



# Occupational Stress

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- **Job stress:** A situation wherein job-related factors interact with employees to change their psychological and/or physiological condition such that they are forced to deviate from normal functioning
  - Involves cognition, emotions, and physiological reactions
  - **Eustress:** Provides challenges that motivate
  - **Distress:** Results from demanding situations that produce negative outcomes

# Occupational Stress

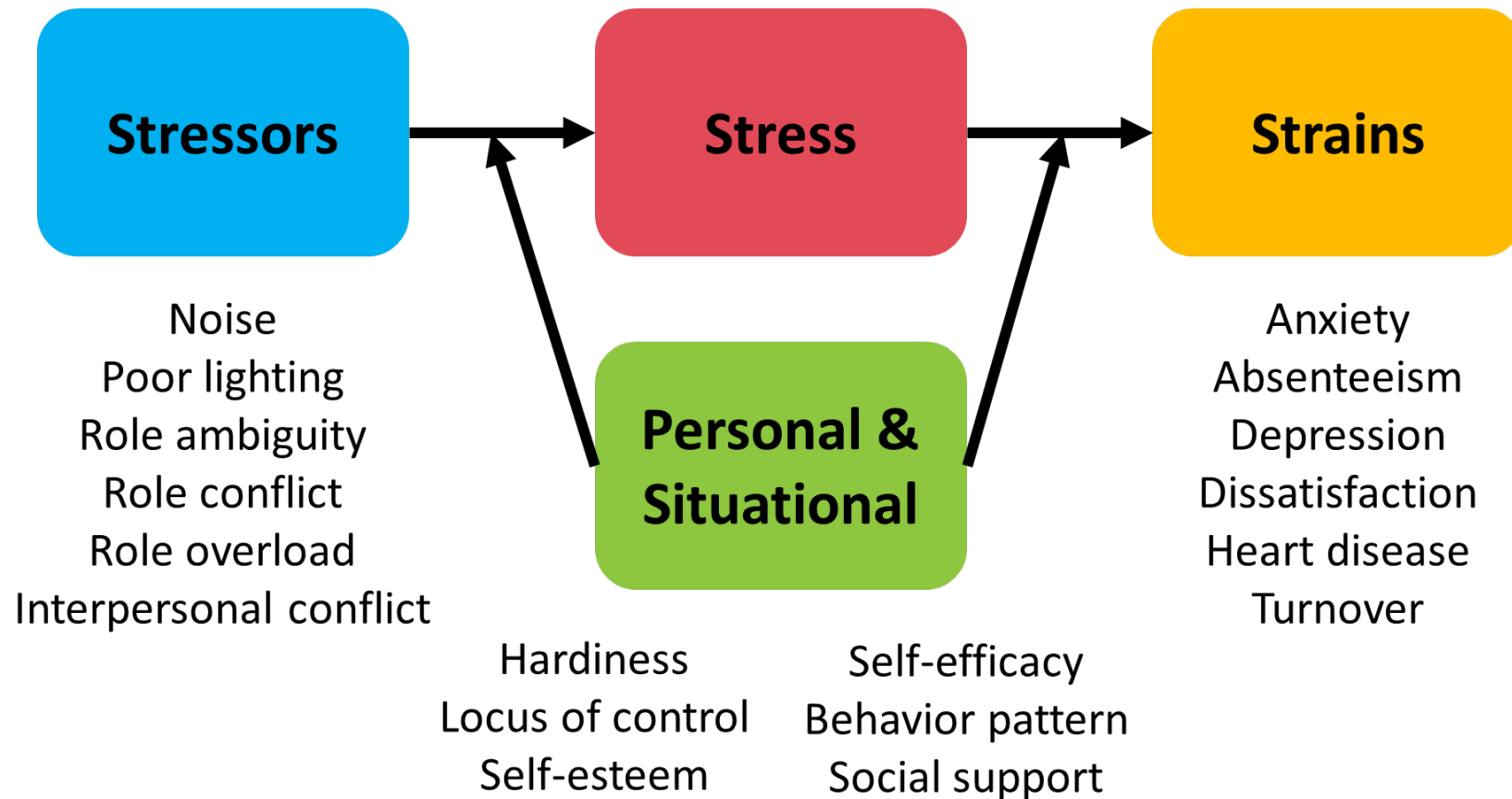
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- Costs of job stress:
  - Impaired physiological and psychological well-being
  - Increased CWBs
  - Increased accidents
  - Increased violence
  - Risk for emotional distress lawsuits



