

cognitive intelligence is beyond our control, especially after the first few years of life. It is a product of the gifts with which we were born or our genetic code. Interestingly, above a certain threshold level, the correlation between IQ and success in life (e.g., achieving high occupational positions, accumulated wealth, luminary awards, satisfaction with life, performance ratings by peers and superiors) is essentially zero. Very smart people have no greater likelihood of achieving success in life or of achieving personal happiness than people with low IQ scores (Goleman, 1998; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Sternberg, 1997). On the other hand, social and emotional intelligence have strong positive relationships to success in life and to a reduced degree of encounter stress.

For example, in a study at Stanford University, four-year-old children were involved in activities that tested aspects of their emotional intelligence. (In one study, a marshmallow was placed in front of them, and they were given two choices: eat it now, or wait until the adult supervisor returned from running an errand, then the child would get two marshmallows.) A follow-up study with these same children 14 years later, upon graduation from high school, found that students who demonstrated more emotional intelligence (i.e., postponed gratification in the marshmallow task) were less likely to fall apart under stress, became less irritated and less stressed by interpersonally abrasive people, were more likely to accomplish their goals, and scored an average of 210 points higher on the SAT college entrance exam (Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990). The IQ scores of the students did not differ significantly, but the emotional intelligence scores were considerably different. Consistent with other studies, emotional intelligence predicted success in life as well as the ability to handle encounter stress for these students.

In another study, the social and emotional intelligence scores of retail store managers was assessed and found to be the largest factor in accounting for their abilities to handle personal stress and manage socially stressful events. These abilities, in turn, predicted profits, sales, and employee satisfaction in their stores (Lusch & Serpkeni, 1990). Social and emotional intelligence predicted managerial success. When managers were able to accurately identify others' emotions and respond to them, they were found to be more successful in their personal lives as well as in their work lives (Rosenthal, 1977), and were evaluated as the most desired and competent managers (Pilling & Eroglu, 1994).

If social and emotional intelligence are so important, how does one develop them? The answer is

neither simple nor simplistic. Each of the chapters in this book contains answers to that question. The skills we hope to help you develop are among the most important competencies that comprise social and emotional intelligence. In other words, by improving your abilities in the management skills covered in this book—e.g., self-awareness, problem solving, supportive communication, motivating self and others, managing conflict, empowering others, and so on—your social and emotional competence scores will increase. This is important because a national survey of workers found that employees who rated their manager as supportive and interpersonally competent had lower rates of burnout, lower stress levels, lower incidence of stress-related illnesses, higher productivity, more loyalty to their organizations, and more efficiency in work than employees with nonsupportive and interpersonally incompetent managers (NNL, 1992). Socially and emotionally intelligent managers affect the success of their employees as much as they affect their own success.

The point we are making is a simple one: eliminating encounter stressors can be effectively achieved by developing social and emotional intelligence. Fewer conflicts arise, individuals with whom we interact are more collaborative, and more effective and satisfying interpersonal relationships are developed among those with whom we work. The remaining chapters in this book provide the guidelines and techniques to help you improve your interpersonal competence and your social and emotional intelligence. After completing the book, including engaging in the practice and application exercises, you will have improved your ability to eliminate many forms of encounter stress.

ELIMINATING SITUATIONAL STRESSORS THROUGH WORK REDESIGN

Most of us would never declare that we feel less stress now than a year ago, that we have less pressure, or that we are less overloaded. We all report feeling more stress than ever at least partly because it is the "in" thing to be stressed. "I'm busier than you are" is a common theme in social conversations. On the other hand, these feelings are not without substance for most people. A third of U.S. workers are thinking of quitting their jobs, repeated downsizings have introduced new threats to the workplace, highways are increasingly congested, financial pressures are escalating, crime is pervasive, and worker compensation claims for stress-related illness are ballooning. Unfortunately, in medical treatment and time lost, stress-related illnesses are almost twice as

expensive as workplace injuries because of longer recovery times, the need for psychological therapy, and so on (Farnham, 1991). Situational stressors, in other words, are costly. And they are escalating.

