

Unit1: Concept of stress-Definition and Nature, Types of Stress- eustress and distress-Acute and Chronic-Hyper and Hypo. Stress reaction, stressors-definition and identifying stressors- Physiological systems, illness and diseases-psychological effects of stressors-Individual stressors- Organizational stressors-social stressors.

STRESS MEANING:

Stress is a state of discomfort experienced by an individual. Loss of emotional stability is the general expression of stress. Stress has a positive association with the age, life styles, time constraints and the nature of occupation.

Stress is the term used to describe the physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioural responses to events that are appraised as threatening, demanding or challenging.

Stress at workplace:

Stress is a psychological condition and body discomfort. Every individual experiences stress at some or other time. Employees experience stress in the process of meeting the targets and working for long hours. When the person experiences a constraint inhibiting the accomplishment of desire and demand for accomplishment, it leads to potential stress. Anxiety is converted into stress and ultimately it leads to job burnout. In fact for most of the time individuals are responsible for stress. However, organizations also create stress in the individuals.

DEFINITION OF STRESS

Stress is defined as an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological, and/or behavioural deviations for organisational participants-Fred Luthans

Stress as a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important- Schuler

The following are the features of stress.

- Stress is both psychological and physical aspect.
- It is common to both the genders.
- It results from the deviation of expectations from actual situation.
- Stress is an interactive concept. It does not spring from the internal organs of the individual. It comes from the interaction of the human being with the environment. Thus, environment has a profound influence on the stress.
- Stress is generic term. If it is applied to the context of organization, it is known as work stress or job stress.
- Stress is related to the attitude of the person. Stress does not occur when the person is having an indifferent attitude to the opportunity.
- Stress is associated with certain common biological disorders such as heart attack, stroke, diabetic, blood pressure, neurological disorders etc.
- The stress is caused when a person has needs, desires, wishes and expectations and certain forces prevent the person from doing the desired activities.

Nature of stress

The nature of stress is characterized by several key features:

1. **Subjectivity:** Stress is a subjective experience, meaning that it varies from person to person. What one individual perceives as a stressor, another may not. This subjectivity is influenced by personal factors, past experiences, coping strategies, and individual differences.
2. **Adaptive Response:** Stress is not inherently negative. In fact, it can be an adaptive response that helps individuals respond to challenges and threats effectively. In some situations, stress can motivate individuals to take action and enhance performance.
3. **Physiological and Psychological Components:** Stress has both physiological and psychological components. Physiologically, the body responds to stress by releasing stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline, which prepare it for a "fight or flight" response. Psychological stress can manifest as feelings of tension, anxiety, and emotional strain.
4. **Short-term and Long-term:** Stress can be acute or chronic. Acute stress is short-term and results from immediate stressors or crises, while chronic stress is long-term and may result from ongoing life difficulties, work pressures, or personal issues.
5. **Effects on Health:** Prolonged or excessive stress can have detrimental effects on physical and mental health. It has been linked to various health issues, including cardiovascular problems, weakened immune function, anxiety disorders, and depression.
6. **Coping Mechanisms:** Individuals use various coping mechanisms to manage stress. These can be adaptive, such as problem-solving, seeking social support, or using relaxation techniques, or maladaptive, such as substance abuse or avoidance.
7. **Influenced by Environmental Factors:** Environmental and societal factors, including socioeconomic status, access to resources, and social support systems, can significantly influence the experience and impact of stress on individuals and communities.
8. **Stress Management:** Effective stress management involves recognizing stressors, developing healthy coping strategies, and making lifestyle changes to reduce stress levels. Stress management is essential for maintaining overall well-being.

Types of Stress

- **Eustress** – Hans Selye (1936) originally coined the term eustress to describe the stress experienced when positive events require the body to adapt. He defines eustress as the optimal amount of stress that people need to promote for health and well-being.

The word "eustress" is derived from the Greek prefix "eu-," which means "good," and the word "stress." Together, eustress refers to a type of stress that is beneficial or helpful.

Eustress refers to stress that leads to a positive response. It tends to be short-term and often feels exciting. People perceive this type of stress as manageable and even motivating.

Some examples of eustress include:

- exercise that matches a person's ability and fitness level
- travel that is stressful but ultimately rewarding
- work that is challenging but fulfilling
- major life changes that a person desires, such as moving house or getting married

- **Distress** – which occurs when people experience unpleasant stressors.

Distress stems from intense, challenging stress that a person feels unable to manage.

