Stress Coping Strategies for Commercial Flight Crewmembers

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The KOBASA model is a very simplified form of the stress resistance training model. Many professional counselors still use it for stress maintenance. After long and extensive studies conducted on the middle managerial level at the Illinois Bell Telephone company, this model was developed in 1979 (Homan, 2002). The conditions of this company marked by stressful events, i.e., organizational or departmental changes, labor issues, consumer pressures, and market shifts. The hypothetical analysis of this model explains that the stressful events in life result in physical, emotional and physiological deterioration. These factors are still experienced by many airline companies in this modern era. Thus this model is helpful in similar ways as it was for the Illinois Bell telephone company.

The stress resistance model of KOBASA is derived primarily from the aspect of hardiness/toughness, i.e., its mechanics lie in this phenomenon. The concept of hardiness is similar to building the body or muscles, where the bodybuilders firstly, do the rigorous exercises for breaking down different groups of their muscles and then rebuild them by extreme body toning exercises. The hardiness is referred to the personality styles with greater control, commitment, and resilience or toughening up, according to military academies and sports psychology. The toughness comes from exposure to the stressors in life.

The stressors are the essential triggering factors for most of the biological factors going on in the body, which alter according to the given condition. For instance, the events containing stress for the person activates the sympathetic nervous system of the autonomic nervous system which is controlling the respiration and blood circulation. Therefore, it triggers the defense mechanism in the body which is commonly known as flight or fight response. The neurotransmitters in the brain respond by exciting the kidneys, which furthermore releases the two set of hormones. The first hormone, glucocorticoids breaks down the complex organic material in blood into sugar, cholesterol, and fat. The stomach acidity levels are increased due to hormones reactivity, preparing it for rapid digestive functioning to aid in fight or flight reaction (Oliveira-Silva et al., 2016). The second hormonal bits of help give adrenaline thrush, increase the heart rate by constricting the arteries. This raises blood pressure. Thus oxygen is consumed more and breathing becomes faster, putting the body into higher reactive mode. This is the whole process through which a body reacts in a stressful condition making it ready to toughen-up.

The overall or holistic management model for stress is adapted to the environment of aviation and uses the whole concept of stress resistance training. The KOBASA's stress model can be utilized in all over the stress-related issues triggering the physiological, psychological and emotional states of a person (Homan, 2002). A person goes through the same biological process when exposed to the stressors, so this model applies in the holistic term to all the life events, and it is essential in the aspect of controlling or managing stress. However, the management of stresses may demand different stress managing models according to various conditions, for instance, the coping strategies for commercial pilot and aviators would differ from each other as they do not experience similar stressful conditions. For example, commercial pilots may develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), when they go through significant stresses, like system failures, emergency landings, hijacking, etc.

The Critical Incident Response Program (CIRP) was established by an airline, to make the commercial pilot learn different strategies of coping up with the critical incident stressors and PTSD. The programs, such as ALPA help them for eliminating psychological distress. The CIRP is in practice in many airline institutes, but due to resistance to consult a psychologist, crew-members get help from peer volunteers. This is a cathartic coping system, in which pilots talk about their traumatic events and get stress-free. This program has its limitations, as worse issues of traumas cannot be dealt in such a way, such that just by doing catharsis (Oliveira-Silva et al., 2016).

The ways I deal with the stressors at work environment is, firstly, I track the cause of my stressor, and then develop a response strategy related to the level of my stress. Once identification is made, I devise ways to cope up with the stressful events, by showing resilience or at the time talking things out with my organization's psychologist. Burnout, fatigue and job insecurity are the major stressors in my organization, so the recreational activities I plan for myself and sometimes organization o the honors, help in maintaining the stress levels low.

The Crew Resource Management (CRM) is devised form the ideas and concept of stress management in the corporate environment; thereby due to its wide applicability, it is utilized in the aviation and cockpit organizations. It is the effective use of all the provided resources for achieving an efficient and safe flight function.

The stressors are maintained through exercises as well, such that anaerobic involves the oxygen-related exercises, e.g., riding, walking, swimming, etc. whereas, the aerobic exercise is related to oxygen-deprived exercises, like lifting weights while control breath.

The two main accidents discussed in the article by Homan, are the crash of Eastern 401 which killed ninety-nine people just because the crew was burned-out due to slight stress and they were fixated with a gear problem and forgot to fly the plane. The second incident involved the B-747s which bombarded while taking off and killed 583 people; the captain was under personal stress and still got the take-off clearance (Homan, 2002).

**References**

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