry. That's not a priority for me right now."
 - b. "I have made so many commitments to others; it would be unfair to them and you if I took on anything more at this point."
 - c. "No."
- E. Plan the Work, Then Work the Plan
 - 1. Make good lists for effective prioritization
 - 2. Basics of Good Lists
 - a. Create/review them every day, ideally at the same consistent time
 - b. Keep them visible
 - c. Use them as a guide to action
 - d. Keep all to-do items together, not on separate scraps of paper.
 - e. Use the ABC method for prioritizing items - A, high; B, medium; C, low.
- F. Ask "What's the Next Action?"
 - 1. The next action is the next physical, visible activity that needs to be done to move toward completion
 - 2. Know what the next action is and write it down

- G. Know Yourself and Your Time Use
 - 1. Examine your time usage and identify problem areas
 - 2. Know when you work best:
 - a. Internal prime time - the time of day when we typically work best
 - b. External prime time - the time of day when it is best to attend to other people
 - H. Fight Procrastination
 - 1. Procrastination = putting off important tasks until later
 - 2. The Swiss Cheese Method
 - a. Poke small holes in a big project - pick small tasks and use them to get started on a project when you are procrastinating
 - I. The 2-Minute Rule
 - 1. Any time demand that will take less than 2 minutes should be done now
 - 2. Quick tasks take longer to categorize than to get done
- VII. Workplace cultures that foster high performance with lower stress
- A. Frequent and open communication
 - 1. Share information to reduce uncertainty
 - 2. Clearly define employee roles and responsibilities
 - B. Employee participation
 - 1. Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them
 - 2. Consult employees about schedules and work issues
 - C. Incentives for work-life balance
 - 1. Praise good work performance
 - 2. Provide opportunities for development
 - D. Cultivate a friendly social climate
 - 1. Provide opportunities for social interaction between employees
 - 2. Establish zero-tolerance policy for harassment

CASES

Stress Reduction as a Business Strategy

The case discusses massive layoffs and the stresses encountered not only to people who lost their jobs but also to the “layoff survivors.” Many companies have Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) as part of their benefits package. EAPs provide services to employees by offering training sessions and counseling during times of stress (e.g., layoffs, alcohol or drug abuse, divorce, relationship problems).

The case poses questions to students about whether they or their family or friends have experienced survivor's guilt and if so, how it was handled. Student responses will vary but it is likely that many students will have at least indirect experience with this issue. Unemployment during the past few years has been high and layoffs have been common. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 1600 mass layoffs occurred in the private nonfarm sector in the second quarter of 2011 (<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/mslo.pdf>). These layoffs resulted in the separation of more than 261,000 workers from their jobs for at least one month.

Layoff survivors often face a wide range of emotions and thoughts ranging from sadness, to guilt, to fear that they will be the next to lose their jobs. Moreover, layoff survivors are often burdened by additional tasks and responsibilities that exist because there are fewer employees to handle the same amount of work. Although we often focus on the challenges faced by people who have lost their jobs, we cannot forget that even the "lucky" people who remain employed have their own difficulties. Organizations that must lay off employees should devote resources to help minimize the traumatic effects on layoff survivors. If these issues are ignored, serious morale and productivity problems may result.

Possible answers to "Case Concluded" discussion questions.

1. Answers will vary. Some of the most damaging contemporary causes of stress today might be interpersonal issues, stresses caused by the bad economy, or stress due to technological advances. Although the physiological and psychological experience of stress today might be quite similar to that experienced by people in the past, the nature of stressors has undoubtedly changed over time. Our distant ancestors were likely to experience more stress due to the elements – famines, droughts, and storms that are more predictable and controllable today due to technology advances in forecasting, irrigation systems, and government and non-profit relief agencies that assist people in these circumstances. We also have medical advances today such as antibiotics, general anesthesia and surgery procedures that prevent illness, death, and also a great deal of stress! However, we still have many stressors in modern life. While we might not fear death due to a common bacterial infection, we are more susceptible to diabetes and heart disease because of our sedentary lifestyle. Additionally, while technology allows us to alleviate stress by keeping current on important news events and communicating easily with coworkers, friends, and family, this ease of communicating electronically can also be a stressor. Some people feel that electronic communications have damaged relationships because we don't get together face-to-face as frequently. Additionally, technology handcuffs us to work even when we are not physically at work. Indeed, it might be both a stress relief and a cause of stress to be able to check work email while at home or on vacation.