For decades, researchers in the area of occupational health have examined the relationship between job strain and stress-related behavioral, psychological, and physiological outcomes. Studies have focused on various components of job strain, including level of task demand (e.g., the pressure to work quickly or excessively), the level of individual control (e.g., the freedom to vary the work pace), and the level of intellectual challenge (e.g., the extent to which work is interesting).

Research in this area has challenged the common myth that job strain occurs most frequently in the executive suite (Karasek et al., 1988). A federal government study of nearly 5,000 workers found that after controlling for age, sex, race, education, and health status (measured by blood pressure and serum cholesterol level), low-level workers tended to have a higher incidence of heart disease than their bosses who were in high-status, presumably success-oriented, managerial or professional occupations. This is true because certain characteristics of lower-level positions—high demand, low control, low discretion, and low interest—tend to produce higher levels of job strain.

A review of this research suggests that the single most important contributor to stress is lack of freedom (Adler, 1989; French & Caplan, 1972; Greenberger & Stasser, 1991). In a study of administrators, engineers, and scientists at the Goddard Space Flight Center, researchers found that individuals provided with more discretion in making decisions about assigned tasks experienced fewer time stressors (e.g., role overload), situational stressors (e.g., role ambiguity), encounter stressors (e.g., interpersonal conflict), and anticipatory stressors (e.g., job-related threats). Individuals without discretion and participation experienced significantly more stress.

In response to these dynamics, Hackman, Oldham, Janson, and Purdy (1975) proposed a model of job redesign that has proved effective in reducing stress and in increasing satisfaction and productivity. A detailed discussion of this job redesign model is provided in the chapter on Motivating Employees. It consists of five aspects of work—**skill variety** (the opportunity to use multiple skills in performing work), **task identity** (the opportunity to complete a whole task), **task significance** (the opportunity to see the impact of the work being performed), **autonomy** (the opportunity to choose how and when the work will be done), and **feedback** (the opportunity to receive information on

the success of task accomplishment). Here we briefly provide an overview of the applicability of this model to reducing stress-producing job strain. To eliminate situational stressors at work:

Combine Tasks When individuals are able to work on a whole project and perform a variety of related tasks (e.g., programming all components of a computer software package), rather than being restricted to working on a single repetitive task or sub-component of a larger task, they are more satisfied and committed. In such cases, they are able to use more skills and feel a pride of ownership in their job.

Form Identifiable Work Units Building on the first step, when teams of individuals performing related tasks are formed, individuals feel more integrated, productivity improves, and the strain associated with repetitive work is diminished. When these groups combine and coordinate their tasks, and decide internally how to complete the work, stress decreases dramatically. This formation of natural work units has received a great deal of attention in Japanese auto plants in America as workers have combined in teams to assemble an entire car from start to finish, rather than do separate tasks on an assembly line. Workers learn one another's jobs, rotate assignments, and experience a sense of completion in their work.

Establish Customer Relationships One of the most enjoyable parts of a job is seeing the consequences of one's labor. In most organizations, producers are buffered from consumers by intermediaries, such as customer relations departments and sales personnel. Eliminating those buffers allows workers to obtain first-hand information concerning customer satisfaction as well as the needs and expectations of potential customers. Stress resulting from filtered communication also is eliminated.

Increase Decision-Making Authority Managers who increase the autonomy of their subordinates to make important work decisions eliminate a major source of job stress for them. Being able to influence the what, when, and how of work increases an individual's feelings of control. Cameron, Freeman, and Mishra (1991) found a significant decrease in experienced stress in firms that were downsizing when workers were given authority to make decisions about how and when they did the extra work required of them.

Open Feedback Channels A major source of stress is not knowing what is expected and how task performance is being evaluated. As managers communicate

their expectations more clearly and give timely and accurate feedback, subordinates' satisfaction and performance improve. A related form of feedback in production tasks is quality control. Firms that allow the individuals who assemble a product to test its quality, instead of shipping it off to a separate quality assurance group, find that quality increases substantially and that conflicts between production and quality control personnel are eliminated. The point is, providing more information to people on how they are doing always reduces stress.

