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# 8

## WORK LIFE BALANCE

In the previous lesson you have learnt about customer service. In this lesson you will learn how to balance your work life. You must be aware that with the outbreak of 24x7 working trends and the growing multinational companies, it has become inevitable for people to manage their time appropriately. It is important for you to understand that the compounding stress from the never-ending workday is damaging. It can hurt relationships, health and overall happiness. This lesson will focus on looking at ways to overcome these issues and obtain work life balance.



### OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson you will be able to:

- manage your time effectively;
- identify the causes of stress;
- describe anger management;
- balance your work and life.

### 8.1 TIME MANAGEMENT

In today's competitive and fast paced life, it seems that there is never enough time. However, since we can not get more than 24 hours, you must make the best of it and there are many who are able to achieve so much more with their time than others. The big question is how do they do it? The answer lies in good time management.



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The highest achievers manage their time exceptionally well even when time is tight and pressures are high. In this section we will throw some light on the various time management techniques that can help you achieve more in the given time.

Good time management requires you to shift your focus from activities to results: being busy does not mean you are effective as well. You may spend your day in a frenzy of activities often achieving less, because your attention is divided between so many different tasks that lead to loss in focus and accuracy.

Good time management lets you work smarter – not harder – so you get more work done in less time. Let us now see what we understand by ‘Time Management’. ‘Time management’ refers to the way you deal with your time as to how you organize and plan the time you wish to spend on specific activities. It might seem contrasting to dedicate precious time on learning time management, instead of using it to get on with your work, but you will see that some knowledge about time management appropriately brings enormous benefits such as:

- ❖ greater productivity and efficiency.
- ❖ a better professional reputation.
- ❖ less stress.
- ❖ increased opportunities for advancement.
- ❖ greater opportunities to achieve career goals.

More often than not failing to manage your time effectively can have some very undesirable consequences such as:

- ❖ missed deadlines.
- ❖ inefficient work flow.
- ❖ poor work quality.
- ❖ a poor professional reputation and a stalled career.
- ❖ higher stress levels.

Spending a little time learning about time-management techniques will have huge benefits now and throughout your career.

Practise the following techniques to become the master of your own time:

- A. Carry a diary and record all your activities for a week. This will help you to understand how much work you can get done during the course of a day. You can now easily do this in the calendar available on your computer or mobile.
- B. Any activity or conversation that’s important to your success should have a time assigned to it. Schedule appointments with yourself and create time blocks for high-priority thoughts, conversations, and actions. Schedule when a task begins and ends. Have the discipline to keep the time commitments.



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- C. Schedule time for interruptions. Plan time to be pulled away from what you are doing. You may have a well-planned- day but in real time there will always be something or other that comes at the last minute and needs your attention. So always keep some extra time at hand.
- D. Take the first 30 minutes of every day to plan your day. Don't start your day until you complete your time plan. The most important time of your day is the time you prepare your schedule.
- E. Take five minutes before every call and task to decide what result you want to attain. Take five minutes after each call and activity to determine whether your desired result was achieved. If not, what was missing? How do you put what is missing in your next call or activity?
- F. Practise not answering the phone just because it's ringing and e-mails just because they show up. Disconnect instant messaging at work. Don't instantly give people your attention unless it's absolutely crucial in your business to offer an immediate human response. Instead, schedule a time to answer email and return phone calls.
- G. When at work, block out other distractions like Facebook and other forms of social media unless you use these tools to generate business.
- H. Remember that it's impossible to get everything done. Also remember that odds are good that 20 percent of your thoughts, conversations and activities produce 80 percent of your results.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.1**

- I. Fill in the blanks with the correct option:
  - 1. Carry a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ all your activities for a week.
    - a. pen, paper
    - b. diary, record
    - c. folder, record
    - d. pen, record
  - 2. Take the first \_\_\_\_\_ of every day to plan your day.
    - a. five minutes
    - b. ten minutes
    - c. fifteen minutes
    - d. thirty minutes
  - 3. Take \_\_\_\_\_ before every call and task to decide what result you want to attain.
    - a. breath