2. A manager should first try to do some research and investigation into the nature of the stress that employees are experiencing. For example, what are the causes of the stress? How many employees are experiencing stress because of these causes? If there is a way for the manager to eliminate or reduce the source of the stress, that would be one effective way to help the situation. For example, if research indicates that employees feel unsure about the nature of their roles, management can do a better job of communicating and reducing role ambiguity. Or, if employees are stressed about having to work a lot of overtime, management may need to consider hiring additional labor (either part-time, full-time, or even temporary employees). If the stressors cannot be eliminated or reduced, the manager might wish to introduce ways to help employees cope with their stress to minimize the damages it can do if it is left unchecked. The manager might recommend to top management that an Employee Assistance Program be offered as a benefit and the manager could encourage highly stressed employees to seek counseling. The manager might also hire someone to provide on-site yoga classes to reduce stress or host “walking meetings” outside. It is true that managers do not have to be concerned about their employees’ stress levels. However, good managers know that stress can interfere with productivity and well-being and result in great financial costs to the company.
3. Yes, there is evidence that stress reduction programs work. Some programs might work better for certain individuals and stressors, however. If an employee is stressed because of a lack of time, she might benefit most from time-management training and a flexible work schedule. If another employee is stressed because of family problems, he might benefit most from social support or counseling. Some strategies appear to have widespread benefits such as physical activity, meditation/relaxation, and social support. And some coping strategies are clearly detrimental such as abusing drugs and alcohol.
4. EAPs are reactive in that they treat stress that has already occurred. A more proactive approach would be a “primary prevention” strategy that would attempt to eliminate or reduce the stressor – the *source* of the stress. For example, if one manager is known for bullying and harassing employees, the removal of that manager might be necessary and result in a great deal of stress reduction for employees.

Creating a Low-Stress Happy Workplace: SAS, Google, and Other Companies That Take it Seriously

Possible answers to case questions:

1. Employers may be motivated to invest in employee perks for a variety of reasons. One set of reasons is practical and based in financial motives: employee benefits might help with employee attraction, retention, and performance. Another set of reasons is less tangible and is based more on values and morals: some employers may believe that if they are capable of providing a workplace that increases employee well-being, they should do so.

2. The best answer is probably “it depends.” It is true that some research shows that the happy worker is the productive worker. But it is also true that there are many factors that contribute to productivity. What we do know is that excessive stress can hurt performance. A certain level of stress, called “eustress” is actually beneficial because it motivates us to perform well. However, excessive stress can interfere with our motivation and even our physical and mental abilities to perform.
3. Responses will vary. Some students might feel that companies that are more frugal with benefits might be a better investment choice. The instructor might wish to point out research showing that companies that are more progressive in terms of social responsibility (like providing employees with great benefits) tend to have *better* not worse financial performance. Of course, it could be the case that companies that are performing better financially are more capable of providing such benefits, but it could also be the case that providing benefits pays off in terms of better performance.
4. While many of the perks described in the case are indeed expensive, there are lower cost ways to provide perks. For example, telecommuting, like described at Accenture, could potentially even be a cost-saver by reducing office space and overhead. Other potentially low-cost strategies include offering flexible scheduling, giving employees more autonomy and control over their jobs, providing social outlets for employees (e.g., organizing a company softball league or pot-luck picnics), and increasing communication so that employees feel like they matter and have a voice in their jobs.

"MANAGE WHAT" SCENARIOS

The following sections contain suggested debriefs for each of the "Manage *What*" scenarios in this chapter.

1. Getting a Priority Done under Stress

Debrief is found at the end of the chapter within the text.

2. Overcoming the Two Biggest Time Management Traps

Debrief is found at the end of the chapter within the text.