These practices are used widely today in all types of organizations, from the Social Security Administration to General Motors. When Travelers Insurance Companies implemented a job redesign project, for example, productivity increased dramatically, absenteeism and errors fell sharply, and the amount of distractions and stresses experienced by managers decreased significantly (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Singh 1998). In brief, work redesign can effectively eliminate situational stressors associated with the work itself.

ELIMINATING ANTICIPATORY STRESSORS THROUGH PRIORITIZING, GOAL SETTING, AND SMALL WINS

While redesigning work can help structure an environment where stressors are minimized, it is much more difficult to eliminate entirely the anticipatory stressors experienced by individuals. Stress associated with anticipating an event is more a product of psychological anxiety than current work circumstances. To eliminate that source of stress requires a change in thought processes, priorities, and plans. In the Developing Self-Awareness chapter, for example, we discussed the central place of learning style (thought processes), values (priorities), and moral maturity (personal principles) for effective management.

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed the central importance of establishing clear personal priorities, such as identifying what is to be accomplished in the long term, what cannot be compromised or sacrificed, and what lasting legacy one desires. Establishing this core value set or statement of basic personal principles helps eliminate not only time stressors but also eliminates anticipatory stress by providing clarity of direction. When traveling on an unknown road for the first time, having a road map reduces anticipatory stress. You don't have to figure out where to go or where you are by trying to identify the unknown landmarks along the roadside. In the same way, a personal principles

statement acts as a map or guide. It makes clear where you will eventually end up. Fear of the unknown, or anticipatory stress, is thus eliminated.

Goal Setting

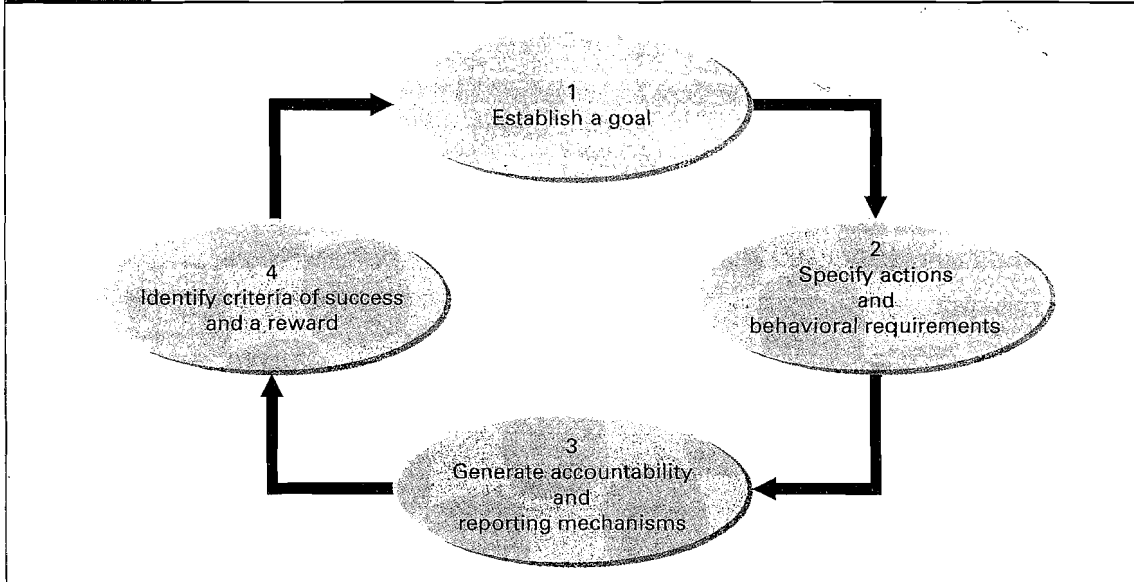
Similarly, establishing short-term plans also helps eliminate anticipatory stressors by focusing attention on immediate goal accomplishment instead of a fearful future. Short-term planning, however, implies more than just specifying a desired outcome. Several action steps are needed if short-term plans are to be achieved (Locke & Latham, 1990). The model in Figure 2.5 outlines the four-step process associated with successful short-term planning.

