

An Article on Stress Management.

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Stress Management

According to 2005-2006 “State of our Nation’s Youth” report findings that were released by the Horatio Alger Association, 41% of High School Students said that the pressure to get good grades was a major concern.

According to the facts & stats collected by National Mental Health Association (now known as Mental Health America), “a suicide was the eighth leading cause of death for all Americans, the third leading cause of death for those aged 15-24, & the Second leading Killer in the college population in 1998.

According to a recent UCLA Survey of College freshman, college students are feeling overwhelmed & stressed than 20 years ago.

At home, an Alarming situation is revealed by the headline given in the ‘Indian Express’ dated 15th April, 2002 as, “stress, internal politics take their toll on cops. Factors other than poor wages & tough working conditions make constables want to kill themselves.”

In 2006, 5857 students – or 16 a day – committed suicide across India due to exam stress, reported by Times of India, some students have discovered other mechanisms to deal with the pressure, like running away from home or simply refusing to appear for exams.

A Headline on the IBN Live, on 19th January 2010 states, “13 Mumbai students commit suicide in last two weeks”.

“Counsellors say what could be pushing children to take such an extreme step is the copycat syndrome with student suicides being widely reported with minute details.

“When I see someone else committing suicide and the manner is described and if I feel his or her situation is the same as mine, I could try & Imitate them”. Said Psychiatrist Dr. Harish Shetty, who is the Vice-President of Bombay Psychiatrist Society & he also states “stress appears when our bodies react to a challenge, mental or physical, by increasing metabolism, elevating Blood pressure, shooting up the heart

beats and breathing rate. Most of the time we do not fight against stress and gets us into trouble.”

Thus, from the above studies it is realized that ‘stress is a common human emotion’. Achieving the right balance between too much and too little stress has become an integral part of our life.

If you work better to a deadline, leave things to the last minute & then do them in a panic, constantly feel in a rush, feel full of dread at the thought of going to work, often skip lunch, stay late at the office or take work home, get tired, irritable & depressed then you are suffering from stress.

And if your way of dealing with it is to have another cup of coffee or reach for a cigarette, switch on the television or pour yourself a stiff drink, you are making the problems worse. Much stress occurs through emotions such as aggression, anger, anxiety, impatience & fear.

Eating an unhealthy diet, smoking, drinking & taking drugs can also contribute further to physical strain, stress may be generated through work, at home, within relationships, as a result of internal emotional conflict, through environment, diet, ill health & financial Insecurity as well as through major life events – from childbirth to bereavement, from marriage to divorce.

Understanding stress - What is stress ?

A brief History of the Term.

- ‘Stress’ (a word derived from Latin) was used popularly in the 17th Century to mean, “Hardship, straits, adversity or affliction.” (Shorter Oxford English dictionary, 1933).
- In physics ‘Stress’ refers to the internal force generated within a solid body by the action of any external force which tends to distort the body.
- In psychology, ‘stress’ refers to ‘a state of bodily or mental tension resulting from factors that tend to alter an existent equilibrium (Britannica Encyclopedia).
- Hans selye postulated 3 stages in the ‘GAS’ to explain the term stress.

GAS = General Adaptation Syndrome.

Stage 1) The alarm reaction: An initial phase of lowered Resistance followed by counter shock.

2) Resistance: The stage of maximum Adaptation and hopefully, successful return to Equilibrium for the Individual.

3) Exhaustion: When adaptive mechanisms collapse.

- Physiologist walter. B.Cannon first described the word 'Stress' over 100 years ago.

Nature of Stress :

- 1) Stress is inevitable.
- 2) Stress has been called "the invisible disease".
- 3) The experience of stress is highly subjective.

It means a) Different individuals can cope with differing levels of stress.
 b) There are individual differences in the actual experience of stress.

- 4) Everyone experiences stress but every stress experience is not alarming or disturbing.
- 5) Excessive stress may lead to the breakdown of the organized functioning.
- 6) Stress is not simply Anxiety & Nervous tension.
- 7) Stress is an additive phenomenon. It builds up. Each new & persistent stressor adds to an individual's stress level.
- 8) Two conditions are required for potential stress to become actual stress: (1) There must be uncertainty over the outcome & (2) The outcome must be important.

Typical Symptoms of stress: I heard one of my friend Saying, "Success & Progress i.e. speed of our life get halt due to HALT". Then she explained to me the full form of 'HALT' i.e. HALT = Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired.

When a person believes demands made of them exceed their ability to cope, they will experience stress.

Stress can manifest itself in many different ways, so recognizing the signs is an important first step in dealing with your problems.