3. Minimizing Your Chances of Choking in a Pressure Situation

Summary:

Students are asked to imagine that they are one of three finalists for a job that they really want. The selection process involves a panel interview, a presentation, and a leaderless group discussion. Because of the very high pressure involved in this situation, students might naturally be concerned about choking under the pressure. Fortunately, there are steps that can be taken to prevent choking. Students are asked to describe these steps and say what they would do to prevent choking.

Debrief:

“Choking” is the all-too-common phenomenon in which someone suffers performance decrements in a pressure situation. Choking does not only happen to the inexperienced novice but can happen to professionals as well. Before understanding how to prevent choking, it is important to think about why choking occurs. Choking is often due to anxiety that occurs and shakes one’s confidence and focus during a high pressure situation. Rather than focusing on the task at hand, the individual’s thoughts may instead be consumed by fear of failure or the physiological anxiety that he or she might be experiencing (e.g., a racing heart, sweaty palms). When our attention is focused on negative thoughts and feelings rather than on the behavior we are supposed to be performing, it is no wonder when performance suffers.

Fortunately, research shows that there are at least a couple of good options to help us refocus our attention and prevent feelings of anxiety in pressure situation. First, you can try “pressure practice” which is to practice the behavior in a pressure situation that would be similar to the pressure situation under which you will be expected to perform. For example, the student concerned about the upcoming interview might consider asking some respected family members or mentors to conduct a practice interview. The student could dress up and act as if the practice interview was the “real thing” and the interviewers should be instructed to be true to their roles as well. Similarly, the student could practice the presentation in front of a group of friends or a student organization. Although these situations might not be as intense and stressful as the actual job interview and presentation, they will pose some pressure which will allow the student to practice under more realistic conditions.

4. Making Changes in a Workplace That Lower Stress and Enhance (not lower) Productivity

Debrief is found at the end of the chapter within the text.

MANAGEMENT LIVE

2.1 Choking Under Stress: It Even Happens to Superstars

As discussed in “Manage This” 2.3 of this chapter, “choking” is a performance decrement that occurs when someone is in a high pressure situation. The “Manage this” scenario asks students to identify strategies for minimizing the likelihood of choking. The instructor might also wish to ask students to recall a time when they choked under pressure. What happened and could it have been prevented?

The textbook gives the example from professional soccer in which penalty kicks that are shot to win are 92% successful versus shots to tie (and avoid defeat) which are only 60% successful. Clearly, the kicking ability of the player does not change between these situations, rather it is something psychological going on that is more problematic for the player who is kicking to avoid defeat rather than to win. Although both are high pressure situations, the thought of being the player that wins the game for the team is arguably a “good” kind of pressure while the thought of being the player that loses the game for the team is a “bad” kind of pressure.

The difference between these two frames of mind relate to Higgin’s (1997) regulatory focus theory. According to this theory, our efforts can be driven by two very different kinds of focuses. The first is an *approach* or “promotion-focused” orientation and the second is an *avoidance* or “prevention-focused” orientation. When people are prevention-focused their emphasis is on avoiding losses and negatives; as such, they tend to view goals as “oughts” and pursue strategies of vigilance so to be on the lookout for negatives (Higgins, 1997). In contrast, when people are promotion-focused, their emphasis is on gains and accomplishments; goals are viewed as “ideals” and are pursued with eagerness (Higgins, 1997).

The instructor might have students describe a time when they felt that they had a promotion-focused orientation to a situation and another time when they felt they had a prevention-focused orientation to a situation.

Discussion questions:

1. Why do you think you had a promotion-focused (or prevention-focused) orientation in that situation?
2. What was the outcome? Did you perform well? Poorly? Why?
3. Do you think choking is more likely in a prevention-focused orientation? Why or why not?
4. Do you think there are situations when it is beneficial to have a prevention-focused orientation? If so, what might those situations be?

Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist*, 52, 1280–1300.