Some examples of experiences that may trigger distress include:

- bullying
- controlling or manipulative behavior
- a relationship ending against a person's wishes
- the death of a loved one

➤ **Acute stress** is the stress experienced on a daily basis from minor situations. Coming in bursts, acute stress typically happens quickly and fades once the situation or circumstance has passed. Most of us experience this type of stress and our bodies are just fine afterwards. **Examples of situations that may cause acute stress include:**

- Traffic jams
- Crowds
- Loud noises
- Running late
- Argument with loved one
- Impending deadlines for work-related projects
- Losing essential items like a wallet or phone

Symptoms of acute stress

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Mood swings
- Lack of focus
- Insomnia
- Recurrent nightmares
- Anger
- Nail biting

➤ **Chronic stress-** This is stress that lasts for a longer period of time. Any type of stress that goes on for weeks or months is chronic stress. **Eg-** money problems, an unhappy marriage, or trouble at work

- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Headaches
- Lack of focus
- Decreased energy
- Feeling of helplessness
- Body aches and pains
- Anxiety
- Nausea

➤ **Hyperstress.** Hyperstress occurs when an individual is pushed beyond what he or she can handle. Hyperstress results from being overloaded or overworked. When someone is hyperstressed, even little things can trigger a strong emotional response.

- **Ex:** When one is stuck in a traffic jam, has forgotten to carry important documents for the meeting, and is late to work, it results in hyper stress.

➤ **Hypostress** is one of those types of stress experienced by a person who is constantly bored. Someone in an unchallenging job, such as a factory worker performing the same task over and over again, will often experience hypostress. The effect of hypostress is feelings of restlessness and a lack of inspiration.

e.g. When one cannot use his full potential in a job, it results in hypo stress.

Signs of Eustress vs. Distress

	Eustress	Distress
Duration	often short-term, with a clear solution or a way out of the situation	can be short-term or long-term
Difficulty	more likely to feel challenging but manageable	more likely to feel unmanageable or overwhelming
Emotions	may include frustration or worry, but also fulfillment or happiness	more likely to include anxiety, panic, or hopelessness
Self-efficacy	usually occurs in situations where a person feels confident, or self-efficacy is high	often occurs in situations where a person's perceived self-efficacy is low
Physical well-being	less likely to affect physical health, although occasional eustress may actually improve it	more likely to affect physical health, especially if the distress is chronic

Stress reaction/General Adaption Syndrome

- **Freeze Response:** people may become paralyzed, overwhelmed or feel hyper-vigilant.
- **Fight Response:** people feel a sense of competitiveness, aggression, or self-defence
- **Flight Response:** Often reported in connection with “fight,” with this response people seek to escape, avoid, or withdraw

There are three stages in stress response:

- Alarm
- Adaptation and
- Exhaustion or recovery.

Alarm is the first stage that involves the ‘fight-or-flight’ response. This is the stage which enables us to deal with the difficult (adverse) situations. The body is prepared either to face the perceived threat, or to escape from it.

If the stressful situation isn't resolved the body uses all its to adapt to the stressful situation. This is the **adaptation** stage.

If the body's compensation mechanisms have succeeded in overcoming the stressor's effect there follows the **recovery** stage.

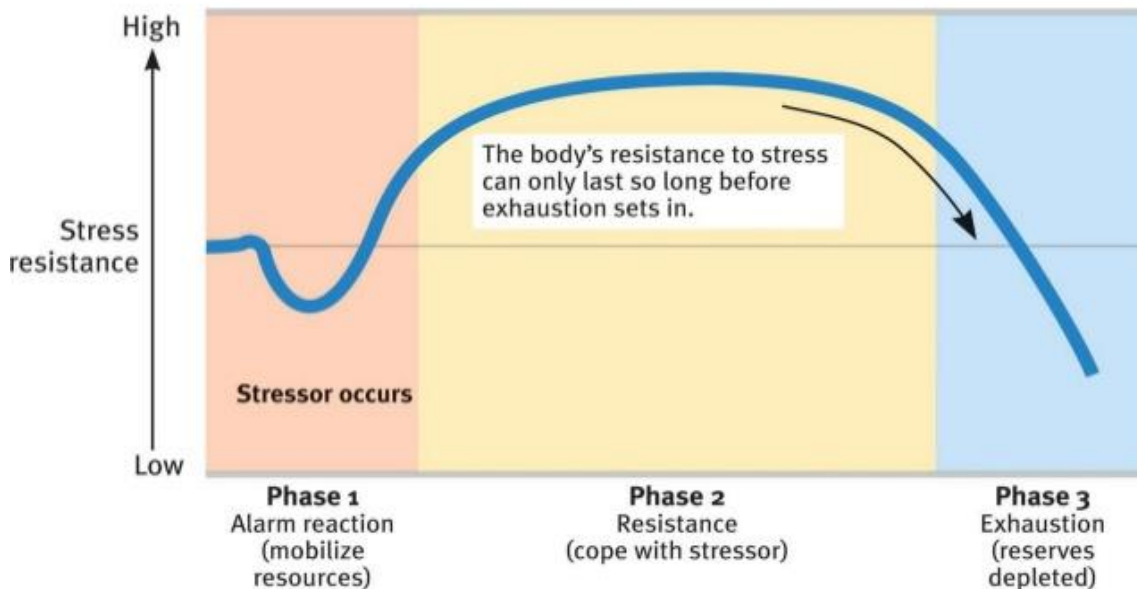
But if the body has used up its resources and is unable to maintain normal function it leads to **exhaustion** stage.

