



Accounting Stress for Success: The Ergonomics Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Often stress appears to be a hindrance of success. There are various stress management examples of how particular performances obstruct to conflicting factors such as role conflicts and role ambiguities. However, a concern with how individuals stress their stress so as to account the events to withstand as a specified success person is not widely written. This paper, arguing from the ergonomics perspective, advocates the view. It details the accounting of stress as a means of reaction and reciprocation of physical changes and other elements of human well-being system, hence operating as a source to success.

Keywords: Stress, Account, Ergonomics, Success

Introduction

Stress is argued to implicate in a wide set of occupations and professions. A great deal of research has examined the construct of it on role conflict and role ambiguity (for e.g. Chang & Chang, 2007; Schaubroeck, Cotton & Jennings, 1989). Stemmed from psychological, biological and social causes, the term “stress” has been in such common usage that it has taken on a variety of meanings. Following Aldwin (1994), “stress refers to that quality of experience, produced through a person-environment transaction, that through either overarousal or underarousal, results in psychological and physiological distress” (p. 22.)

Considerable theory and research have argued that while the common emotional reactions to stress generally refer to negative feelings such as anxiety, anger, and sadness, some attentions have been paid to growth and positive personal changes (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). For instance, according to Fogarty, Singh, Rhoads, and Moore (2000), role overload of memberships in the American Institute of Certified Public accountants is not a significant influence on job satisfaction. This may lead to the conclusion that role overload is a less critical role stressor (see p. 60). As for other fields such as nursing and the practice of medicine, the result is vice versa (see Berland, Natvig & Gundersen, 2008).

One effect of such inconsistent findings have induced researchers to reexamine the very basic question: whether stress is a fact or myth. This essay extends this view with the relationship of stress and the development of future career. It discusses the accounting of stress as a stimulus, and is a key to success. The question of whether it is a fact or myth is detailed based on the arguments developed from the ergonomics perspective. The term “ergonomics” is taken from the Greek word *ergon*, which means “work” and “natural laws”. It is also called human engineering as it studies human capabilities in relationship to their tasks, products, environments and systems that are compatible with the needs, abilities and limitations of people.

Accounting Stress for Success

Measuring stress entails measurement of live events (cf. Aldwin, 1994). In so doing, previous research has come up with methods such as clinical interviews (e.g. Gould, Hussong & Keeley, 2008), laboratory stressors (e.g. Al-Fudail & Mellar, 2008), intelligence and working memory capacities (e.g. Brewin & Beaton, 2002).

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The above scholars agree that the temporal parameters of the study and the type of stress outcomes being assessed should guide the choice of stress measure. For stress to be associated with positive outcomes, people often find that success is the most debatable feature. It is because, success is epistemologically privileged (Maslow, 1987).

The meaning of success comes in many forms, and many definitions. It depends on what you are accounting for in life, and accounting for in hereafter. Ashar and Lane-Maher (2004) found success in the spirituality virtues, ranging from money, property, positional power, and status symbols. For them, when a person conducts himself to include or excuse from responsibility he ordinarily impute some measure of foresight of his actions so that to “account” the events going on around him (see also Meyer, 1986; Scott & Lyman, 1968). Accounting stress in success terms offers a means by which the actions and achievements of individuals may be standardized and compared. This is because, by doing so, particular ways are created by which individual may be thought about, controlled and directed, and acted upon (cf. Potter, 2005).

An example of the foregoing description is accounted by Jerrold S. Greenberg in his book *Comprehensive Stress Management* (1993). It provides insights that success and stress are inextricably intertwined, where stress functions as a stimulus to success.

My life changed rapidly and repeatedly. I came to Buffalo as an assistant professor and was *promoted* twice, leaving as a full professor with tenure and administrative responsibility for the graduate program in health education. When I left Buffalo, I had *published* over forty articles in professional journals, and my second book was soon to come off the press. During my tenure at SUNY/Buffalo, I *appeared* on radio and television programs and was subject of numerous newspaper articles. I came to Buffalo and there bought my first house, fathered my two children, and won my first tennis tournament. In short I became a *success*. So *why the vomiting?* I was experiencing too much change in too short a period of time. I wondered about embarrassing myself in front of other people and became extremely anxious when due to speak in front of a large group—so anxious that a nice spring day, about seventy degrees, with the sun shining and a slight breeze, as I was on my way to address a group of teachers, school administrators, and parents in Wheatfield, New York, I became sick to my stomach. *I pulled the car off the road, jumped out, vomited, jumped back in, proceeded to Wheatfield, and presented a one-hour speech which to this day is still not remembered by anyone who was there.* What I didn't know then, but know now, is that I was *experiencing stress—too much stress* (1993, p. 3-4, emphasis added)