# Occupational Stress

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# Job Stressors

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- **Job stressors:** The job demands to which employees respond
  - **Demand-control model:** Suggests stress exists as a function of job demands and job control
  - **Person-environment fit model:** Suggests stress is influenced by the compatibility between a person and the workplace
- **Physical/task stressors:**
  - E.g., excessive heat, noise, and light; repetitive tasks

# Job Stressors

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- Psychological stressors:
  - **Perceived lack of autonomy:** The extent to which employees can control how and when they perform job tasks
  - **Interpersonal conflict:** Negative interactions with other employees
  - **Role stressors:** A collective term for stressors resulting from multiple roles

**Role ambiguity:**

Unclear  
expectations

**Role conflict:**

Incompatible  
demands

**Role overload:**

Too many  
demands

# Job Stressors

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- Psychological stressors:
  - **Emotional labor:** The regulation of one's emotions to meet job demands
    - **Surface acting:** *Expressing* appropriate emotions without *experiencing* them
    - **Deep acting:** Changing one's emotional experience to match the emotions expressed
  - **Rotating shift:** A schedule of work that changes on a consistent schedule (e.g., bi-weekly or monthly)

# Job Strains

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- **Job strains:** Employees' reactions or responses to stressors

## Behavioral Strains

- Absenteeism and turnover
- Drug abuse
- Poor performance
- High accident rate
- Sabotage
- Violence
- Impaired memory, reaction time, accuracy, attention, creativity, decision-making

## Psychological Strains

- Psychological burnout
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Family problems
- Sleep problems
- Job dissatisfaction

## Physiological Strains

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Common cold and flu
- Digestive problems
- Back pain
- Arthritis
- Headaches
- High blood pressure



# Job Strains

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- **Psychological burnout:** An extreme state of psychological strain resulting from prolonged response to chronic stressors
  - 3 components – Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal accomplishment
  - Risk factors – Perceptions of injustice and lack of social support

# Individual Differences in Stress

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- Reactions to stressors vary widely depending on individual characteristics
- Qualities associated with higher levels of stress:
  - **Neuroticism:** A tendency to be emotionally unstable
  - **Type A behavior pattern:** Described as ambitious, competitive, impatient, and reluctant to rest

# Individual Differences in Stress

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- Qualities associated with lower levels of stress:
  - High **self-esteem** (a global evaluation of the self) and **high self-efficacy** (an evaluation of one's ability to do something)
  - **Type B behavior pattern:** Relaxed, patient, calm, reflective, and easygoing
  - **Proactive personality:** A tendency to initiate and maintain actions that can alter surrounding environment