If exhaustion stage persists for a long time it can cause long term effects where the individual is at risk of suffering from more serious health conditions. It may lead to depression, hypertension and coronary diseases.

General Adaptation Syndrome [GAS]

(Identified by Hans Selye):

Our stress response system defends, then fatigues.



STRESS REACTION/RESPONSE

Behavioural/ individual responses:

- Change in activity levels
- Decreased efficiency and effectiveness
- Difficulty communicating
- Increased sense of humour/gallows humour
- Irritability, outbursts of anger, frequent arguments
- Inability to rest, relax, or let down
- Change in eating habits
- Change in sleep patterns
- Change in job performance
- Periods of crying
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs, sugar or caffeine
- Hyper-vigilance about safety or the surrounding environment
- Avoidance of activities or places that trigger memories
- Accident prone

Psychological or Emotional response: A psychological stressor is any situation or event that the individual deems to be a threat or challenge

- Feeling heroic, euphoric or invulnerable
- Denial
- Anxiety or fear
- Worry about safety of self or others
- Irritability or anger
- Restlessness
- Sadness, moodiness, grief or depression
- Vivid or distressing dreams
- Guilt or "survivor guilt"
- Feeling overwhelmed, helpless or hopeless

- Feeling isolated, lost, lonely or abandoned
- Apathy
- Over identification with survivors
- Feeling misunderstood or unappreciated

Physical response:

- Increased heart rate and respirations
- Increased blood pressure
- Upset stomach, nausea, diarrhoea
- Increased or decreased appetite which may be accompanied by weight loss or gain
- Sweating or chills
- Tremors or muscle twitching
- Muffled hearing
- Tunnel vision
- Feeling uncoordinated
- Headaches
- Sore or aching muscles
- Light sensitive vision
- Lower back pain
- Feeling a "lump in the throat"
- Easily startled
- Fatigue that does not improve with sleep
- Menstrual cycle changes
- Change In sexual desire or response
- Decreased resistance to colds, flu, infections
- Flare up of allergies, asthma, or arthritis
- Hair loss

Cognitive response:

- Memory problems/forgetfulness
- Disorientation
- Confusion
- Slowness in thinking, analysing, or comprehending
- Difficulty calculating, setting priorities or making decisions
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Limited attention span
- Loss of objectivity
- Inability to stop thinking about the disaster or an incident

Social response: But a lack of social support or unhealthy social relationships can cause us stress and damage our mental health. These stressors can stem from conflict with people close to us or loneliness.