- b. pen
  - c. five minutes
  - d. ten minutes
4. When at work, \_\_\_\_\_ other distractions like Facebook and other forms of social media unless you use these tools to generate business.
- a. blot out
  - b. block out
  - c. distract
  - d. avoid
5. Spending a little time learning about \_\_\_\_\_ will have huge benefits now and throughout your career.
- a. work life balance techniques
  - b. stress management techniques
  - c. anger management techniques
  - d. time management techniques



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## 8.2 STRESS MANAGEMENT

We will now look at some effective ways of handling stress. With the enhancement of work opportunities, responsibilities, performance orientation and competition the stress levels are on at all-time high. Today's youth is getting great work opportunities at a very young age and this leads to an early advent of stress in their lives. Hence, in order to strike a good work-life-balance, it is imperative for you to manage stress.

Effectively coping with stress, managing stress and finding ways to reduce unnecessary or unhealthy levels of stress are important life skills - skills that everybody needs.

Negative stress, tension and anxiety are extremely common problems in our life. You may feel there's nothing you can do about stress. The bills won't stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your work and family responsibilities will always be demanding. But you have more control over stress than you might think. Stress management is all about taking charge of your lifestyle, thoughts, emotions, and the way you deal with problems.

### **Let us begin with understanding what is stress management?**

We all respond to stress differently so, there's no "one size fits all" solution to managing stress. But if you feel like the stress in your life is out of control, it's time to take action. Stress management can teach you healthier ways to cope with stress, it helps you reduce its harmful effects.



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No matter how powerless you may feel in the face of stress, you still have control over your lifestyle, thoughts, emotions, and the way you deal with problems. Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can be taking care of yourself, and taking out time for rest and relaxation.

The first step of stress management is to recognize **the true sources** of stress in your life. It is easy to identify sources of stress following a major life event such as changing jobs, moving home, or losing a loved one, but thinking about it every day can be more complicated.

How do you currently cope with stress?

Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy, helpful or unproductive? Unfortunately, many people cope with stress in ways that compound the problem.

**Unhealthy ways of coping with stress**

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- ✓ smoking
- ✓ drinking too much
- ✓ bingeing on junk or comfort food
- ✓ zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- ✓ withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- ✓ using pills or drugs to relax
- ✓ sleeping too much
- ✓ procrastinating
- ✓ filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- ✓ taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

It is vital that we learn healthier ways to manage stress. If your methods of coping with stress are not contributing to your emotional and physical health, it's time you find out the healthier ones. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

**Some key steps to manage stress are -**

➤ **Get moving**

Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress, but you do not have to be an athlete or spend hours in a gym to experience the

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benefits. Just any form of physical activity can help relieve stress and burn away anger, tension, and frustration.

While the maximum benefit comes from exercising for 30 minutes or more, you can start small and build up your fitness level gradually. Short, 10-minute bursts of activity that elevate your heart rate and make you break out into a sweat can help to relieve stress and give you more energy and optimism. Even very small activities can add up over the course of a day. The first step is to get yourself up and moving. Here are a few easy ways:

- put on some music and dance around.
- take your dog for a walk.
- walk or cycle to the grocery store.
- use the stairs at home or work rather than an elevator.
- park your car in the farthest spot in the lot and walk the rest of the way.
- pair up with an exercise partner and encourage each other as you workout.
- play ping-pong or an activity-based video game with your kids.

➤ **Engage socially**

Social engagement is the quickest, most efficient way to reduce stress. There is nothing more calming to your nervous system than communicating with another human being who makes you feel safe and understood. Of course, it's not always realistic to have a pal close by to lean on when you feel overwhelmed with stress, but by building and maintaining a network of close friends you can improve your resiliency to life's stressors. On the flip side, the lonelier and isolated you are, the greater is your vulnerability to stress.