Note that the above two clauses that have underscored are *success* and *experiencing stress—too much stress*. The former, for which constructions such as “promoted”, “published”, and “appeared” amalgamate with, has shown that: it is success that is an antecedent of stress. A preceding occurrence, cause, or event of promotion, publication and appearance had caused Greenberg to account through looking at where he was presently, had he failed in any of his endeavours? And how long did Greenberg take to achieve what he has? In this sense it is success that constitutes the conception of stress. The central argument is it is “an experience that arises from a transaction between a person and the environment” that defines the stress (Aldwin, 1994, p. 23, quoted Mason, 1975). It is success that arises from a transaction between Greenberg and his environment.

Although it is equally possible that stress may have an antecedent effect, much of the work in stress acknowledges that stress effects are highly probabilistic phenomena, being very dependent upon a myriad of contextual and personal factors. To interpret, we all know that the same situation presented here to different people may result in different reactions. That is because different people will interpret the situation differently. This, according to Greenberg, is termed as “cognitive appraisal” (1993) which can be controlled. At this point, we need some information about ourselves as a stimulus to infer the success meaning. The success interpretation might include successes such as Greenberg's experiences: was promoted twice, leaving as a full professor with tenure and administrative responsibility for the graduate program in health education. This success view is seen as competing and winning. This structure reflects the concept of the

rational individual that stress is not only had to be thought up by the success, but also needs to be regarded as a stimulus of success.

The Ergonomics of Stress

As can be read from the reflections of Greenberg, there are some parts of Greenberg's body that changed when he was distressed, which wrote: I became sick to my stomach. I pulled the car off the road, jumped out, vomited, jumped back in, proceeded to Wheatfield, and presented a one-hour speech which to this day is still not remembered by anyone who was there. All of these were in the form of "ergonomics", on the basis of the interplay of "work" and "natural laws". Like many of the "reality series" in television it is neither the size of the audiences nor the amount of income collected from advertisement that makes the audiences feel anxious, worried, etc. (stress?), but when the self-presentations of actor counteract undesirable or problematic experiences as a means of reaction and reciprocation, that is when the actor accomplish, attain, etc. (success?) in provoking the emotional charge. In the case of Greenberg, beginning to think of stress in terms of his journey, may be proceeded to how he had previously thought about success.

Similarly, if in the show, the hypnotist asks the man to follow the pendulum like movement of his chained watch as he slowly and softly mutters, and the man paused for a moment, took a deep breath, focusing on what he is capable to do, for Greenberg, what seems to be an adverse reaction of digestive system (i.e. vomiting), is inasmuch as to defend him "from being harmed by bacteria, viruses or other poisonous substances" (Tengland, 2001, p. 85). As a university professor, Greenberg accepts that the more rapidly knowledge and information climates change, the greater the need for responsive dynamic learning models. Stress takes place of him in response to such environmental demands or pressures. However, his "defense" human body systems were utilized in order to "fight off" so as to withstand as a specified success person.

Concluding Thought

The term "managing stress" is common in our live. There are various stress management examples of how particular individuals give attention to conflicting factors such as role conflicts and role ambiguities. A number of related theoretical concepts and developments have been instrumental in expanding current knowledge of stress. This includes attempts to link management techniques according to notions of a negative relationship between stress and job performance (e.g. Collins and Killough, 1992; Cooper, 1980; Viator, 2001, to name a few). However, in reality, many routine actions are more salient to others and they might react differently. A concern with how individuals stress their stress so as "to be accountable" (Garfinkel, 1967) is not widely written. Consideration needs to be given to ways of accounting the stress consequences of alternative forms of organizing success. Rather than seeing stress with the myths of higher role ambiguity and role conflict, ones should see it with their heart pounding faster, muscles tightening, blood pressure rising, breath quickening, and brain senses sharpening. These physical changes increase strength and stamina, speed reaction time, and enhance focus, preparing to fight with the understanding of interactions among humans and other elements of a system in order to optimize human well-being and overall system – the ergonomics approach.

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