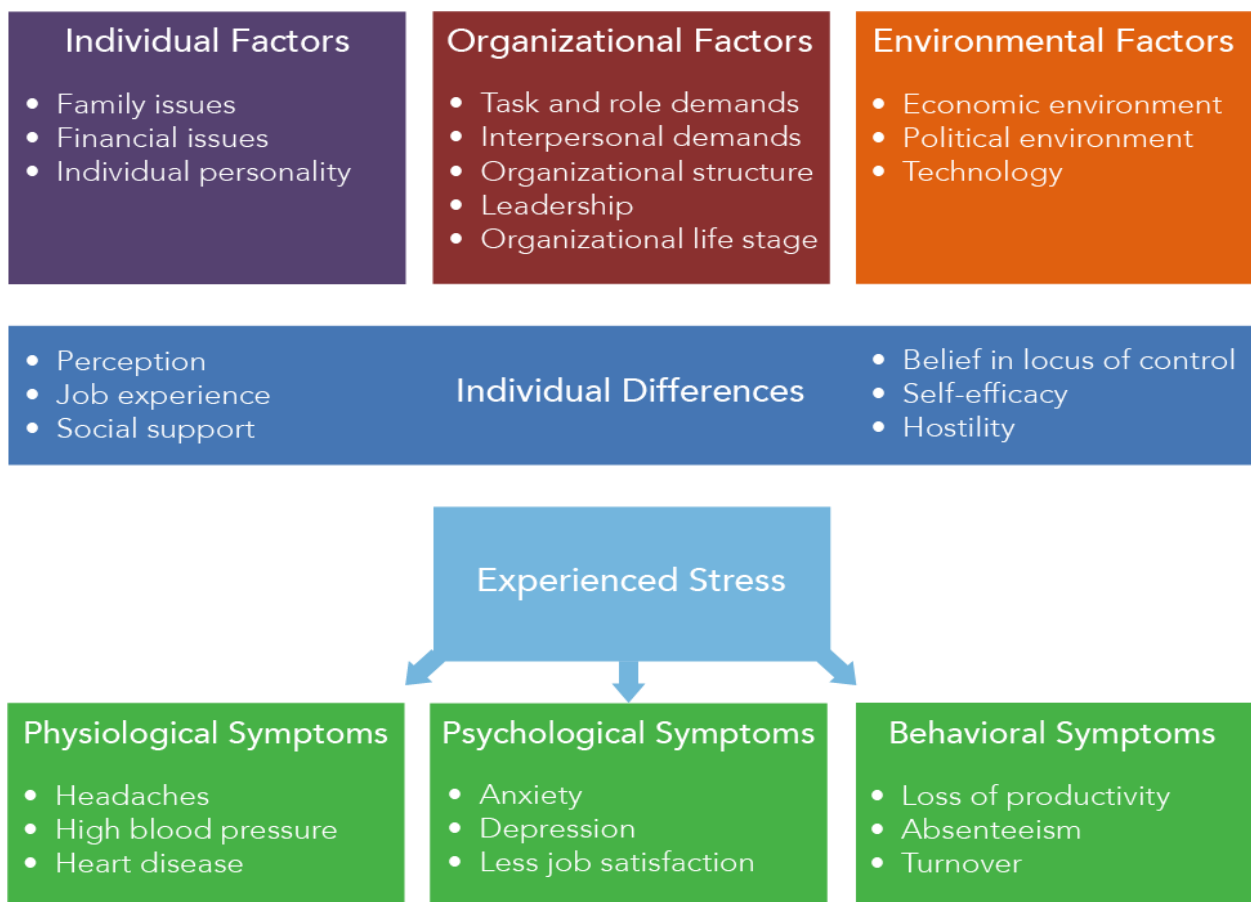
- Withdrawing or isolating from people
- Difficulty listening
- Difficulty sharing ideas
- Difficulty engaging in mutual problem solving
- Blaming
- Criticizing
- Intolerance of group process
- Difficulty in giving or accepting support or help
- Impatient with or disrespectful to others

Stressor

A stressor is a chemical or biological agent, environmental condition, external stimulus or an event seen as causing stress to an organism. Psychologically speaking, a stressor can be events or environments that individuals might consider demanding, challenging, and/or threatening individual safety.

Events or objects that may trigger a stress response may include:

- environmental stressors (hypo or hyper-thermic temperatures, elevated sound levels, over-illumination, overcrowding)
- daily "stress" events (e.g., traffic, lost keys, money, quality and quantity of physical activity)
- life changes (e.g., divorce, bereavement-Death of close relative or friend)
- workplace stressors (e.g., high job demand vs. low job control, repeated or sustained exertions, forceful exertions, extreme postures, office clutter)
- chemical stressors (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, drugs)
- social stressor (e.g., societal and family demands)



Identifying Stressors: Identifying stressors is a critical step in managing stress effectively. Recognizing what is causing stress allows individuals to take appropriate actions to address or cope with these challenges. Here's how to identify stressors:

Self-Reflection: Take time to reflect on your daily life, experiences, and emotions. Consider moments when you have felt anxious, tense, or overwhelmed. What was happening, and what triggered those feelings?

Keep a Stress Journal: Keeping a journal can help you track and identify patterns of stress. Record daily events, emotions, and physical sensations. Note what events or circumstances preceded your stress reactions.

Monitor Your Physical and Emotional Responses: Pay attention to physical symptoms like increased heart rate, muscle tension, headaches, or changes in appetite. Also, be mindful of emotional responses, such as irritability, sadness, or anxiety.

Environmental Factors: Examine your surroundings for potential stressors. These could include noise, clutter, lighting, or even specific locations like a stressful workplace or home environment.

Life Events: Major life events can be significant stressors. These include events like marriage, divorce, job changes, moving, or the loss of a loved one. Even positive events can be stressful due to the associated changes and adjustments.

Work-Related Stressors: Identify stressors in your workplace, such as excessive workloads, deadlines, conflicts with colleagues, or a lack of control over your tasks.

Relationships: Relationship-related stressors can come from conflicts with family members, friends, or partners. Identify specific issues that cause tension.

Financial Stressors: Financial concerns, including debt, job insecurity, or unexpected expenses, can be significant stressors. Identify sources of financial stress in your life.

Health-Related Stressors: Health issues, whether your own or those of a loved one, can be a source of stress. Identify health-related stressors and their impact on your well-being.

Time Management and Over commitment: Stress can also stem from over committing and a lack of time management. Consider your daily schedule and responsibilities.

Emotional Stressors: Recognize stressors related to emotional challenges, such as unresolved conflicts, grief, or personal insecurities.

Media and Information Overload: Excessive exposure to distressing news, social media, or other sources of information can contribute to stress. Be mindful of the content you consume.