Reach out to family and friends and connect regularly in person. The people you talk to don't have to be able to fix your stress; they just need to be good listeners. Opening up is not a sign of weakness and it won't make you a burden to others. In fact, most friends will be flattered that you trust them enough to confide in them, and it will only strengthen your bond. And remember, it's never too late to build new friendships and improve your support network.

➤ **Avoid unnecessary stress**

While stress is an automatic response from your nervous system, some stressors arise at predictable times. For example you commute to work, a meeting with your boss, or family gatherings. When handling such predictable stressors, you can either change the situation or change your reaction.

➤ **Avoid the stressor**

It's not healthy to avoid a stressful situation that needs to be addressed, but you may be surprised by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

- **Learn how to say "no"** – Know your limits and stick to them. Whether



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in your personal or professional life, taking on more than you can handle is a sure shot recipe for stress.

- **Avoid people who stress you out** – If someone consistently causes stress in your life, limit the amount of time you spend with that person, or end the relationship.
- **Take control of your environment** – If the evening news makes you anxious, turn off the TV. If traffic makes you tense, take a longer but less-travelled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.

➤ **Adapt to the stress**

Your thoughts have a great effect on your stress levels. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts and considers it to be a tension-filled situation. Resume your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude to stressful situations.

- **Reframe problems.** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favourite radio station, or enjoy being alone for some time.
- **Look at the big picture.** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- **Adjust your standards.** Perfectionism is a major source of stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with “good enough.”

➤ **Accept things you cannot change**

Many sources of stress are unavoidable. You can not prevent or change stressors, such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it is easier than railing against a situation you can not change.

- **Do not try to control the uncontrollable—** Many things in life are beyond our control—particularly the behaviour of other people. Instead of stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- **Look for the upside—** When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.
- **Learn to forgive—** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

**Notes****➤ Find time for fun and relaxation**

Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. If you regularly find time for fun and relaxation, you will be in a better place to handle life's stressors.

Don't get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.

- **Set aside relaxation time:** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Do something you enjoy every day:** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.
- **Keep your sense of humour:** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

**➤ Adopt a healthy lifestyle**

In addition to regular exercise, there are other healthy lifestyle choices that can increase your resistance to stress.

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress; so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you will feel more relaxed and you will sleep better.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Do not avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.
- **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

Overcoming stress is not easy. However choosing a lifestyle that reduces it is always worth a try.





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### 8.3 ANGER MANAGEMENT

Finally, we will now throw some light on overcoming anger by using some anger management techniques. Anger is a normal, healthy emotion, but when chronic, explosive anger gets out of control, it can have serious effects on your relationships, your health, your state of mind, and reputation too.

With an insight of the real reasons of your anger and some basic anger management techniques, you can learn to keep your temper from overtaking your life and creating problems in the long run.

#### Understanding anger and anger management

The emotion of anger is neither good nor bad. Like any other emotion, it conveys a message and it tells you that a situation is upsetting, or unjust, or threatening. So while it's perfectly normal to feel angry when you have been mistreated or wronged, anger becomes a problem when you express it in ways that harm yourself or others. That's where anger management becomes extremely crucial and important -

- The aim of anger management is not to suppress feelings of anger but rather to understand the message behind your emotions and express it in a healthy way without losing control.
- When you are able to manage anger, you will not only feel better, you will also be able to get your needs met, to manage conflict in your life and will also be able to strengthen your relationships.
- Mastering the art of anger management takes workout, but the more you practise, the easier it will become.

Let us look at some myths and facts about anger and anger management.

**Myth: I shouldn't "hold in" my anger. It's healthy to vent and let it out.**

**Fact:** It's true that we must not suppress or avoid the feeling of anger, however venting out too much can also be equally challenging. Anger shouldn't be showcased in an aggressive manner. In fact, outbursts only fuel the fire and reinforce your problem.

**Myth: Anger, aggression and intimidation help me earn respect and get what I want.**

**Fact:** Respect does not come from bullying others. People may be afraid of you, but they won't respect you if you can not control yourself or handle opposing viewpoints. Others will be more willing to listen to you and understand your needs if you communicate in a respectful way.

