

National Judicial Academy



Programme Report

P- 1049

NATIONAL SEMINAR FOR PRINCIPAL DISTRICT JUDGES ON STRESS

MANAGEMENT: SEPTEMBER 22ND TO 24TH, 2017

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INTRODUCTION

The National Judicial Academy organized a three-day National Seminar for Principal District and Sessions Judges on Stress Management. The course was attended by 27 participants.

The variegated functional responsibilities that judges' discharge, increasing work pressures, the ever-evolving laws, and social conflicts, and accelerating societal expectations from the judiciary impose enormous physical and psycho-social stress on our judicial officers. These phenomena have brought judicial offices into the company of highly stressed occupations. Recent studies indicate that the legal profession, jury duties, and judgeship are intrinsically stressful occupations. Occupational stress among judges in India is recognized as an inevitable occupational pathology. Efforts to augment resilience or manage judicial stress, identifying indicia of psychosomatic disorders are not adequately addressed.

The Seminar provided a platform to enable participants to understand the judicial stress and its impact on the physiological and emotional health of judges. The objective was to provide tools and techniques to help handle cognitive, emotional and behavioral symptoms of occupational stress, which affects decision-making capacity as well. Participants deliberated on how to negotiate systemic and discrete barriers and operationalize institutional assistance for affected officers. The sessions were conceived to facilitate categorization of pre-emptive, restorative and rehabilitative institutional measures that aid and combat the detrimental effects of occupational stress in the judicial office.

DAY-1

Session 1: Understanding 'Stress'

