

Stress and Stress Management

BY

DR MONDAY N. IGWE

CONSULTANT PSYCHIATRIST

DEPT OF PSYCHIATRY

FEDERAL TEACHING HOSPITAL

ABAKALIKI

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

To understand:

- What stress means.
- Categorizing stressors
- The types of stress.
- The negative effects of stress.
- The positive effects of stress.
- The signs & symptoms of stress.
- How we can cope with or manage stress.

Introduction

- All of us face stress in our lives at home/work
- Life is full of circumstances that produce threats to our well being - **stressors**.
- Stressors (events) that produce stress can be positive or negative eg planning this prog
- Stress can have cumulative negative effects on our psychological, physiological and emotional well being.

Definition of stress:

- Any action or situation that places physical and psychological demands upon a person.
- Demands on an individual which tax or exceed his adjustive capacity.
- Body's response to pressure or events that threaten or challenge a person

THE BODY'S STRESS RESPONSE

- ***Q. How does the body respond to stressful situations?***
 - stress hormones: adrenaline, cortisol, thyroxin.
 - stress response helps one rise to meet challenges. But if stress is persistent for a long time (chronic), it will lead to deleterious effects.

The general Adaptation Syndrome Model

- The course of stress
- Theory developed by Hans Selye
- Suggests that a person's response to stress consists of 3 stages
- Alarm and mobilization
- Resistance
- Exhaustion – failure to adapt leading to physical, psychological and social probs.

CATEGORIZING STRESSORS

1. PERSONAL STRESSORS

Major life events:

**10 top stressful life events:*

- spouse's death
- divorce
- marriage separation
- jail term
- death of a close relative

Stressful life events contd

- injury or illness.
- marriage.
- Loss of job.
- marriage crisis.
- retirement.

Others

- job overload
- poverty
- Government policy

2 Cataclysmic events

- Strong stressors occurring suddenly and affecting many people at same time
- Floods, plane crashes, fire, multiple RTA
- Less stressful in the long run
- Provision of social support usually
- People know that the worst is behind them
- Some develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

3. Background stressors

- Daily hassles like delays, broken appliances, people's irritating behaviour, dissatisfaction with job/school, unpleasant relationships, crowded housing with no privacy.
- Exposure to dirty environ, exhaust fumes, pollution including noise, excess heat or cold
- Minor irritations but no long term ill effects
- They may cause if continued or compounded by other stressors.

TYPES OF STRESS

- 2 types: Eustress and Distress
- Eustress – positive: stimulates; leads to fulfillment & achievement of goals & objectives.
- Distress – negative: This is persistent & long time pressure; mostly bad because of duration.

EFFECTS OF CHRONIC STRESS

Chronic stress can:

- Raise BP.
- Increase the risk of heart attack & stroke.
- Suppress the immune system.
- Contribute to infertility.
- Speed up the aging process.
- Rewire the brain, leaving you more vulnerable to anxiety & depression.

Effects of chronic stress contd

- Health problems caused or exacerbated by stress:
 - Pain of any kind.
 - Heart disease.
 - Digestive problems.
 - Sleep problems.
 - Depression.
 - Obesity.
 - Autoimmune diseases.
 - Skin conditions, eg eczema

SYMPTOMS & SIGNS OF STRESS

- ***Q. How do we recognize stress overload?***

Cognitive symptoms:

- Memory problems.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Poor judgment.
- Seeing only the negative.
- Anxious or racing thoughts.
- Constant worrying.

.

- **Physical symptoms:**
 - Aches and pains.
 - Diarrhoea or constipation.
 - Nausea, dizziness.
 - Chest pain, rapid heartbeat.
 - Loss of sex drive.
 - Frequent colds.

Behavioural symptoms:

- Eating more or less.
- Sleeping too much or too little.
- Isolating yourself from others.
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities.
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax.
- Nervous habits (e.g.nail biting,pacing).

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Q. How do we cope with stress/stressors?

Steps in management include:

- Identification of the sources of stress.
- Stress journal.
- Coping strategies.
- Dealing with stressful situations: The 4 A's.
- Other measures.

•

- **(i) Identify the sources of stress in your life –**
Not easy. Look closely.
- **(ii) Start a stress journal – Each time you feel stressed, keep a track of it in your journal.**
- **(iii) Coping strategies: Avoid maladaptive coping mechanisms, eg, drinking too much.**
- **(iv) Dealing with stressful situations: The 4A's.**

The 4A's

- **Change the situation:**
 - **AVOID** or **ALTER** the stressor.
- **Change your reaction:**
 - **ADAPT** or **ACCEPT** the stressor.

•

A. Avoid unnecessary stress:

- Learn how to say “no”. Know your limits and stick to them.
- Avoid people who stress you out.
- Take control of your environment.
- Avoid hot-button topics.
- Pare down your to-do list. Drop tasks not truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

.

B. Alter the situation:

- Express your feeling instead of bottling them up.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Be more assertive.
- Manage your time better.

.

C. Adapt to the stressor:

- If you can't change the stressor, change yourself.
- Reframe problems.
- Look at the big picture.
- Adjust your standards and change goals
- Focus on the positive. Apply faith.

- **C. Adapt to the stressor contd**
- Turn a threat to a challenge
- Making a threatening situation less threatening
- Preparing for stress before it happens

.

D. Accept the things you can't change:

- Don't try to control the uncontrollable.
- Look for the upside.
- Share your feelings.
- Learn to forgive.

V. Other measures

A. Make time for fun and relaxation.

- Set aside relaxation time.
- Connect with others via phones, mails, visits.
- Do something you enjoy everyday.
- Keep your sense of humour.

•

- *Healthy ways to relax and recharge:*

- Go for a walk.
- Spend time in nature.
- Work in your garden.
- Sweat out tension with a good work out.
- Write in your journal.
- Take a long bath.
- Light scented candles.
- Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea.
- Play with a pet.
- Get a message.
- Curl up with a good book.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a comedy.

.

B. Adopt a healthy lifestyle

- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Reduce caffeine and sugar.
- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and psychoactive drugs.
- Get enough sleep.

.

C. Strengthen your relationships

Tips for reaching out and building relationships

- Help someone else by volunteering.
- Have a lunch or coffee with a co-worker.
- Call or email an old friend.
- Go for a walk with a workout buddy.
- Schedule a weekly dinner date.
- Take a class or join a club like rotary etc.

.

D. Invest in your emotional health.

E. Nutritional supplements eg Vitamins, Homtamin Ginseng, amino-pep, etc.

F. Positive mental attitude

G. Prayers, meditation, praises.

Defense mechanisms

- Efforts to control, reduce or learn to tolerate the threats from stressors (coping)
- Unconsciously
- Maintains a person's sense of control and worth
- May involve denial of the existence of the stressor
- Displacement, reaction formation, projection, sublimation, regression, repression, rationalizn

CONCLUSION

- Stress is a normal part of life. Avoiding it means ceasing to exist
- Stress that can either help us learn and grow or can cause us significant problems.
- While there are promising treatments for stress, the management of stress is mostly dependent on that willingness of a person to make the changes necessary for a healthy lifestyle.

- **THANKS FOR YOUR TIME**