Michael Cohen describes 5 categories of the symptoms of stress. They are the –

- 1) Emotional Symptoms
- 2) Mental Symptoms
- 3) Physical Symptoms
- 4) Behavioural Symptoms
- 5) Health Problems.

Typical Symptoms of Stress (Michael Cohen)

1. Emotional Symptoms

1. Anxiety
2. Anger
3. Loneliness
4. Depression
5. Isolation
6. Feeling tearful
7. Worry
8. Guilt
9. Loss of confidence
10. Loss of Humor
11. Dissatisfaction
With your job.

2. Mental Symptoms

1. Frequent lapses in memory
2. Difficult concentrating
3. Very rigid attitudes
4. Difficulty in getting things done
5. Constant Negative thinking
7. Being very critical of yourself
8. Inability to make decisions
Distorted Ideas

3. Physical Symptoms

1. High blood pressure
2. Headaches
3. Poor sleep
4. Pin
5. Weakness Dizziness
6. Diarrhoea & Constipation
7. Dry mouth
8. A lack of energy
9. Cramp
10. Feeling restless
11. Muscle tensions in the
neck & back.

4. Behavioural Symptoms

1. Impatience
2. Impulsiveness
3. Short temper
4. Hyperactivity
5. Aggressiveness
6. An increase in smoking
7. Alcohol Abuse
8. Becoming Accident Prone
9. Avoiding difficult situations
10. The use of prescribed drugs
11. The use of illegal drugs.

5. Health Problems

1. Ulcers
2. Asthama
3. Skin rashes
4. Cold & flu
5. High blood pressure
6. Migraines
7. Stomach disorders
8. Heart attacks
9. Irritable bowel syndrome

Where does stress come from?

We define stress factors broadly as external demands of life or the internal attitudes and thoughts.

Stress factors can also include conflict with spouse, traffic Jams, pollution in the city, that fifth cup of tea, the pushy Salesman who will not take no for an answer or the angry boss. The more stressful life events includes the death of a family member, major personal injury or illness, Retirement, change in Residence, fired from job, trouble with In-laws, pregnancy etc.

Many elements contribute to stress factors becoming stressful. There are certainly 'individual differences among us. "you can't make a race horse out of a turtle".

How much Control we have over the stress factors will determine our response. As Eleanor Roosevelt Observed".

"No one can hurt you without your consent".

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi," They cannot take away our self respect if we do not give it to them." It is our willing permission, our consent to what happens to us, that hurts us far more than what happens to us in the first place.

Different individuals can cope with different levels of stress. Because each individual experiences life in Unique ways, circumstances that one enjoys may be stressful to others. Vulnerability to different sources of stress may be determined by an individual's personality characteristics, past experience, cultural background, and so on.

Following Table gives the probable list of the sources of stress.

<u>Common Sources of Stress</u>		
<u>Environmental Stress</u> 1	<u>Change Induces Stress</u> 2	<u>Personality related stress</u> 3
-Heat -Noise -Crowding -Suffocation -Bright light -Lack of light -Chemical emissions	-fear of new/unknown -fear of rejection -Lack of tolerance for ambiguity -fear of conflict -fear of taking risk.	-fear of making mistakes -fear of loss of control -feeling of over responsibility low self esteem -Lack of belief in being 'good enough'. -chronic guilt -chronic anger -chronic hatred -feeling of inadequacy.
<u>Stress related to interpersonal issues.</u> 4	<u>System Induced stress.</u> 5	
-Lack of support in relationship -unhealthy communication -sense of competitiveness -Threats of rejection -Over dependency -inability to be assertive.	-Un co-operative atmosphere -Unclear expectations -Confused Communication -Lack of teamwork -No sense of direction -Autocratic leadership -Lack of Leadership.	

Notice that no matter where stress comes from if the short term effects occur intensely and frequently the long term costs are the same – the quality of life suffers. Perhaps we can't change circumstances or our doing something around us may not be practically possible. On the other hand, if we increase and refine our skills of understanding, life & health actually improve.

All of us can conduct a worry survey of situations around us & even about others in a circle – out of worry situations

- 1) 40% belong to future & never happen.
- 2) 30% are in the past which can't be helped.
- 3) 12% concern others, none of your business.
- 4) 10% are because of real or imaginary sickness and
- 5) 8% are the real situations which are worth concern and must never be ignored.

AN ANALYTICAL LOOK AT STRESS

The College Readjustment Rating Scale is a Rutgers University (Health Services) * adaptation of Holmes and Rahe's Life Events Scale. It has been modified for college age adults and should be considered as a rough indication of stress levels that can have possible health consequences.

