

Course Learning Outcomes for Unit II

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

2. Examine ways to use organizational human behavior theory to manage stress in public organizations.
 - 2.1 Explore specified views associated with course-related terminology.
 - 2.2 Express your thoughts on stress mitigation tactics as you elaborate on your personal experiences with stress.
 - 2.3 Expand upon relationships between stress mitigation and creativity-development practices.

Course/Unit Learning Outcomes	Learning Activity
2.1	Unit Lesson Chapter 3, pp. 61–80 Video: <i>Creativity and Innovation: Leadership Essentials</i>
2.2	Chapter 4, pp. 93–101 Unit II Reflection Paper
2.3	Unit Lesson Chapter 4, pp. 93–101 Unit II Reflection Paper

Required Unit Resources

Chapter 3: Fostering Creativity and Innovation, pp. 61–80

Chapter 4: Managing Stress, pp. 93–101

In order to access the following resource, click the link below.

Video Arts (Producer). (2016). [Creativity and innovation: Leadership essentials \[Video\]](https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?auth=CAS&url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPage.aspx?wld=273866&xtid=124085). Films on Demand.
<https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?auth=CAS&url=https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPage.aspx?wld=273866&xtid=124085>

The transcript for this video can be found by clicking on “Transcript” in the gray bar to the right of the video in the Films on Demand database.

Unit Lesson

Creativity is paramount to innovation, and, with the exponentially increasing pace and complexity of the world, creativity and innovation are exponentially increasing in importance. Creativity is also important to the advancement of public organizations as it allows workers to develop new solutions to problems, making the fostering of creativity a topic of utmost importance (Denhardt et al., 2016). Closely related and often associated with creativity is innovation. With these considerations in mind, generating new and useful ideas and creating and implementing those ideas through innovation can be more easily implemented in an environment where these attributes are respected aspects of organizational culture.

Before attempting to promote and cultivate creativity, it is important to define creativity. Looking at individuals who can be described as creative, the traits associated with their creativity seem to be inherent as opposed to being reliant on a particular organization or atmosphere. Popular adjectives associated with creative people include *capable*, *clever*, *original*, and *self-confident*. Do you possess any or all of these traits? Regardless of

whether you do or do not, do you consider yourself to be a creative individual? Asad and Khan (2003) noted that creative individuals add the most value by being cognizant of all possible alternatives. Thinking about how you answered the previous question, if you consider yourself to be a creative person, do you add value to your organization in this manner? In addition to these particular traits, creativity also involves certain skills, motivations, and behaviors with the application of conceptual skills and abilities at a higher-than-normal level being a common indicator of creative thought. The behavior that leads to application is more closely associated with creativity than general creative traits.

According to Denhardt et al. (2016), "For public organizations to be effective, they must facilitate creative responses to increasingly complex societal problems. Organizations and the individuals who work in them must innovate and change as community needs and demand shifts" (p. 65). Think about some of the major social movements and causes that are occurring in modern times and some of the ensuing effects and considerations that are associated or are the result of them. Can these issues realistically be addressed with traditional and non-creative ways of thinking? Anderson et al., (2014) contend that creativity is a multi-level entity that requires skillful leadership in order to maximize potential benefits. This is an important consideration since, according to Ingraham and Getha-Taylor (2004), leadership drives employee satisfaction via the utilization of employee skills and teamwork. These effects are not solely confined to the effects that leaders can have, however, as the innovative characteristics of managers have been found to influence the adoption of general innovation (Damanpour & Schneider, 2008). Since creativity is directly linked to organizational performance and effectiveness, it can also help organizations to respond to challenges, demands, and opportunities for change (Denhardt et al., 2016). Fostering a culture of creativity can also have positive effects on employee motivation while also reducing workplace stress.

Creativity is often not the flash-of-inspiration phenomenon that it is commonly attributed to be but instead manifests in a multi-part process. According to Denhardt et al. (2016), the associated steps are as listed below:

- preparation, which is assessing the problem and possible alternatives;
- concentration, which is devoting focus to solving the problem;
- incubation, which is allowing the subconscious mind to work on the problem;
- illumination, which is coming to the solution of the problem; and
- verification, which is confirming that the solution consistently works.

It is important to keep in mind that the process is usually far from linear, even though the process involved will still generally be present. Thinking about creative processes that you have experienced before, which of these elements, if any, have been the most apparent and ultimately the most vital to your creative efforts?