# Individual Differences in Stress

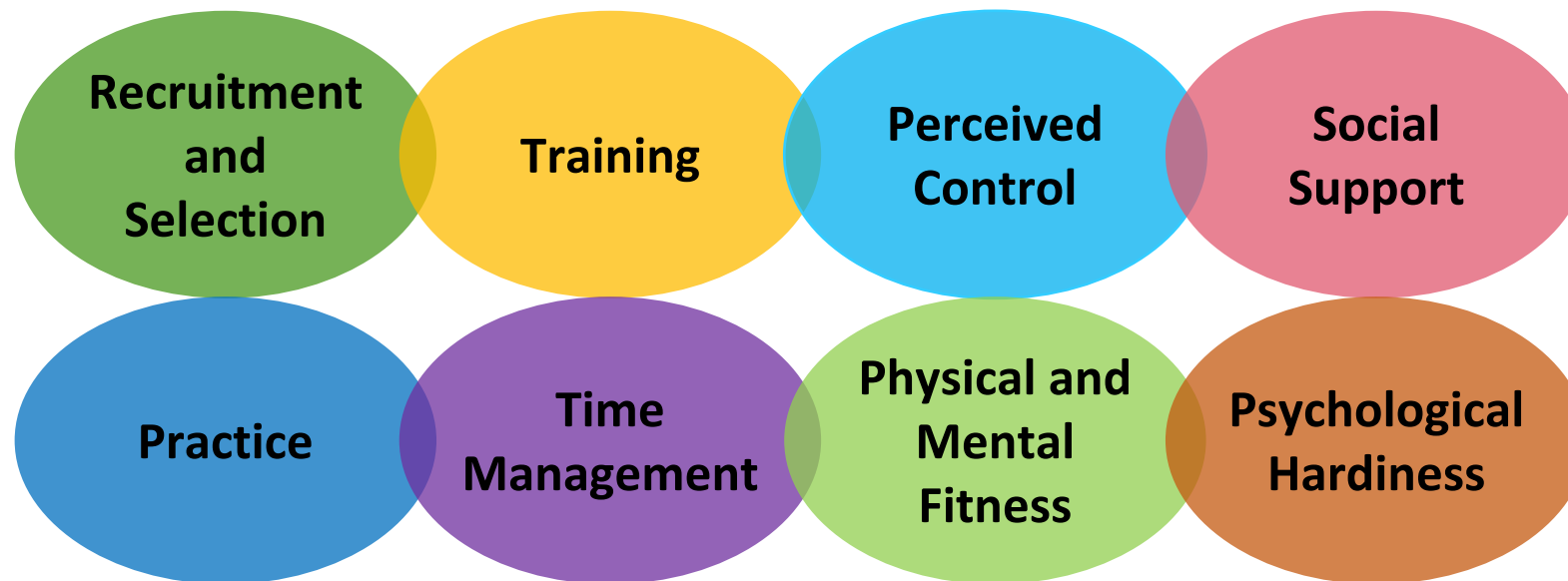
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- Qualities associated with lower levels of stress:
  - **Psychological hardiness:** A set of personality characteristics that provide resistance to stress
    - A sense of control over one's environment (internal locus of control)
    - A sense of purpose and commitment
    - A tendency to perceive stressors as challenges rather than obstacles (**transformational coping**)