The first step is to identify the desired goal or objective. Most goal setting, performance appraisal, or management by objectives (MBO) programs begin with that step, but most also stop at that point. Unfortunately, this first step alone is not likely to lead to goal achievement or stress elimination. Merely establishing a goal, while helpful, is not sufficient. When people fail to achieve their goals, it is almost always because they have not followed through on steps 2, 3, and 4.

Step 2 is to identify, as specifically as possible, the activities and behaviors that will lead toward accomplishing the goal. The more difficult the goal is to accomplish, the more rigorous, numerous, and specific should be the behaviors and activities.

A friend once approached one of us with a problem. She was a wonderfully sensitive, caring, competent single woman of about 25 who was experiencing a high degree of anticipatory stress because of her size. She weighed well over 350 pounds, but she had experienced great difficulty losing weight over the last several years. She was afraid of both the health consequences and the social consequences of not being able to reduce her weight. With the monitoring of a physician, she set a goal, or short-term plan, to lose 100 pounds in the next 12 months. Because it was to be such a difficult goal to reach, however, she asked us for help in achieving her ambitious objective. We first identified a dozen or so specific actions and guidelines that would facilitate the attainment of the goal: for example, never shop alone nor without a menu, never carry more than 50 cents in change (in order to avoid the temptation to buy a doughnut), exercise with friends each day at 5:30 P.M., arise each morning at 7:00 A.M. and eat a specified breakfast with a friend, forgo watching TV to reduce the temptation to snack, and go to bed by 10:30 P.M. The behaviors were rigid, but the goal was so difficult that they were

Figure 2.5 A Model for Short-Term Planning and Goal Setting



necessary to ensure progress. In each case, these specific behaviors could be seen as having a direct effect on the ultimate goal of losing 100 pounds.

Step 3 involves establishing accountability and reporting mechanisms. If no one else will ever know if the goal was achieved, chances are it will not be. The principle at the foundation of this step is: "Make it more difficult to stay the same than to change." This is done by involving others in ensuring adherence to the plan, establishing a social support network to obtain encouragement from others, and instituting penalties for nonconformance. In addition to announcing to coworkers, friends, and a church group that she would lose the 100 pounds, for example, our friend had her doctor register her for a hospital stay at the end of the 12-month period. If she did not achieve the goal on her own, she was to go on an intravenous feeding schedule in the hospital to lose the weight, at a cost of over \$250 per day. Because of her public commitments, her self-imposed penalties, and the potential high medical expenses, it became more uncomfortable and costly not to succeed than to accomplish the goal.

Step 4 involves establishing an evaluation and reward system. This means identifying the evidence that the goal has been accomplished. In the case of losing weight, it's a matter of simply getting on the scales. But for improving management skills, becoming a better friend, developing more patience, establishing more effective leadership, and so on, the criteria of success are not so easily identified. That is why this

step is crucial. "I'll know it when I see it" isn't good enough. Specific indicators of success, or specific changes that will have been produced when the goal is achieved, must be identified. (For example, I'll know I have become more patient when I reinterpret the situation and refuse to get upset when my spouse, or friend, is late for an appointment.) Carefully outlining these criteria serves as a motivation toward goal accomplishment by making the goal more observable and measurable.

The purpose of this short-term planning model is to eliminate anticipatory stress by establishing a focus and direction for activity. The anxiety associated with uncertainty and potentially negative events is dissipated when mental and physical energy are concentrated on purposeful activity. (By the way, the last time we saw our friend, her weight was below 200 pounds.)

Small Wins

Another principle related to eliminating anticipatory stressors is the small-wins strategy (Weick, 1984). By "small win," we mean a tiny but definite change made in a desired direction. We begin by changing something that is relatively easy to change. Then we change a second thing that is easy to change, and so on. Although each individual success may be relatively modest when considered alone, the multiple small gains eventually mount up, generating a sense of momentum that creates the impression of substantial movement toward

a desired goal. This momentum helps convince ourselves, as well as others, of our ability to accomplish our objective. The fear associated with anticipatory change is eliminated as we build self-confidence through small wins. We also gain the support of others as they see progress being made.