In addition to different steps and attributes being associated with the cultivation of creative thought, there are separate and distinct roles associated with different aspects of creative processes. Hollingsworth (1989) identifies four distinct roles, which are listed below:

- innovation, which is seeing the obvious before others;
- synthesis, which combines ideas from various sources;
- extension, which expands ideas to new applications; and
- duplication, which copies good ideas.

Finding an organizational balance between workers who fit each of these roles is vital to maximizing creative output. Do you favor any of these roles over others, or do you attempt to create the suggested balance with your own creative ventures, whether in your personal life or in your professional endeavors?

Communicating with others can be beneficial to creativity, especially when ties to others are relatively weak due to the increased willingness to suggest different approaches and unique ideas. Communication may sometimes be greater when someone shares stronger ties with certain individuals, whether it be due to their ideas being similar or because he or she does not want to risk alienating his or her close associates (Denhardt et al., 2016). Do you feel freer to express creative thoughts when interacting with an unfamiliar audience, or are you comfortable sharing possibly unpopular opinions with your usual groups? On the other hand, when there are too many ties to manage, creative forces can be spread too thin, resulting in less-than-ideal outcomes. Additionally, workers must be mindful of obstacles to creativity, which include giving an improper definition of the problem at hand, being too quick to judge ideas, being too quick to accept the first

solution, and lacking support and being unwilling to share applicable information (Denhardt et al., 2016). Do you ever find yourself experiencing or even setting up any of these obstacles?

Ultimately, organizations must foster an environment where workers feel comfortable and motivated to engage in creative thinking. Amabile (1999) suggests that intrinsic motivators are more beneficial to the creative process than extrinsic motivators, so organizational leaders should emphasize incentives that are related to these areas. Additionally, there are steps that can be taken to actively promote creativity within the organization. These include assigning challenging work, offering supportive supervision, and supporting a group work culture that encourages creative thought. A group work culture that encourages creative thought includes building trust and supporting open communication and diversity. When considering challenging work, this also considers a workload that is sufficient but not overly taxing. An overly taxing workload can hinder creativity. Supportive group work and supervision can build positive emotions, which can have positive effects on creativity. Have you responded well to any of these suggested strategies? What are some motivating factors that have helped to foster your creative juices that are not listed or discussed here?

Denhardt et al. (2016) discuss a number of different strategies and methods to improve creativity and to help it to manifest within organizations. These approaches include the creation of a *matrix box*, which is used to identify objectives and possible combinations of solutions or synectics, which involves using different analogies in relating to a problem. Developing solutions based off of the analogy is theorized to play out, and *mind mapping* involves the inclusion of pictures and images to define problems, situations, and visions for solving the issue. These strategies are generally linked more closely with organizational creativity development. Ultimately, creative impulses reside within the individual, and steps should be taken to improve personal creative thought. Some of these strategies involve being aware of one's surroundings and changing landscapes, being persistent, being mindful of alternatives, being realistic with expectations, and committing to properly evaluating results.

A commitment to cultivating an environment of creativity with a personal commitment to improving one's own creative capacity can result in more productive outcomes for public organizations and those they serve. As economic flux becomes ever-present, global competition becomes fiercer, and communication means and technology becomes increasingly sophisticated, institutions must be increasingly flexible, adaptive, and innovative, both at the individual and organizational level (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992).

Stress is a common feeling that most people can easily recognize, identify, and empathize with and can have differing effects and consequences for different people. We can all easily recall some stressful situations or factors that immediately bring stress into our lives; however, regardless of how stress affects a person, one must be conscious of the best methods of managing stress and examining how exactly the stress is manifesting itself. According to Seyle (1956), stress occurs in three major stages. The first is the alarm stage where stress receptors in the body and brain are triggered. The second is the counter shock phase where the body's defenses are mobilized, and the third is the resistance phase, which is the body's last resort after other coping mechanisms have been depleted. Stress is a nonspecific body response, which is why stress manifests in similar ways during vastly different encounters or situations even during seemingly happy events. Was the process leading up to your wedding a stressful experience? For many, the days leading up to the happiest day of their lives were also the most stressful days of their lives. Unfortunately, Williams and Cooper (1998) contend that there is a dearth of comprehensive and standardized tools to adequately measure stress.