Speakers: *Dr. Vidya Sathyanarayanan*

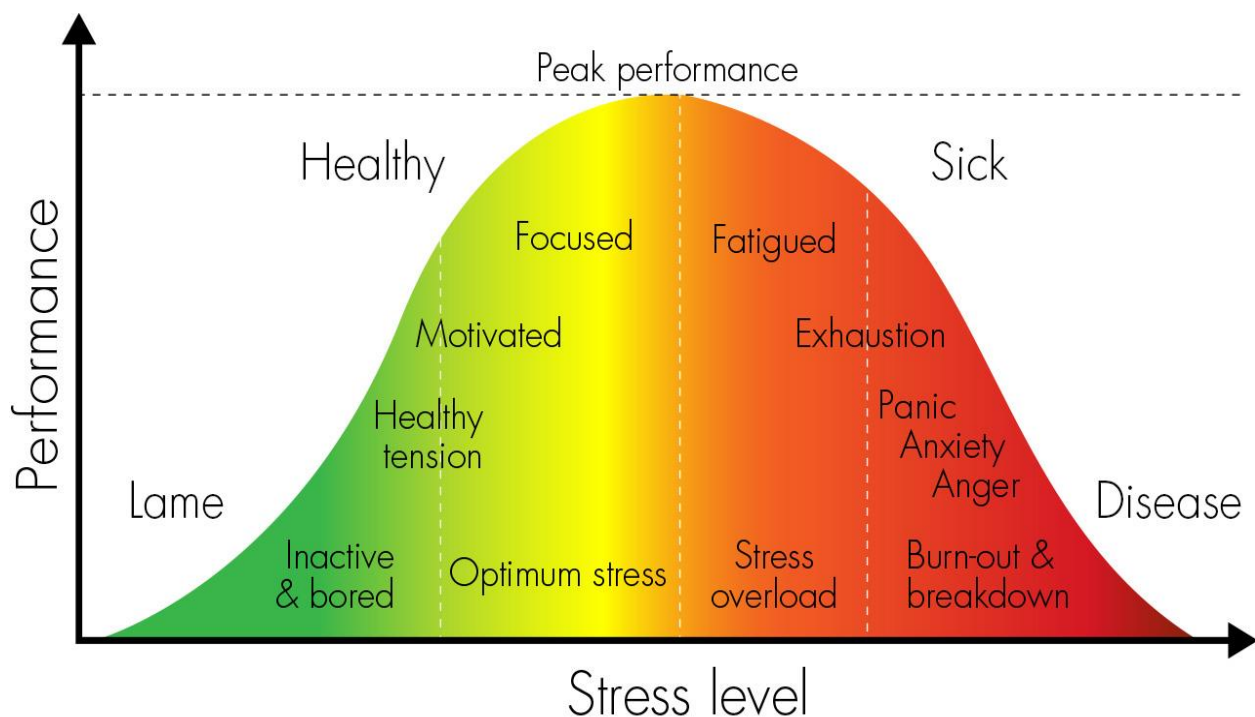
Chair: *Justice Manmohan Sarin*

The first session focused on the meaning of stress. The speaker discussed that stress is of two kinds- EUSTRESS – positive eg, promotion, marriage, and DISTRESS – negative eg, bereavement, loss of a job. Stressors are demands made by the internal or external milieu that upset balance, thus disturbing corporeal and psychosomatic well-being and requiring action to reinstate

equilibrium. The physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and social/interpersonal manifestations of stress were also discussed in details during the discourse. Ways to cope up with stress formed an integral part of the session. The speaker suggested that stress can be managed by - Problem-focused coping that involves direct efforts to modify the problem causing the distress; Emotion-focused coping which is directed toward regulating the feelings or affect surrounding a stressful experience, and by Social Support Seeking which has Problem Focused and Emotion-Focused components.

The speaker explained the relation between Stress and Performance with the help of the diagram below and emphasized that:

- ❖ No stress equals no performance
- ❖ Inertia, procrastination etc.
- ❖ Some stress associated with higher performance
- ❖ Too much stress leads to diminished performance
- ❖ Burnout, inefficiency, inability to prioritize, tension etc.



Session -2: Why and Wherefore of Stress in Judicial Officers

Speaker: *Dr. Manju Mehta*
Chair: *Justice Manmohan Sarin*

The speaker emphasized that a judge himself is on trial when he is conducting a trial in the court. Judges deal with people who are stressed and this stress passes over to them, knowingly or unknowingly. It was deliberated that stress may be caused by environmental, organizational and personality-related variables. Organizational factors maybe- factors intrinsic to the job; relationship at work; organizational role; career development; organizational structure and personal and professional interface. These stressors serve as agents that trigger various stress in judges. It was suggested that firstly if a judge is diligent and honest towards his duty then most of the problems are solved through tactful handling however difficult they may be. Secondly, a judge should make a list of major and minor problems and work on them simultaneously and lastly, a delegation of work also helps in doing away with occupational stress.

Session-3: Documentary Screening: “Stress, Portrait of a Killer”, Followed by Open Discussion on the Documentary

Panel: *Justice Manmohan Sarin, Dr. Manju Mehta & Dr. Vidya Sathyanarayanan*

The discourse exemplified how prolonged exposure to stress can ruin one's health in a multitude of ways. It also illustrated that a person is more vulnerable to the adverse effects of stress if he/she feels like they have no control, no way out, feel like things are getting worse, and have little social support. Common health conditions caused or worsened by stress include heart disease, hypertension, impaired immune function, infertility, and mental illness. The documentary further elaborated that Emotional Freedom Techniques (EFT) is an excellent stress management tool that has been scientifically shown to significantly reduce cortisol levels and psychological distress. The documentary suggested that stress is an extremely significant player in one's overall health. The better a person gets at managing stress on a daily basis, the better his/her health will be.

Session-4: Consequences of Occupational Stress in Judges

Speaker: Mr. Sampath Iyengar

Chair: Justice Manmohan Sarin

The speaker emphasized that the judicial occupation makes the judges experience regular encounters with prolonged work hours, substantial workload, occasional traumatic cases, the making of important decisions etc. Further judges may also experience negative physical (e.g. becoming overweight) and emotional (e.g. boredom, burnout) outcomes from sitting on the bench for countless hours. Therefore it is important to understand and account for these experiences as they have the potential not only to affect judges' personal lives negatively but also to impede them from performing their duties to the best of their abilities. It was submitted that stress takes its toll on the body—whether an individual perceives that stress as "good" or "bad." Science has established that stress can lead to cardiovascular disease, stress-induced weight gain typically involves an increase in belly fat, which is the most dangerous fat for the body to accumulate, and increases cardiovascular risk. Stress alters the way fat is deposited because of the specific hormones and other chemicals which the body produces when stressed.