Using the college Readjustment Rating Scale – on the following page, each event, such as one's first term in college, is assigned a value that represents the amount of readjustment a person has to make as a result.

To determine your stress score, circle the number of points corresponding to the events you have experienced in the past six months or are likely to experience in the next three months. Then add up the circled numbers and record your answer in the total column.

Life Events Scale

<u>Event</u>	<u>Points</u>
Death of spouse	100
Female unwed pregnancy	92
Death of a parent	80
Male partner in unwed pregnancy	77
Divorce	73
Death of a close family member	70
Death of a close friend	65
Divorce between parents	63
Jail term	61
Major personal injury or illness	60
Marriage	55
Fired from a job	50
Loss of financial support from college	48
Failing grade in important or required class	47
Sexual difficulties	45
Serious argument with significant other	40
Academic Probation	39
Change in major	37
New Love interest	36
Increased workload from college	31
Outstanding personal achievement	29
First term in college	28
Serious conflict with instructor	27
Lower than expected grades	25
Change in college (transfer)	24

Change in social activities	22
Change in sleeping habits	21
Change in eating habits	19
Minor violations of the law (e.g. traffic ticket)	15
Total	

1. Persons with scores of 300 and higher have a high health risk and might consider seeking professional assistance to manage stress.
2. Persons scoring between 150 and 300 have about a 50 – 50 chance of serious health change within two years and may want to do frequent stress self checks to be certain they are coping as well as they think they are.
3. People scoring 150 and below have a 1 in 3 chance of a serious health change, but should still consider stress reduction activities.

Everyone should consider retaking this survey every so often to determine your health risk.

According to the facts & stats collected by the National Mental Health Association, “Depression affects over 19 million American adults annually, including college students. At colleges nationwide, large percentages of college students are feeling overwhelmed, sad, hopeless and so depressed that they are unable to function.

If you are a student, there is no need to explain what ‘Exam stress’ is, sleepless nights, troubled thoughts, loss of appetite, rapid pulse, trembling hands – these are typical manifestations of exam fear. Recent research has shown that it affects all the systems of the human body:

Nervous, immune, cardiovascular, etc. unfortunately, the negative influence of this phenomenon on the students’ body and their psychology is underestimated nowadays.

Social polls demonstrate that students perceive the exams as a “duel of questions and answers”, as a “severe fortune”

As “Intellectual and emotional overload.”

Views & Opinions

Miss Samruddhi Bhatiya, T.Y.B.A. Student from Sophiya (opinions) College Express her views about stress as follows :-

Managing Stress During Exams.

- Stress is actually contagious. During exam week, resist the urge to have a study session with your 'super-tense' friends.
- Prepare for the exam prior to the night before. The earlier you start studying, the more comfortable you will feel with the material.
- Get plenty of sleep (at least 6-7 hours) and try to make your sleeping patterns as regular as possible.
- Keep yourself physically active by exercising or walking.

Miss Prachi Shukla who scored 95.09% marks in S.S.C. Board Exams 2010 says, "Exam. is not the only challenge, as life is very long there are many more challenges (more tougher than exam.) to be faced by us in our practical life. Keep your confidence level very high, have proper Revision have Good Time Management, work hard & Go ahead".

Miss Shikha Pande, BSC. IT student gives her opinions as follows :-

1. Keep your sense of Humour,
2. Learn to forgive
3. Be more assertive
4. & share your feelings with parents & friends.
5. Learn how to say 'No' to unnecessary and unwanted things".

Miss Saili Sawant, a student of S.Y.J.C. studying in Lala Lajpatrai College says my stress by doing my studies from time to time. I manage my stress by doing my studies time to time, making sure that I am well prepared for my exams, avoiding late night studies, listening to music when I am in stress, talking more to family and friends, not keeping my problems in mind, avoiding tension about anything, concentrating more on my studies and by staying happy every time.

For many young adults, college is the best time of life. These critical years of adjustment can also be undermined by depression, anxiety, substance abuse & eating disorders. Researchers are finding that many mental illnesses are traced to trauma, whose damage surfaces in times of stress & change, such as college years.

Common stressors in college life includes

- 1) Greater Academic demands

- 2) Being away from home, often for the first time.
- 3) Change in family relations & one's Social life
- 4) Over expectations from parents.
- 5) Over pampering from parents, by giving them excessive protection & amenities of life (even if it is expensive).
- 6) Lack of emotional support from parents.
- 7) Peer Group pressure.
- 8) Financial responsibilities
- 9) Exposure to new environment, new people, ideas etc.
- 10) Psychological make up of the student.