Diseases and illness caused by stress

1. Broken heart syndrome (Takotsubo syndrome)

Severe stress can lead to sudden, temporary weakening and dysfunction of the left ventricle, the large squeezing chamber of the heart.

2. Stress-induced ischemia to the heart

Stress can lead to chest pain, and it can even decrease blood flow to the heart, resulting in a heart attack or heart ischemia.

3. High blood pressure

Chronic stress can increase stress hormones, like cortisol and adrenaline. Over time, this raises blood pressure and increases your risk for heart disease.

4. Stress-induced hyperglycemia (elevated blood sugar)

The release of stress hormones, like epinephrine and cortisol, can also increase blood glucose levels. This should not create a problem for people without diabetes.

5. Stress-induced insomnia

Stress can lead to disruptions in sleep and stress-related insomnia. This affects some people more, such as those who have previous sleeping difficulties or underlying anxiety or depression.

6. Stress-induced anxiety

Palpitations, chest pressure, insomnia, dry mouth, panic attacks, and anxiety.

7. Stress-induced depression

Acute and ongoing stress can lead to mood changes, including depression. Many things likely play a role in this, such as environmental factors, cortisol levels, and changes in your brain.

8. Stress-induced pain (hyperalgesia)

Stress and anxiety change the way people feel pain. The nature, time, and intensity of the stress all play a role.

9. Stress-induced inflammation

Stress can lead to increased inflammation levels. This can be helpful if fighting off an infection or healing an injury. But when it goes on for a long time, it can lead to chronic inflammation and other health issues, including heart disease or diabetes. It can also cause symptoms in the short term, such as hives, pain, or fatigue.

10. Stress-induced nausea and diarrhoea

A stress response causes many GI (Gastrointestinal) issues, including nausea, heartburn, and diarrhoea. Experts know the brain and gut are linked (the brain-gut axis). Stress-related GI symptoms have to do with the release of hormones, like cortisol and adrenaline, and the change in blood flow away from your GI tract. This slows down digestion and can make food harder to absorb.

11. Stress-induced infections

Chronic stress can lead to decreased immune function and even immunosuppression. This can increase the risk of infections, from the common cold to cold sores.

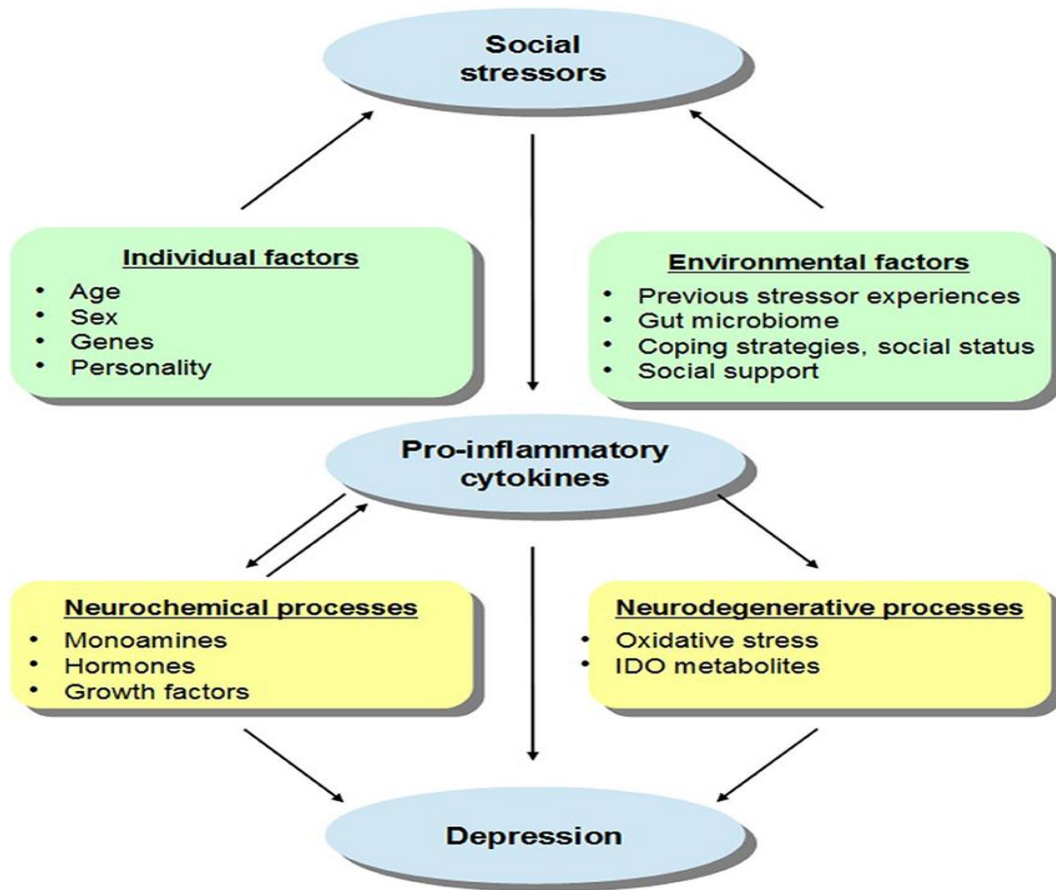
12. Irregular or painful periods

Stress can also affect hormones that regulate your reproductive system and your menstrual period. This can lead to irregular and painful periods. It can even make your periods stop all together (amenorrhea).