In the case of our overweight friend, one key was to begin changing what she could change, a little at a time. Tackling the loss of 100 pounds all at once would have been too overwhelming a task. But she could change the time she shopped, the time she went to bed, and the menu she ate for breakfast. Each successful change generated more and more momentum that, when combined, led to the larger change that she desired. Her ultimate success was a product of multiple small wins.

Similarly, Weick (1993b) has described Poland's peaceful transition from a communistic command-type economy to a capitalistic free-enterprise economy as a product of small wins. Not only is Poland now one of the most thriving economies in eastern Europe, but it made the change to free enterprise without a single shot being fired, a single strike being called, or a single political upheaval. One reason for this is that long before the Berlin Wall fell, small groups of volunteers in Poland began to change the way they lived. They adopted a theme that went something like this: "If you value freedom, then behave freely; if you value honesty, then speak honestly; if you desire change, then change what you can."

Polish citizens organized volunteer groups to help at local hospitals, assist the less fortunate, and clean up parks. They behaved in a way that was outside the control of the central government but reflected their free choice. Their changes were not on a large enough scale to attract attention and official opposition from the central government. But their actions nevertheless reflected their determination to behave in a free, self-determining way. They controlled what they could control, namely, their own voluntary service. These voluntary service groups spread throughout Poland, so when the transition from communism to capitalism occurred, a large number of people in Poland had already gotten used to behaving in a way consistent with self-determination. Many of these people simply stepped into positions where independent-minded managers were needed. The transition was smooth because of the multiple small wins that had previously spread throughout the country relatively unnoticed.

In summary, the rules for instituting small wins are simple: (1) identify something that is under your control; (2) change it in a way that leads toward

your desired goal; (3) find another small thing to change, and change it; (4) keep track of the changes you are making; and (5) maintain the small gains you have made. Anticipatory stressors are eliminated because the fearful unknown is replaced by a focus on immediate successes.

