



STRESS MANAGEMENT: CONCEPT AND TECHNIQUES

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Abstract: This article provides an overview of stress management. Now stress is a common part of life. Stress varies from person to person and situation to situation. Stress management involves many techniques like relaxation exercise, Meditation, Time management and many more. The present article examines and reviews stages of stress and techniques related to stress management.

Index Terms- Stress Management, Relaxation, Meditation

INTRODUCTION

Stress is a part of day to day living. In our daily lives, we are often exposed to situation that produces stress. Stress prevents students from focusing and enjoying learning from behaving harmoniously and from unfolding their unique talents. Accumulate stress causes frustration, depression and anxiety and can lead to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, substance abuse, antisocial behaviours and even violence. Stress has become an important topic in academic circle as well as in our society.

Now it has become common among the students and it can be controlled by stress management strategies because stress in academic institution can have both positive and negative consequences if not well managed. Stress management is the ability to maintain and control when situation, people and events make excessive demands. Stress can be traced by adopting different strategies. We must check and monitor the abnormal or unusual behaviour of peoples, so that suitable measure should be taken.

This research paper evaluates stages of stress and also suggests suitable strategies to solve the problem.

STAGES OF STRESS

Stress may be ranged from mild to severe forms. In this context, Seaward stated that stress passes through four major stages. In the first stage, the stimuli from the sense organs are sent into the brain. In second stage an interpretation took place inside the brain, and then the brain perceives it either threat or no threat. If the brain regarded it as no threat, then the stress is at normal level. Otherwise it leads to the third stage, where the body stays activated, aroused until the threat is over. In the fourth and last stage the body returns to the homeostatic state, which results in the physical and mental calmness.

Hans Selye proposed that the first stage of stress is the alarm stage, where the body prepare itself for immediate action, aroused by the sympathetic nervous system and released the hormone which alert the organism to meet the danger. If the stress is prolonged, the second stage is the resistance stage, where the arousal become slowdowns compare to the first stage. If the stressor continue for a long period then it entered into third or the exhaustion stage, which produced both psychological and physical illness.

- **Alarm Stage:** The Alarm stage marks the first contact with the stressor. The individual's nervous system immediately sends an emergency signal to brain. Stress leads to increase adrenaline to the blood stream. This in turn causes breathing to speed up. Blood flow to the brain and muscles increases, digestion slow, blood pressure goes up, palm sweat and our mouth gets dry. Adrenaline activates the "fight or flight response," which is the body's initial response to stress. This phase is characteristic of the fight or flight reaction described by Canon and Taylor. The fight or flight reaction prepares us to meet the stressor head on or run from it.
- **Resistance Stage:** Resistance stage occurs when one is unable to successfully deal with a stressor during the alarm stage body adapts to the pressure of the stressor. Since the body is still fighting the stressor, the individual may become irritable, tired and less capable to handle the demanding situation. Resistance is form of adjustment that lasts until the stressor stops. If the stressful situation is over, the body returns to a pre-alarm stage.
- **Exhaustion Stage:** Exhaustion stage comes when the body can no longer keep up with the demands of the stressor. Exhaustion only occurs if a stressor continues for a long period of time – weeks, months, or even years. When stress continues beyond the second stage and you do not adhere to remedial measures, the final stress stage of exhaustion settles in. The individuals at this stage are totally tired and drained out of all energy.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

The intensity of stress and the perception of stress are different from person to person, time to time and situation to situation, like this, the coping abilities and coping strategies also differ from person to person , time to time and situation to situation. Although there is difference of coping strategies , there are some common coping strategies to live a healthy and prosperous life . Lazarus and Folkman defined that coping is the process where the individual constantly changed his/her cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person.

As the causes of stress related with the cognitive and behavioural process of the individual for its intervention the cognitive and behavioural functions are plays a vital role. In this context Halahan stated that coping strategies are mostly depends on the cognitive and behavioural of the person to manage his/her stressful condition or associated emotional distress.

Coping is a dynamic situation specific reaction to stress. It is a set of concrete responses to stressful situations or events that are intended to resolve the problem and reduce stress. The way we cope with stress often depends on rigid deep seated beliefs, based on experiences. To manage stress we often need to reassess the way we think and learn coping strategies. People who cope poorly with stress have an impaired immune response and diminished activity of natural killer cells.

Individuals show consistent individual differences in the coping strategies they use to handle stressful situations. These can include both overt and covert activities.

STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Stress is a silent killer. It is estimated to play a significant role in physical illness and disease. Hypertension, Heart disease, Diabetes and even cancer are linked to stress. Due to lifestyle changes stress is on the increase. Therefore schools, other institution , office and communities are concerned about knowing techniques to manage stress,. Some of these techniques are:

Relaxation Techniques- It is an active skill that reduces symptoms of stress and decreases the incidence of illnesses such as high blood pressure and heart disease. Usually relaxation starts from the lower part of the body and progresses up to the facial muscles in such a way that the whole body is relaxed. Deep breathing is used along with muscle relaxation to calm the mind and relax the body.

Meditation Procedure- The yogic method of meditation consists of a sequence of learned techniques for refocusing of attention that brings about an altered state of consciousness. It involves such a thorough concentration that the meditator becomes unaware of any outside stimulation and reaches a different state of consciousness.

Creative Visualisation- It is an effective technique for dealing with stress. Creative visualisation is a subjective experience that uses imagery and imagination. Before visualisation one must set oneself a realistic goal, as it helps build confidence. It is easier to visualise if one's mind is quiet, body relaxed and eyes are closed. This reduces the risk of interference from unbidden thoughts and provides the creative energy needed for turning an imagined scene into reality.

Time Management- Time management training provides individuals with skills to adjust activities with respect to time. Time management involves increasing amount of functional time. Time management for behavioural modification in stress management has been used by Lakein including the techniques such a preparing the list to do and prioritizing.

Exercise- Exercise can provide an active outlet for the physiological arousal experienced in response to stress. Regular exercise improves the efficiency of the heart, enhances the function of the lungs, maintains good circulation, lower blood pressure, reduces fat in the blood and improves the body's immune system. Swimming, walking , running, cycling, skipping etc. helps to reduce stress. One must practice these exercise at least four times a week for 30 minutes at a time. Each session must have a warm up exercise and cool down phases.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

So we can see that stress is a complex phenomenon and is influenced by various factors. There is no single method for surviving the stressful events in life, rather it is a process of figuring out what works best for person at the time of stress. The coping strategies will guide the individual to work through both everyday stress as well as crisis stressors.

Cognitive behavioural approaches are effective in dealing with stressful conditions. Mindfulness based approaches are recently highlighted as intervention for managing stress. Stress management is important since stress is related to various medical conditions which has enduring effects on individual.

So it's clear that stress is a part of life. Stress is neither a stimulus nor a response but an ongoing transactional process between the individual and the environment.

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