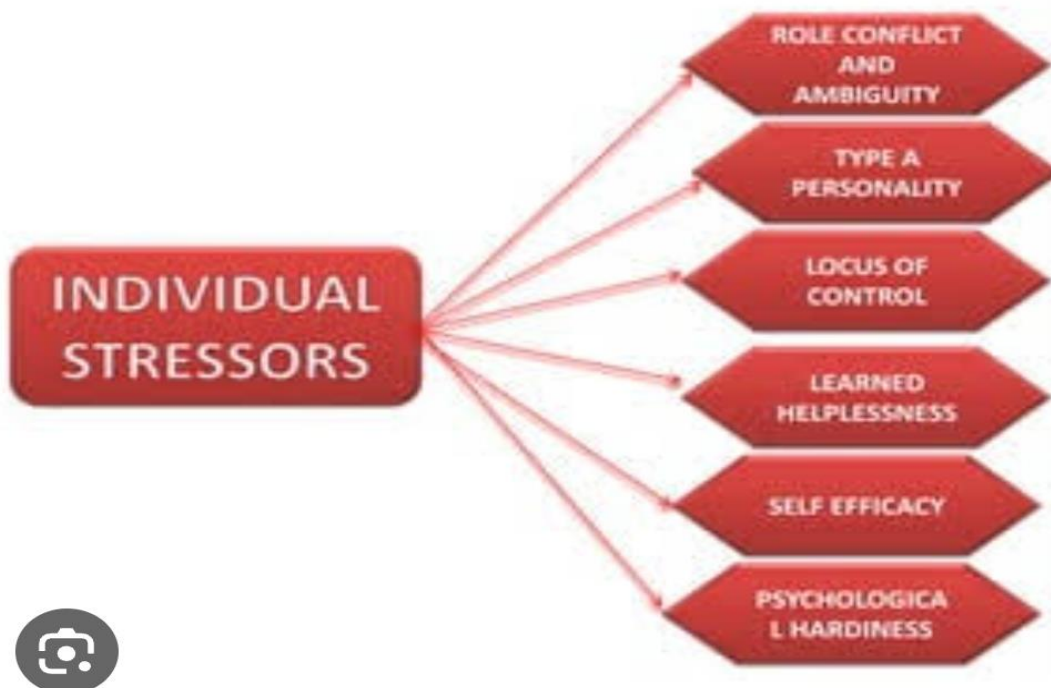
Effects of stress



Social stressors



Individual stressor



Organization stressor

Organizational means anything from our schools, workplaces, or even clubs. They can also be from pressure, like working for a good grade or meeting a tight deadline at work.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS



PHYSIOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF STRESS:

Physiological systems

- When the body is unable to cope with the stress or if stress persists for long time (chronic stress) it affects the body in several ways. The effects of stress are not limited to one or two organs, or systems. Stress affects the body in many ways. Stress affects both physical as well as mental health. The impact of stress on the body may not be the same in all people. It may vary depending on factors like the genotype, sex, age, physiological conditions and past experiences of the person. But some of these effects are common to every individual. Most of the effects are due to increased concentrations of corticoids and adrenaline. Some major effects on the body systems are as:

Effect on digestive system

- Disturbed eating habits, acid reflux, diarrhoea or constipation are the common symptoms seen in stressed persons. Stress can also be related to obesity which is linked to a host of other health problems.
- Extreme stress can also be associated with diabetes. This is because excessive cortisol can affect the activity of insulin. The body can also become resistant to insulin. This can lead to diabetes.

Effect on circulatory problems

- Several studies have shown a strong association between stress and cardiovascular diseases. According to Esch et al., stress plays a significant role in susceptibility progress and outcome of cardiovascular diseases.
- Psychological stresses are associated with cardiovascular diseases to the extent that cardiovascular diseases are among the most important group of psychosomatic diseases. Cardiovascular diseases due to stress-induced mechanisms are mediated primarily through increased adrenergic stimulation. Stress has been reported to be a predictor of incidents of coronary heart disease (CHD) and hypertension among both men and women

- Stress can cause increased oxygen demand on the body spasm of the coronary (heart) blood vessels and electrical instability in the heart's conduction system. Chronic stress also leads to increased blood cholesterol levels.