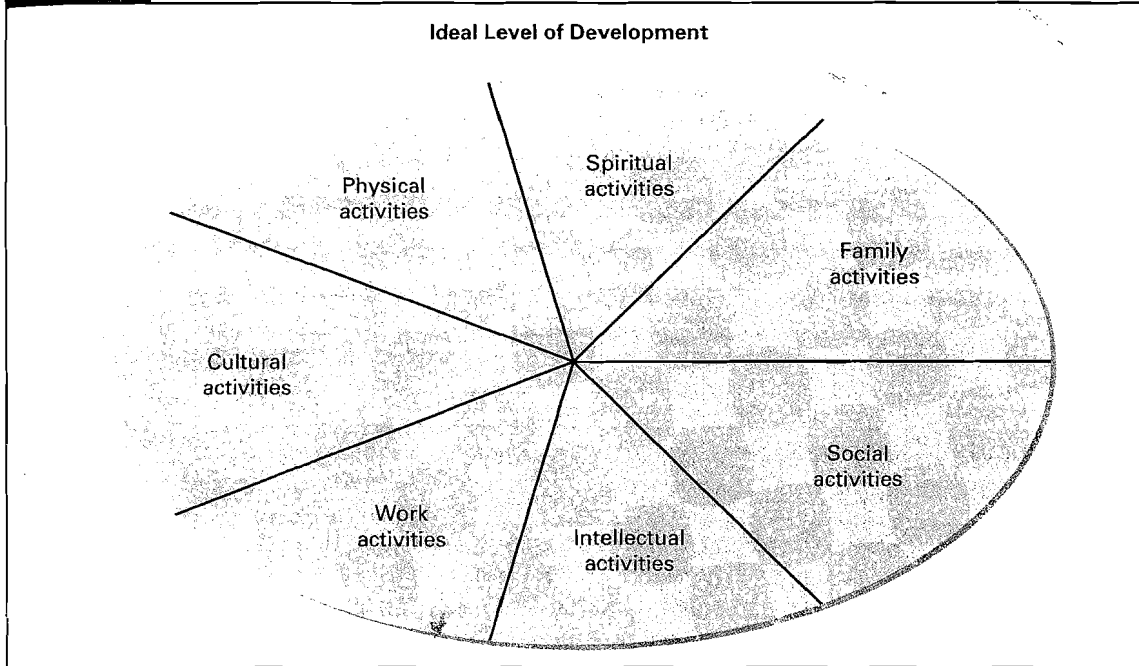
Developing Resiliency

Now that we have examined various causes of stress and outlined a series of preventive measures, we turn our attention to a second major strategy for managing stress as shown in Figure 2.2, the development of **resiliency** to handle stress that cannot be eliminated. When stressors are long lasting or are impossible to remove, coping requires the development of personal resiliency. This is the capacity to withstand or manage the negative effects of stress, to bounce back from adversity, and to endure difficult situations (Masten & Reed, 2002). The first studies of resiliency emerged from investigations of children in abusive, alcoholic, poverty, or mentally ill parent circumstances. Some of these children surprised researchers by rising above their circumstances and developing into healthy, well-functioning adolescents and adults. They were referred to as highly resilient individuals (Masten & Reed, 2002).

We all differ widely in our ability to cope with stress. Some individuals seem to crumble under pressure, while others appear to thrive. A major predictor of which individuals cope well with stress and which do not is the amount of resiliency that they have developed. Two categories of factors explain differences in resiliency. One is personal factors—such as positive self-regard and core self-evaluation, good cognitive abilities, and talents valued by society—and the second is personal coping strategies—such as improving relationships and social capital, and a reduction in risk factors such as abuse, neglect, homelessness, and crime (Masten & Reed, 2002). Several of the first set of factors were measured in Chapter 1, including aspects of personality, self-efficacy, values maturity, and so on. The second set of factors is more behavioral and can be summarized by Figure 2.6. The figure illustrates that resiliency is fostered by achieving balance in the various aspects of life.

The wheel in Figure 2.6 represents the key activities that characterize most people's lives. Each segment in the figure identifies an important aspect of life that must be developed in order to achieve resiliency. The most resilient individuals are those who have achieved a certain degree of **life balance**. They

Figure 2.6 Balancing Life Activities



LEARNING

actively engage in activities in each segment of the circle so that they achieve a degree of balance in their lives. For example, assume that the center of the figure represents the zero point of involvement and the outside edge of the figure represents maximum involvement. Shading in a portion of the area in each of the seven segments would represent the amount of attention paid to each area. (This exercise is included in the Skill Practice section.) Individuals who are best able to cope with stress would shade in a substantial portion of each segment, indicating they have spent time developing a variety of dimensions of their lives. The pattern of shading in this exercise, however, should also be relatively balanced. A lopsided pattern is as much an indicator of nonresiliency as not having some segments shaded at all. Overemphasizing one or two areas to the exclusion of others often creates more stress than it eliminates. Life balance is key (Lehrer, 1996; Murphy, 1996; Rostad & Long, 1996).

This prescription, of course, is counterintuitive. Generally, when we are feeling stress in one area of life, such as an overloaded work schedule, we respond by devoting more time and attention to it. While this is a natural reaction, it is counterproductive for several reasons. First, the more we concentrate exclusively on work, the more restricted and less creative we become. We lose perspective, cease to take fresh points of view,

and become overwhelmed more easily. As we shall see in the discussion of creativity in Chapter 3, many breakthroughs in problem solving come from the thought processes stimulated by unrelated activities. That is why several major corporations send senior managers on high-adventure wilderness retreats, invite thespian troupes to perform plays before the executive committee, require volunteer community service, or encourage their managers to engage in completely unrelated activities outside of work.

Second, refreshed and relaxed minds think better. A bank executive commented recently during an executive development workshop that he gradually has become convinced of the merits of taking the weekend off from work. He finds that he gets twice as much accomplished on Monday as his colleagues who have been in their offices all weekend. He encourages members of his unit to take breaks, get out of the office periodically, and make sure to use their vacation days.

Third, the cost of stress-related illness decreases markedly when employees participate in well-rounded wellness programs. A study by the Association for Fitness in Business concluded that companies receive an average return of \$3 to \$4 on each dollar invested in health and wellness promotion. AT&T, for example, expects to save \$72 million in the next 10 years as a result of investment in wellness programs for employees.