

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Shri Shyamal Gupta
Director,
West Bengal Judicial Academy
Bijan Bhawan, Salt Lake, Kol – 97.

What is Stress?

In medicine, the Stress is a result produced when a system or organism is acted upon by forces that disrupt equilibrium. In health care, the term denotes the physical forces and psychological forces that are experienced by individuals.

Stress is usually thought of as a response of the body to unpleasant external stimulus whether it is emotional or physical.

Stress can be defined as the reaction of the body to forces of a deleterious nature i.e. a physical or psychological stimulus and various abnormal states that tend to disturb its normal physiological equilibrium i.e. homeostasis.

Stress is a common psychiatric disorder. Actually stress exists when the adoptive capacity of the individual is overwhelmed by events.

For each individual stress is subjectively defined and the response to stress is a function of each individual personality and physiologic endowment.

According to Dr. Malcolm Earruthers stress is not what you eat but what's eating you.

Effects of Stress:

Individual becomes less efficient, less effective, more quarrelsome.

If repeated and prolonged it causes psychosomatic diseases like headache, hypertension, heart attack, stomach ulcers, diminishing sleep, depression, diabetes etc.

Types of Stress:

Any stimulus that produces a stress response is called STRESSOR. Stressor may be almost any stimulus, disease, heat, cold, fight or flight response, emotional reaction interactive fights etc.

Stress is a part of our everyday life. Stress is of two types; one is EUSTRESS (eu = true), prepares us to meet certain challenges in life and thus is productive. Other stress is

called DISTRESS. It is harmful. Distress disturbs the chemical & hormonal equilibrium including immune system. Thus stress if continued may alter chemical and hormonal equilibrium and depress the immune system also.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS DURING STRESS:

According to Selye stress is defined as “General adaptation syndrome” consisting of three stages.

1. Alarm reaction.
2. Stage of resistance
3. Stage of exhaustion.

1. ALARM REACTION:

The alarm reaction or fight-or-flight response is a complex of reaction initiated by hypothalamic stimulation of sympathetic division of Autonomic nervous system and adrenal medulla. The responses are immediate, and mobilize the body's resources for immediate physical activity. Following are the consequences of this response:

- i) Increased heart rate and force of heart.
- ii) Constriction of blood vessels of most viscera & skin.
- iii) Dilation of blood vessels of heart, lungs, brain and skeletal muscles.
- iv) Dilation of airways.
- v) During this response digestive, urinary and reproductive activities are impaired.

2. STAGE OF RESISTANCE:

This is the second line of defence appears a few minutes later when adrenocorticotrophic hormone stimulates corticoid hormone secretion i.e. cortisol (Glucocorticoid). It enables more prolonged adaptation to stress by creating readily available sources of energy by mobilising fats, proteins and sugar into the blood stream for the purpose of repairing damages tissue cortisol also has anti-inflammatory effect, preventing excess infiltration and scar tissue formation.

3. STAGE OF EXHAUSTATION:

If the stress producing agent does not go away i.e. constant demands are being made on the body. Body has a finite amount of adapt energy, the more stressor experienced the greater drain of adaptation energy, sooner the energy is used up. When no more energy is available, the third exhaustion stage is reached. In this stage the physiological process of the body are altered at pathological symptoms. In long term, immunity of the body is suffered and it becomes susceptible to infections.

ARE YOU STRESSED		YES	NO
1.	Do you feel trapped in a set of circumstances you cannot change?		
2.	Do you feel tired even after sleeping for six hours?		
3.	Do you panic easily when faced with a difficult situation?		
4.	Do you feel you have no time for yourself?		
5.	Do you feel bored with job?		
6.	Does your partner often get annoyed because you spend too much time working?		
7.	Do you drink more than five cups of tea and coffee a day?		
8.	Do you regularly take less than half an hour for main meal?		
9.	Do you get depressed very often?		
10.	Do you get easily irritated?		

- * High stress level 7-10 (Yes)
- ** Moderate stress level 3-6 (Yes)
- *** Low stress level 1-2 (Yes)

Stress Management – Short term Measures:

1. Magic Formula:

- a) Ask yourself “What is the worst that can possibly happen if I cannot solve my problem?”
- b) Prepare yourself mentally to accept the worst if necessary.
- c) Then calmly try to improve upon the worst-which you have accepted mentally.
2. Keep busy yourself. (mind cannot think of more than one thing at any given time)
3. Never waste a minute thinking about people we do not like.
4. Sleep and think again with fresh mind.
5. Discuss your problem with those in whom you have confidence.
6. If problem lasts for days / weeks, change environment. (Go on vacation)
7. Do not involve in too many assignments at a time, prioritize them and tackle one by one. (fighting with one enemy at a time)
8. In a grief situation, go to people having similar problems.
9. Try to accept a situation which you cannot change. (realize your limitations)
10. Recognize yourself; learn to avoid using Rs. 100 worth of energy on a Rs. 10 problem.
11. Relabeling: the art of seeing a promise in every problem.
12. Whispering: the art of giving yourself positive message when things are going wrong.
13. Avoid rush and hurry.
14. Relaxation.

15. Smiles.
 16. Have a hobby.
 17. Listen favourite music.
 18. Look old family photo album.
 19. Meditation.
 20. Take regularly healthy food, specially anti oxidants (vitamin C, E, selenium / zinc)
 21. Exercise (physical & mental)
 22. Touch
 23. Humour.
 24. Cognitive Restructuring
 25. Low stress life Cycle
 26. Cherish the quiet of an early morning before the sun rises.
 27. Star gaze on a clean night
 28. There is a moon out tonight – Share it with someone.
 29. Appreciate the vibrant colours of flowers and leaves. Stay for a while to see it.
 30. Go to the mountains, lake or ocean for a weekend.
 31. Try bird watching.
 32. Stop and take a deep breath every now & then.
 33. With your eyes closed try to feel the breath going in and out for few minutes.
Concentrate on your nostrils and the breath.
 34. Once in a while, stop your thought process. Put your fingers on your eyes and look between your eye brows for a few minutes.
 35. Close your eyes, breathe out the tension and stress. Feel them going out of your body.
Take a glass of water and start sipping it.
 36. Schedule medical check up for peace of mind.

 37. For everything you have missed, you have gained something else and for everything you gain, you loose something else. It is about your outlook towards life. Regret or Rejoice.

 38. You are a guest in this world.

 39. You are an actor in this huge world drama.

 40. Time is the best healer.

 41. Practice Mental Filing System.

 42. Take life one day at a time.
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