Stress and Stress Management

BY

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