Suppression of immune system

The persistent activation of Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal (HPA) axis in chronic stress response probably impairs the immune response leading to several types of infections. Studies have shown that people under chronic stress are more susceptible to viral illnesses like flu and common cold as well as other infections

Some other effects of stress hormones

- In addition to the above-mentioned effects cortisol also alters bone mineral density thus affecting the development of new bones in the body. In young children stress may retard their growth. In some cases, stress could also be a cause of cancer. The persistent activation of the Hypothalamic Pituitary Adrenal (HPA) axis in the chronic stress response and in depression probably impairs the immune response and contributes to the development and progression of some types of cancer. Studies have indicated that stress can promote breast cancer cell colonization of bone.
- Stress also interferes with reproductive system both in men and women. Since sex life depends on fitness of both body and mind, chronic stress may decrease libido and may even cause erectile dysfunction or impotence in man. In case of chronic stress testosterone levels can drop to an extent that can interfere spermatogenesis (sperm production). In women stress can affect menstrual cycle. It can lead to irregular, heavier or more painful periods.
- In addition to its direct effect on health, stress also produces some behavioural changes. People living in stressful environments are more prone to smoking which could lead to respiratory disorders and may even lead to cancer. Similarly stressed people are more vulnerable to alcohol consumption which has its own consequences.

Studies have found many health problems related to stress. Stress seems to worsen or increase the risk of conditions like obesity, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, depression, gastrointestinal problems, and asthma.

Heart disease: Researchers have long suspected that the stressed-out, type A personality has a higher risk of high blood pressure and heart problems. We don't know why, exactly. Stress can directly increase heart rate and blood flow, and causes the release of cholesterol and triglycerides into the blood stream. It's also possible that stress is related to other problems -- an increased likelihood of smoking or obesity -- that indirectly increase the heart risks.

Asthma: Many studies have shown that stress can worsen asthma. Some evidence suggests that a parent's chronic stress might even increase the risk of developing asthma in their children. One study looked at how parental stress affected the asthma rates of young children who were also exposed to air pollution or whose mothers smoked during pregnancy. The kids with stressed out parents had a substantially higher risk of developing asthma.

Obesity: Excess fat in the belly seems to pose greater health risks than fat on the legs or hips -- and unfortunately, that's just where people with high stress seem to store it. "Stress causes higher levels of the hormone cortisol," says Winner, "and that seems to increase the amount of fat that's deposited in the abdomen."

Diabetes: Stress can worsen diabetes in two ways. First, it increases the likelihood of bad behaviours, such as unhealthy eating and excessive drinking. Second, stress seems to raise the glucose levels of people with type 2 diabetes directly.

Headaches: Stress is considered one of the most common triggers for headaches -- not just tension headaches, but migraines as well.

Depression and anxiety: It's probably no surprise that chronic stress is connected with higher rates of depression and anxiety. One survey of recent studies found that people who had stress related to their jobs -- like demanding work with few rewards -- had an 80% higher risk of developing depression within a few years than people with lower stress.

Gastrointestinal problems: Here's one thing that stress doesn't do -- it doesn't cause ulcers. However, it can make them worse. Stress is also a common factor in many other GI conditions, such as chronic heartburn (or gastroesophageal reflux disease, GERD) and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), Winner says.

Alzheimer's disease: One animal study found that stress might worsen Alzheimer's disease, causing its brain lesions to form more quickly. Some researchers speculate that reducing stress has the potential to slow down the progression of the disease.

Accelerated aging: There's actually evidence that stress can affect how you age. One study compared the DNA of mothers who were under high stress -- they were caring for a chronically ill child -- with women who were not. Researchers found that a particular region of the chromosomes showed the effects of accelerated aging. Stress seemed to accelerate aging about 9 to 17 additional years.

Premature death: A study looked at the health effects of stress by studying elderly caregivers looking after their spouses -- people who are naturally under a great deal of stress. It found that caregivers had a 63% higher rate of death than people their age who were not caregivers.

Psychological effects of stressors

Stressors, or sources of stress, can have profound psychological effects on individuals. The psychological impact of stressors is diverse and can affect various aspects of mental well-being. Here are some common psychological effects of stressors:

1. Anxiety: Stressors often trigger feelings of anxiety, characterized by excessive worry, restlessness, and a heightened state of arousal. Chronic exposure to stressors can contribute to the development or exacerbation of anxiety disorders.

2. Depression: Prolonged or intense stressors may contribute to the development of depressive symptoms. Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest in activities are common psychological responses to chronic stress.

3. Cognitive Distortions: Stressors can lead to negative thought patterns and distortions, affecting how individuals perceive and interpret events. This can contribute to a pessimistic outlook and a sense of helplessness.