**Myth: I can't help myself. Anger isn't something you can control.**

**Fact:** You can not control the situation but you *can* control your expression and anger can be expressed without being verbally or physically abusive.

#### Anger management: why is it important?

When anger goes out of hand it can damage your relationships, cloud your judgment, get in the way of success, and have a negative impact on the way people see you.

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- **Anger hurts you physically** - High levels of stress and anger makes you more prone to heart disease, diabetes, a weakened immune system, insomnia, and high blood pressure.
- **Anger hurts you mentally** - Chronic anger consumes huge amounts of your mental energy and clouds your thinking, making it harder to concentrate or enjoy life. It can also lead to stress, depression, and other mental health problems.
- **Explore what's really behind your anger- Anger hurts your career.** Constructive criticism, creative differences, and heated debate can be healthy. But lashing out only alienates your colleagues, supervisors, or clients and erodes their respect.
- **Anger hurts your relationships with others.** It causes lasting scars in the minds of people you love most and gets in the way of friendships and work relationships. Over the top anger makes it hard for others to trust you, speak honestly, or feel comfortable—and is especially damaging to children.

Anger often stems from what you've learned as a child. If you watched others in your family scream, hit each other, or throw things, you might think this is how anger is supposed to be expressed. Anger is often a cover-up for other feelings.

In order to express your anger in appropriate ways, you need to be in touch with what you are really feeling. Are your anger masking others feelings such as embarrassment, insecurity, hurt, shame, or vulnerability?

- If your first response in many situations is anger, it's likely that your temper is covering up your true feelings.
- This is especially likely if you grew up in a family where expressing feelings was strongly discouraged. As an adult, you may have a hard time acknowledging feelings other than anger.
- Anger can also be a symptom of underlying health problems, such as depression, trauma, or chronic stress.

### Clues that suggest that there's more to your anger

- **You have a hard time compromising.** Is it hard for you to understand other people's points of view, and even harder to concede a point? If you grew up in a family where anger was out of control, you may remember how the angry person got his or her way by being the loudest and most demanding. Compromising might bring up scary feelings of failure and vulnerability.
- **You have trouble expressing emotions other than anger.** Do you pride yourself on being tough and in control? Do you feel that emotions like fear, guilt, or shame don't apply to you? Everyone has these emotions, so you may be using anger as a cover for them.
- **You view different opinions as a personal challenge.** Do you believe that your way is always right and get angry when others disagree? If you have a



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strong need to be in control or have a fragile ego, you may interpret other-perspectives as a challenge to your authority, rather than simply a different way of looking at things.

**1. Recognize anger warning signs and triggers**

Anger fuels the body’s “fight or flight” response so while you might feel that you just explode without warning, there are physical warning signs that your body is preparing to react. Recognizing these signs allows you to take steps to manage your anger before it boils over.

- **Note how anger feels in your body**– Is your stomach knotted, your hands or jaw clenched, your muscles tense? Do you feel clammy or flushed? Is your heart pounding or are you breathing faster?
- **Identify negative thought patterns that trigger anger**– You may think that external things—frustrating people or situations—are causing your anger. But anger problems have more to do with negative thinking patterns, such as having a rigid view of the way things should be and getting angry when reality doesn’t match up. Or maybe you overlook the positive things while letting small irritations mount? Or do you blame others for bad things that happen rather than taking responsibility for your own life?
- **Recognize situations that trigger anger**– Stressful events do not excuse anger, but understanding how these events affect you can help you avoid unnecessary aggravation. Does the traffic on your daily commute drive you crazy? Think about ways to avoid these triggers or view the situation differently so it does not provoke anger.

**2. Learn ways to diffuse anger**

Once you recognize the warning signs, you can take steps to manage your anger before it spins out of control.

Even just a brisk walk around the block can release pent-up energy and enable you to approach the situation with a cooler head.