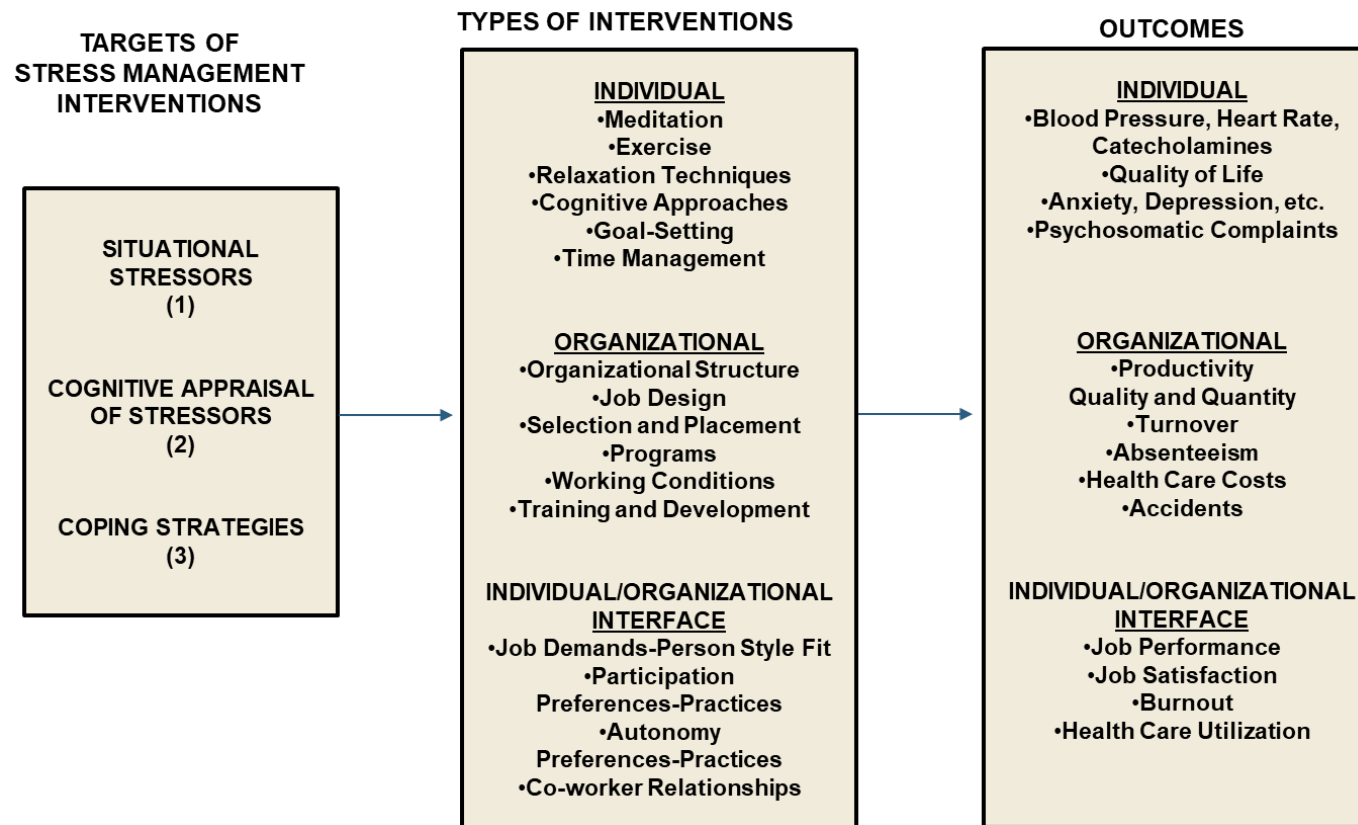
# Stress Management Interventions

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- **Occupational health psychology:** The application of psychology to improving people's work lives and promoting safety, health, and well-being



# Stress Management Interventions



# Stress Management Interventions

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- **Primary prevention strategies:** Proactive and preventative approaches that try to reduce the number and the intensity of stressors
  - Changes to the job, technology, or organizational structure
  - **Cognitive restructuring:** The process of changing one's perceptions of stress
  - Flexible schedules



# Stress Management Interventions

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- **Secondary prevention strategies:**  
Seek to modify responses to stressors and job demands
  - Balanced diet, exercise, smoking cessation, and relaxation training
  - Conflict resolution training
  - Social support
- **Tertiary prevention strategies:**  
Reactive and recuperative approaches that are focused on healing from the negative consequences of stress
  - E.g., medical care, psychotherapy, and career counseling



# Stress Management Interventions

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- **Employee wellness programs (EWPs):** Primary approach designed to help employees prevent occupational stress
  - E.g., incentives to stay well
  - Usually cost effective
- **Employee assistance programs (EAPs):** Secondary approach designed to help employees cope with work and personal stress
  - Usually run by outside organization
  - Usually cost effective

# Launching a Wellness Program

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- ✓ Launch simple programs or distribute information to employees
- ✓ Let employees plan and implement activities and conduct a survey to assess their interests related to health and recreation
- ✓ Schedule events before work, during lunch, or after work
- ✓ Learn from other companies in the area or industry
- ✓ Connect employees with local health agencies and nonprofit organizations