The following most common health conditions that are caused by or worsened by stress were discussed:

Cardiovascular disease	Hypertension	Depression
Anxiety	Sexual dysfunction	Infertility and irregular cycles
Frequent colds	Insomnia and fatigue	Trouble concentrating
Memory loss	Appetite changes	Digestive problems and dysbiosis

Session 5: Stress Management through enhancing Emotional Intelligence

Speakers: Mr. Sampath Iyengar

Chair: Justice Manmohan Sarin

The speaker underlined that the capacity to recognize own feelings and that of others is “Emotional Intelligence”. Recent researches indicate that emotions play an integral part in managing stress at the workplace. It was emphasized that since judges are expected to be multitaskers, therefore, it is essential for them to realize their potentials so that they can manage stress through enhanced Emotional Intelligence. Thereafter, the Emotional and Social Intelligence Competencies were elaborated upon that includes- self-awareness through emotional self-awareness; self-management through emotional self-control and adaptability; social awareness through empathy; and relationship management through conflict management, inspirational leadership, and teamwork.

Session 6: Managing Judicial Stress: Approaches and Techniques

Speaker: Dr. Jayasankara Reddy K

Chair: Justice Manmohan Sarin

It was emphasized that Stress occurs when the pressure is greater than the resource. There are two major reasons of stress i.e. when a person perceives a situation as dangerous, difficult, or painful and two when the person does not believe that he/she has the resources to cope with a situation. Therefore the most important point is to recognize the source of negative stress. It is a way to identify the Problem and plan measures to overcome it. It was further suggested that stress management/stress control can be done through ABC Strategy, where ‘A’ is Awareness, ‘B’ is Balance and ‘C’ is Control. It was further suggested that coping skills can be enhanced by - *Emotion-focused coping strategies* which include efforts to manage or reduce the emotional distress that is aroused in a stressful situation and *Problem-focused coping strategies* which includes efforts to manage or modify the source of stressful situations, such as finding a solution to the problem. Keeping the above strategies in mind it was deliberated that judicial stress can reduce when judges- find a support system to talk about out their feelings and experiences be it

with respect to Self-perception, Society/ media expectation, decision making – lawyers, decision reviewed etc., change attitude and find other ways to think about stressful situations. , be realistic and set practical goals, get organized and take charge, take breaks, give yourself "me time, take good care of yourself, get regular exercise, laugh, use humor, do relaxation exercises and most importantly learn to relax.

Session 7: Judges' Perspectives on Stress in the Courtroom

Speakers: Dr. Chandrasekhar Sripada & Mr. Parag Gadhia

The session was activity based and the participants were divided into groups and were asked to identify the stressors in their courtrooms. Thereafter, the identified stressors were discussed at length and the most common stressors were identified. The idea was to cull out the system-centric stressors in the courtroom. The three most common stressors that were identified are- issues related to lawyers; the pressure of time-bound disposals and pendency of old cases.

Session 8: Institutional Strategies to Identify and Combat Occupational Stress

Speakers: Dr. Chandrasekhar Sripada

The speaker suggested various approaches that can be of immense use to combat stress at the institutional level. These included building up of such organizational culture where there is trust, honesty, and fairness; providing psychological and social support; to have clear leadership and expectations; to have civility and respect among coworkers; to have psychological competencies and requirements; growth and development of employees; recognition and reward ; good involvement and influence by staff; workload management by providing necessary resources and time; maintaining work balance by providing choices and opportunities for flexible working arrangements to accommodate work, family, and personal priorities; psychological protection so that there is sense of safety that if a cause is raised appropriate action will be taken and most importantly, to provide physical safety.

The Seminar concluded with thanksgiving to the resource persons and the participants.