You may be surprised to hear that roughly 50% of American students who enter college don't end up graduating !

According to U.S. Census figures, 6-in-10 high School seniors go on to college the following year, but only 29% of adults 25 of the age and over had at last a bachelor's degree. Certainly finances & life circumstances play into that figure, but the stress of college life cannot be ignored as a factor as well.

If you are taking an exam, or preparing to give a speech, or going for job interview, or asking someone for a date, if you say, "don't get stressed out". You are creating a picture of some one who is stressed out. If you say "I feel calm & relaxed, I am confident and alert; then you are creating an image of some one who is relaxed & confident.

Take ownership of the statement, for example "I am " I can " following are the stress management strategies.

Suggestions for reducing stress levels among the college students
(Source: Indiana University Health Centre)

- 1) Get to know your professors.
- 2) Get involved with campus activities
- 3) Go to class.
- 4) Take advantage of campus resources & choose a career path.
- 5) Talk to someone about your problems (family member, friend, college counsellor).
- 6) Maintain communication with your family.
- 7) Keep your space & consequently your mind organized.
- 8) Keep up with course work (the rule of thumb is two hours of study per one hour in class)
- 9) Form healthy relationships.

How to cope up with the stress?

Strategy for stress management

Following are tips on how to maintain a healthier lifestyle and to prepare you to cope with the stress of everyday living.

- 1) Structure each day to include a minimum of 20 minutes of aerobic exercise.
- 2) Eat well-balanced meals, more whole grains, sprouts, nuts & vegetables, Substitute fruits for desserts.
- 3) Maintain your weight.
- 4) No smoking;
- 5) Avoid caffeine. The substance may aggravate anxiety, isomnia, nervousness & trembling.
- 6) Reduce refined sugars, Excess sugars cause frequent fluctuation in blood glucose levels, adding stress to the body's psychological functioning.
- 7) Reduce alcohol or drugs. These substances may add to headaches, swelling, decrease coping mechanisms, & add to depression.
- 8) Get at least 7 hours sleep nightly.
- 9) Take a warm bath or shower.
- 10) Go for a walk (morning walk or evening walk)
- 11) Spend time each day with at least one relaxation technique imagery, day dreaming, prayer, yoga or meditation.
- 12) Reading Books/comics/jokes & listening music are good hobbies.
- 13) Activities like Gardening, singing, painting, cooking delicious food, shopping, Swimming, Birdswatching etc. also helps to reduce stress.
- 14) Talking to family & friends to discuss your problems
- 15) Playing with children

- 16) Social services/ activities
- 17) Club membership
- 18) Go to a library & refer books, journals etc.
- 19) Attend Educative, spiritual, religious lectures
- 20) Develop a positive self – image.
- 21) Develop a sense of Humour
- 22) Avoid doing many tasks/ activities at one time.
- 23) Have a proper time management,
- 24) Avoid leaving several tasks incomplete
- 25) Perceive every task as a challenge
- 26) Avoid Role-conflict & goal-conflict.
- 27) Avoid taking work problems home.
- 28) Be claim, cool & patient, when tensed.
- 29) Learn from a Chinese proverb:-

“In walking Just walk
In sitting Just sit
Above all don’t wobble”.
- 30) Develop hobbies like Dancing, fishing, Hunting, Soiling, furnishing, sailing etc.

Use the following 10 D’s formula to cope up with your stress :
(Source – Byrum & Robinson 1993, programme)

- 1) Define – causes & symptoms of stress.
- 2) Dig –by analyzing your own stress level.
- 3) Describe – your goals of life.
- 4) Decide – to achieve those goals.
- 5) Detach – yourself from hurries & worries & relax
- 6) Declare – you are the happiest human being
- 7) Dispute – with negative thoughts & messages.
- 8) Dream – Visualize future state & imagine

- 9) Develop – Interpersonal relations & positive attitude towards life.
- 10) Do - take action, carry out & continue.

CONCLUSION: In the final analysis, stress management is a complex & an on-going process & Similar to SWOT Analysis. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats). While ‘SWOT’ Analysis deals with the health & well being of an Organisation, the stress management strategies suggested are meant for the health & well being of every member of an organization, Community & nation.

It might be difficult but not impossible to make the suggested changes in one’s life style but once these changes are made, one will be in agreement with Robert frost-

“Two roads diverged in a wood & I
I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference”.

A Journey of Thousand miles begins with
‘A STEP’.

STEP = Stress Total Eradication Programme.

Thank you,

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