2.2 Executive Fitness and Performance

An abundance of research demonstrates the benefits of engaging in exercise. Exercise reduces the risk for illness and diseases like diabetes, cancer, and hypertension. Exercise also can help reduce stress and can even help people perform better in their jobs and in school. As stated in the textbook, many executives are dedicated to physical activity; additionally, the two most recent American Presidents, George W. Bush and Barack Obama are exercise devotees. Even though many people believe they are too busy to engage in exercise, these leaders realize that time spent in exercise is more than recouped by the benefits in performance, health, and stress reduction. Many leaders are not only concerned with their own fitness but the fitness of their employees. According to the National Compensation Survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of employees who have access to a wellness program at work. In 1998, 35% of full-time public-sector workers and 19% of full-time private-sector workers had access to an employee wellness program. In 2008, this had increased to 54% and 28% respectively. The benefits of wellness programs might include increased employee satisfaction, reduced employee stress, increased performance, and lower health care costs.

Of relevance to students is research showing a positive relationship between physical activity and academic performance (e.g., California Department of Education, 2002); in fact, when a substantial amount of the school day is devoted to physical activity, students perform just as well if not better than students who do not get this extra time spent exercising (e.g., Shephard, 1997).

The instructor might wish to initiate a class discussion about the benefits of exercise and assess students' beliefs about the importance of exercise for not only physical health but also mental health and academic performance. The instructor might even hold a competition challenging students to commit to a certain amount of exercise for the remainder of the semester. Students can set exercise goals for each week and track progress to those goals along with other important academic goals such as study time, class attendance, and grades on papers and exams. Through such records, students could assess the benefits of exercise and see if there are any patterns between exercise habits and academic success in their own lives.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. National compensation survey.
<http://www.bls.gov/opub/cwc/cm20090416ar01p1.htm>

Shephard RJ. Curricular physical activity and academic performance. *Pediatric Exercise Science*, 1997;9:113-125.

2.3 Never Check Email in the Morning – and Other Surprising Time Savers

This Management Live recommends several time-saving strategies that might be surprising or counterintuitive to students: 1) don't check email first thing; 2) avoid the urge to multitask; 3) shorten your workday; 4) take a break; 5) don't do chores when big deadlines loom; and 6) always tackle the most important job first, though it might be the most difficult and time consuming.

The instructor can assign students to identify at least two or three of these strategies that they routinely violate. Students could then actively attempt to follow the strategies for the following week and even set goals and incentives for continuing to follow the strategy.

In addition to avoiding time-management traps, students should think about their internal and external prime times through the week. Each of us has both external and internal prime time. Internal prime time is that time of the day when we typically work best – morning, afternoon or evening. External prime time is the best time to attend to other people – those you have to deal with in classes, work or at home. Internal prime time is the time when you concentrate best.

Interestingly, studies have shown that most business people pick the first couple of hours at work as their internal prime time, yet this is usually the time they read the newspaper, answer routine mail, review yesterday's unanswered emails and talk to colleagues and associates. It would be much better to save such routine tasks for non-prime hours. Students often schedule their classes during their internal prime time when it would be better used for study and completion of deliverables.

In terms of what you would not want to do (common traps) there are some very frequent and persistent patterns. For example, people lack goal clarity (rarely write goals down) and thus stress distracts them into neglecting true high-priority work in favor of seemingly urgent tasks. Similarly, it is seductive to do lots of "C" priority tasks before embarking on "A" priority tasks and use personal prime time for low priority tasks.

Discussion questions:

1. Which strategies did you find were most effective in helping you use your time more effectively?
2. Which strategies were the hardest for you to implement and why? Would you continue to try these strategies?
3. What are other strategies that you have found help you avoid your own personal time traps?
4. Do you think the use of technology (e.g., smart phones, email) save us time or only cause more problems with time management? Explain your answer.
5. If you had to pick the two hours of the day when you think most clearly, which would you pick? The two hours you select are probably your internal prime time and you should aim to save all of that time for high-priority projects.