Both individuals and organizations can suffer from the consequences of stress; the negative psychological and behavioral effects on individuals can lead to problems within organizations (Denhardt et al., 2016). Coping behaviors, such as substance abuse, can affect personal health, and irritability can cause harm to relationship-building. Stress can also lead to carelessness, which can be dangerous in many work environments, or stress can even lead to workplace violence. Has your thinking ever clouded during stressful situations and resulted in less-than-ideal decision-making? While there are obvious and immediate effects associated with these problems, there are also costs to general productivity and in money spent on settling lawsuits and contracting with appropriate healthcare workers. As such, avoiding stress would seem to be an appropriate task. Stress, however, can actually be beneficial in certain circumstances by increasing motivations and energy, and a stress-free existence could lead to apathy or boredom (Denhardt et al., 2016). Why do we engage in stressful activities like watching scary movies, playing tough sports, or attempting to solve challenging problems? Could some forms of stress be addictive?

Identifying sources of stress can be beneficial to general management of stress. Job stress is derived from a number of different places. Individual contributors to stress include major life changes, both positive and

negative, family troubles, financial pressures, and addictions. Within organizations, stress can be created by interpersonal conflicts, perceptions of treatment inequity, or workplace bullying. According to Ongori and Agolla (2008), occupational stress can be caused by a lack of resources and equipment, unpleasant work schedules, or an overwhelmingly negative organizational climate. Additionally, having questions about where one fits in within an organization or being assigned roles that are in conflict with each other are also major contributors to stress (Denhardt et al., 2016). Many public sector positions are inherently stressful, particularly when they involve high levels of responsibility, when there are literal life-and-death consequences, or when there is a perception of little to no control. Consider the stresses that emergency service workers have or those related to managing large public works projects that thousands of citizens rely on. Unfavorable working conditions or environments as well as perceived inequity in organizational decision-making practices are other contributors.

Even when stress can be channeled in a productive manner, there are still arguments made to effectively manage stress. Denhardt et al. (2016) assert that managing stress is important for preventing unnecessary and destructive strain in order to remain motivated and equipped to address challenges and to effectively cope with stress as it occurs. Some more specific tactics involve making lifestyle adjustments, whether this involves making dietary improvements or responding to others in a more positive manner. Stress and job burnout can be mitigated by a healthy lifestyle, which can also have positive effects on psychological well-being (Jones et al., 2010). How do you feel on a weekend morning after a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast? Contrast that with the feeling of the same morning after an alcohol-infused slumber and cold pizza? You probably feel at least slightly less stressed out. These types of adjustments can also include working to maintain a more equitable work-life balance. Adjusting one's attitude to adopt a resilient mindset can also be beneficial in stressful situations where the desire to overcome perceived problems can result in personal prospering or success. Also, the amount of social support that we are able to derive can help to combat negative effects of stress. By successfully building relationships both inside and outside of work, stress can be more effectively buffered or mediated. Emotional regulation is an interesting consideration as it relates to stress management because it can be both a contributor to as well as a mitigator of stress-inducing components (Denhardt et al., 2016). Positive effects can be more positive social interactions and less stressful environments while negative effects can lead to surface acting or a perceived necessity to mask one's true self within a particular environment. It is much less stressful when we can cut loose and be ourselves around trusted friends and family.

Another major stress factor that most people can relate to is pressures on time and properly managing time, which includes setting daily task goals and prioritizing assignments or objectives in an effective manner. While the most important tasks should be finished as soon as possible, there are also arguments in favor of completing easier tasks first since the confidence that these completions provide can promote motivation and momentum (Denhardt et al., 2016).

Stress management initiatives should not only be relegated to the individual level. Organizations should be active in promoting situations and settings that can help to better manage stress. This is achieved particularly well by linking workers with situations that best fit their preferred environments and taking time to properly assimilate new employees into the organization's culture. Promoting healthy lifestyles through wellness and other employee assistance programs (EAPs) can also create better lifestyle choices and mitigate stress.

Denhardt et al. (2016) present a number of ways of acting that can be incorporated into an individual's lifestyle and a general demeanor in order to help him or her better manage and mitigate stressful situations. These ways include the following actions:

- taking charge,
- taking care of oneself,
- reaching out to others,
- finding a balance,
- being prepared,
- building competences,
- getting creative, and
- adjusting one's attitude.

Have you been able to successfully implement any or all of these methods into your personal life? If so, what kinds of mitigating effects have they had on stress? If not, which of the following do you think would be most beneficial to your stress management efforts?

References

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Suggested Unit Resources

Continue reading the following sections in your textbook for more in depth discussion of these units' concepts.

Chapter 3: Fostering Creativity and Innovation, pp. 81-91

Chapter 4: Managing Stress, pp. 102-123