



Advanced Agile Skills

Working with Agile Teams



Stress Management

Stress & pressured teams

Definition of Stress

Stress is a physical reaction to prepare us for a flight or flight response including:

- Increasing heart rate & respiration to carry more blood to the brain to help us think more clearly and provide energy to muscles
- Closing down functions that are not immediately vital including digestion
- Increased hormone levels that help us “deal with danger” effectively
- Dilation of pupils so that vision becomes clearer



50% of all sickness days or 13m working days are lost each year due to stress-related illness costing the UK 10% of GDP or £22.4bn in 2009/10



Problem with Stress

- **Past** - humans needed to respond to immediate threats more often – stress response was vital to survival
- **Modern world** - our stressors tend to be less life-threatening but last much longer (financial worries, relationships, exams, work, etc...)
- **Problem** - our bodies respond exactly the same way whether it's a short or long term stressor
- **Example** - adrenaline is continuously produced and attacks the immune system limiting our ability to fight diseases



Stressors & symptoms



Take 5 mins and prepare a list of things that cause you stress (stressors)

Now rank them according to how they affect you on a scale of 1 (laid back) to 10 (breaking point)

Compare answers in your team – are they the same?

Now as a team list typical consequential symptoms that you think could be caused by stress



Symptoms of stress

Physical

- Increased body temperature
- Increased blood pressure
- Enhanced hormone levels
- Constant illness

• Psychological

- Insomnia
- Emotions – Anger, Crying
- Irrationality
- Depression



"What's this I hear about you not having an ulcer?"



Stress is a very real & debilitating illness that can lead to serious long term problems

Stress categories

- **Work Related Stress** (Johansson - Sawmill)
 - Pressures of a repetitive & responsible job with responsibility for meeting targets, expectations and lack of social (as opposed to work) interactions
- **Lack of control** (Geer & Masiel – Car crash study)
 - Inability to control stressors leads to increasing stress patterns
- **Life events** (Holmes & Rahe – SRRS Scale)
 - Events that happen in life that lead to stress due to the readjustment needed to cope with them
- **Hassles** (Kanner – Hassles, uplifts and events)
 - Minor stressors combine to become one large cause of stress



Stress & productivity



You are about to take part in a simple productivity exercise

Once the exercise is complete discuss the following questions in your team:

How did you & your group feel:

- Before the exercise?
- In the first part of the exercise?
- In the second part of the exercise?
- What would you do different to gain more positive results?



Managing Stress – Mindset

Assumption – Stress is caused by faulty processing of information

- **Aware**: be aware of the thoughts that occur in a stressful situation (ABC analysis – **A**ctivators, **B**eliefs and **C**onsequences)
- **Cope**: adopt strategies that help gain perspective & reframe stressors Practice relaxation, meditation & self hypnosis techniques. Visualise stressful situations & deal with them
- **Try**: use techniques & learning in a real life situation
- **Measure**: measure stress level on 1 – 10 scale to see improvement (positive reinforcement)



Managing Stress – Lack of control

Assumption – Stress is caused by inability to control situation

- **Aware**: identify the root stressors (Fishbone or Cause & Effect diagrams, Cognitive interviewing methods)
- **Cope**: take actions to control stressors – time management, simplify, relax, exercise, manage, assert position & control emotions
- **Try**: prioritise actions and implement one at a time – don't change too much as once or actions become a stressor in their own right
- **Measure**: measure stress level on 1 – 10 scale to see improvement (positive reinforcement)



Managing Stress – Interaction

Assumption – Stress is caused by a lack of social interactions

- **Aware**: understand your social networks (family, friends, online, etc...)
- **Cope**: expand social network, discuss situations, learn from others, be open-minded
- **Try**: express feelings, seek help, express emotions & compromise where necessary
- **Measure**: measure stress level on 1 – 10 scale to see improvement



Stress summary

- Stress is a vital response to danger but extended episodes can have debilitating consequences
- Stress causes tension, anxiety, depression, schizophrenia , OCD and ultimately total biochemical changes that lead to heart, obesity, liver, kidney & diabetes issues and ultimately a lower life expectancy
- Stress impacts different people in different ways
- The symptoms of stress can be addictive
- Relaxation & meditation strategies help deal with the physical & psychological impacts of stress
- Leaders should constantly monitor their teams for symptoms of stress & manage them