2.4 Is This Advice Worth \$250,000.00?

This Management Live shares the story of advice from a consultant given to Bethlehem Steel executive Charles Schwab. The advice – which Schwab paid \$35,000 for (the equivalent of \$250,000.00 today) – was to make a daily list of 6 things that must be accomplished. The items should be prioritized by importance and completed in order. Although this advice might sound more like the simple idea of a child in grade school rather than a professional efficiency consultant, it is nevertheless sound advice. Much of time management is not learning some secret strategies but about actually applying what we already know. It takes discipline to make a prioritized list and work your way through it each day. But that discipline can lead to profound improvements in performance.

Given that the advice given by the consultant to Schwab was actually very basic, the instructor might wish to ask students to discuss why Schwab decided to pay such a generous award to the consultant. In other words, why did Schwab think this advice was worth the modern day equivalent of \$250,000.00?

TOOLKITS

2.1 Type A Personality Assessment

Ask students to read the section in the textbook about Type A Personality and then ask them to think about whether they think the Type A profile fits them or not. Then have students complete the Type A Personality assessment and see if their score reaffirms their initial self-assessment of their personality. Students can list the pros and cons of their particular personality. If they are “Type A” they may be predisposed to stress and illness for instance. If they are “Type B” they may be prone to procrastination or fail to reach their potential if their stress level is too low.

2.2 Locus of Control

Ask students to read the section in the textbook about Locus of Control and ask them to think about whether they think they have a predominately internal or external locus of control. Students should then take the Locus of Control assessment and compare to their initial self-assessment. Alternatively (or in addition), students might try to predict a friend or family member’s locus of control and have that person complete the assessment. Students can list the pros and cons of having an internal locus and external locus of control and discuss strategies to best manage their own predisposition.

2.3 What are the Sources of YOUR stress: Starting a stress journal

Ask students to keep a daily log of their stressors, stress levels, and coping strategies for one or two weeks. Instructors might wish to give specific guidelines for the journal such as creating a column for the stressor (i.e., what was the *cause* of the stress), another column for stress symptoms (e.g., anxiety, heart racing), another column for the coping strategy (e.g., talked to a friend, avoided the situation, confronted the situation), and a final column for the outcome or conclusion, if any. The instructor might also challenge students to try a new coping strategy that they have not used but think might be effective (perhaps meditation or going on a walk in the park). Because some of the stressors might be personal experiences that the student might wish to keep private, the instructor might ask students to share only one of their entries that they feel comfortable revealing in a group or class discussion.

Discussion questions:

1. Did you notice any patterns in the types of stressors in your life? (i.e., are they mostly of an interpersonal nature or are they related to your job or school?)
2. Did you notice any patterns in your coping responses?
3. What coping responses did you find are most effective for you in terms of resolving your stress or removing the stressor? Are these the coping strategies you most commonly use?
4. If you tried a new coping strategy, how did it work and would you continue to use this coping strategy?

2.4 Writing Effective To-Do Lists

Assign students to create a to-do list for the following week using the guidelines provided in the text. Then check back in one week to assess the effectiveness of the lists and what they could do differently to make their lists better in the future. Students might wish to apply what they have learned to making another list for the following week. Students should get in the habit of making lists as this can be an important part of the goal-setting process and having stated specific goals is clearly beneficial to lacking such goals.

Chapter 02 - Managing Stress and Time

Discussion questions:

1. What kind of a list did you use? (Pencil and paper? On your calendar? On your phone or other electronic device?) Would you use this type of list again or change to something else? Why?
2. What part of your list got accomplished and what part did not? If there were things you did not get done that you had hoped to, what went wrong? Did you fail to prioritize the tasks appropriately? Did you underestimate the amount of time certain tasks would take? Did you procrastinate?
3. What advantages did you find to having a list rather than just “winging it”?
4. Is list-making something you would incorporate into your everyday life? Why or why not?

2.5 Getting Yourself Organized: A Quick Primer

Ask students to use the TRAF system (mail sorting - Toss, Refer, Act, File) for one week. Discuss the outcomes of the experiment in class. This is a good way to illustrate "small wins" with regard to behavioral change.

Discussion Questions:

1. What impact did using the system have on your work environment?
2. What was the hardest part of using the system? The easiest?
3. Would you recommend this system to others? Why or why not?