- Exercise relieves stress, lowers blood pressure, and releases powerful endorphins that improve your mood.
  - It can also put some welcome time and space between you and the stressful or frustrating situation.
  - Rather than focusing on your anger as you exercise, focus instead on how your body feels as you move—such as the sensation of your feet hitting the ground, or the feeling of the wind on your skin, or the rhythm of your breathing.
  - If you know that you are going to be entering a situation that is likely to make you angry, exercising beforehand can help keep your mood stable.
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**Manage stress**

The more stressed you are, the more likely you are to lose your temper. But no matter how stressful your life seems, there are steps you can take to relieve the pressure and regain control.

- Connect regularly with friends and family. There is nothing more calming to your nervous system than communicating face to face with people who care about you. Your friends do not have to be able to fix your stress; they just need to be good listeners.
- Practice relaxation techniques. A daily relaxation practice can help reduce stress and boost feelings of well-being. Try yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, or meditation.
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle. Getting enough sleep, eating well, reducing your caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and sugar intake, and making time for fun in your life can increase your resistance to stress and make it easier to manage anger.

**3. Manage anger within the moment**

For example—taking time out to go for a walk or hit the gym may not be practical. These tips can help you cool down in the moment:

- Focus on the physical sensations of anger. While it may seem counter-intuitive, tuning into the way your body feels when you are angry often lessens the emotional intensity of your anger.
- Take some deep breaths. Deep, slow breathing helps counteract rising tension. Breathe deeply from the abdomen, getting as much air as possible into your lungs.
- Use your senses. Take advantage of the relaxing power of your senses—sight, smell hearing, touch, and taste. You might try picturing yourself in a favourite place or squeezing a stress ball.
- Stretch or massage areas of tension. Roll your shoulders if you are tensing them, for example, or gently massage your neck and scalp.
- Slowly count to ten. Focus on the counting to let your rational mind catch up with your feelings. If you still feel out of control by the time you reach ten, start counting again.
- Take a moment to think about the situation. Ask yourself: How important is it in the grand scheme of things? Is it really worth getting angry about it? Is my response appropriate to the situation?

Always remember, being angry will fetch you nothing but bad memories and bad relationships whether it is personal or professional.

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## INTEXT QUESTIONS 8.2

### I. CHOOSE THE CORRECT OPTION:

1. Do not try to control the \_\_\_\_\_.
    - a. uncontrollable
    - b. situations
    - c. people
    - d. challenges
  2. \_\_\_\_\_ is the quickest, most efficient way to reduce stress.
    - a. societal engagement
    - b. social engagement
    - c. charity engagement
    - d. animal engagement
  3. Anger often \_\_\_\_\_ from what you have learn as a child
    - a. surges
    - b. surpasses
    - c. stems
    - d. steams
  4. Connect \_\_\_\_\_ with friends and family.
    - a. periodically
    - b. annually
    - c. bi-monthly
    - d. regularly
  5. \_\_\_\_\_ relieves stress, lowers blood pressure, and releases powerful endorphins that improve your mood.
    - a. dance
    - b. music
    - c. exercise
    - d. cycling
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## WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

In this lesson you have learnt the meaning and importance of work-life-balance. You have learnt ways and tools to manage your time. You are comfortable with the term stress management and can easily manage stress in a healthy manner. You are familiar with the steps of managing stress. You have acquainted yourself with anger-management and the various myths surrounding it. You are now aware the impact of anger and the importance of anger management.



## TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Describe the benefits of time management.
2. Explain the first step towards recognising stress.
3. List some key steps to stress management.
4. State the consequences of inefficient time management. Give details.
5. Differentiate the following
  - a. Engage socially and get moving.
  - b. Find time for fun and relaxation.
6. Why do you think anger management is important?



## ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

### 8.1

- I.
1. diary , record
  2. First 30 minutes
  3. Five minutes
  4. block out
  5. time-management techniques

### 8.2

- II.
- |      |      |
|------|------|
| 1. a | 4. d |
| 2. b | 5. c |
| 3. c |      |



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