4. Impaired Concentration and Memory: Stressors can interfere with cognitive functions, leading to difficulties in concentration, memory recall, and problem-solving. This can impact academic or work performance.

5. Irritability and Mood Swings: The emotional strain caused by stressors can result in increased irritability, mood swings, and a reduced tolerance for frustration.

6. Sleep Disturbances: Stressors can disrupt normal sleep patterns, leading to difficulties falling asleep, staying asleep, or experiencing restful sleep. Sleep disturbances, in turn, can contribute to a cycle of increased stress and impaired mental well-being.

7. Changes in Appetite: Stressors may influence eating habits, leading to changes in appetite. Some individuals may experience increased emotional eating, while others may lose interest in food.

8. Social Withdrawal: The psychological impact of stressors can lead individuals to withdraw from social activities and relationships. This social withdrawal may be a coping mechanism or a result of reduced energy and motivation.

9. Decreased Coping Skills: Prolonged exposure to stressors can deplete an individual's coping resources, making it more challenging to effectively manage additional stressors that may arise.

10. Increased Risk-Taking Behavior: In an attempt to cope with stressors, some individuals may engage in risky behaviors, such as substance abuse or reckless actions, as a way of seeking relief or distraction.

11. Feelings of Overwhelm: The cumulative effect of multiple stressors or a particularly intense stressor can lead to a sense of being overwhelmed, making it difficult for individuals to manage their daily responsibilities.

12. Impact on Self-Esteem: Chronic stressors may contribute to negative self-perceptions and a decline in self-esteem. Individuals may doubt their abilities or feel a sense of inadequacy.

Unit 2 :Theories of stress/ Models – cognitive, behavioural, and psychological theories. Conceptual model - transactional model - health realization/innate health model - measuring stress.

Theories of stress

Several theories attempt to explain the nature and impact of stress on individuals. Here are some key theories of stress:

- Cognitive theory
- Behavioural theory
- Psychological theory

1. The Cognitive Theory of Stress, also known as the Cognitive

Lazarus's Cognitive Appraisal Approach

According to Lazarus, an individual response to stressor largely depends upon the perceived event and how they are appraised or interpreted.

Lazarus stated that cognitive appraisal occurs when a person considers two major factors that majorly contribute in his response to stress. These two factors include:

- The threatening tendency of the stress to the individual, and
- The assessment of resources required to minimize, tolerate or eradicate the stressor and the stress it produces.

In general, cognitive appraisal is divided into two types or stages: primary and secondary appraisal.

- Primary appraisal refers to the perception of new or changing environment. It occurs as a person is trying to understand what the event is and what it will mean. Events may be appraised for their harm, threat, or challenge.
 - Harm is the assessment of the damage that has already been done, as for example being fired from a job.
 - Threat is the assessment of possible future damage, as for eg. person anticipates the problems that loss of income will create for him and his family.
 - Challenge- the potential to overcome or even profit from the event.

If we perceive an event as stressful on the basis of primary appraisal we must probably try to make secondary appraisal.

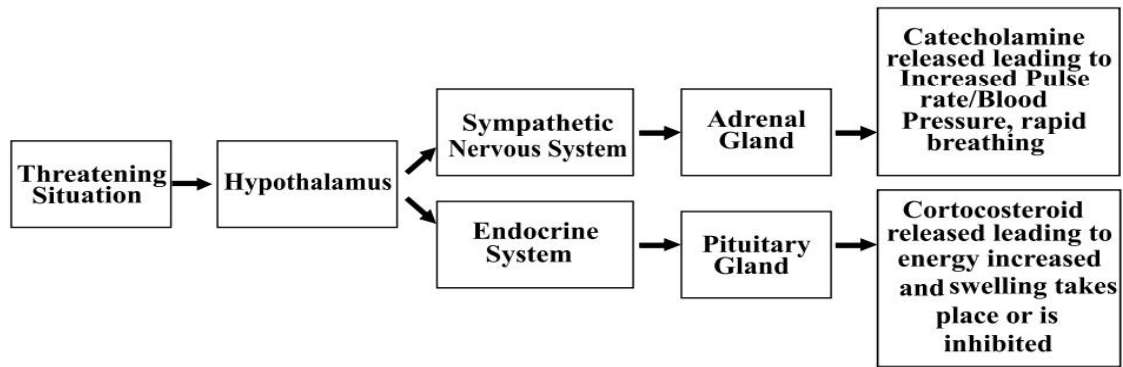
- Secondary appraisal- Assess whether personal resources are sufficient to meet the demands of the environment.

These appraisals are very subjective and based on many factors like stressor intensity, durability, complexity and predictability.

It also depends upon the characteristic like physical health, mental health, temperament, self- concept and cultural background

Appraisal is also determined by individual resource like money, medical care, skills, coping style, social, spirituality in individual and professional support

Fig. 2. 1. : Physiological Changes during fight or flight response.

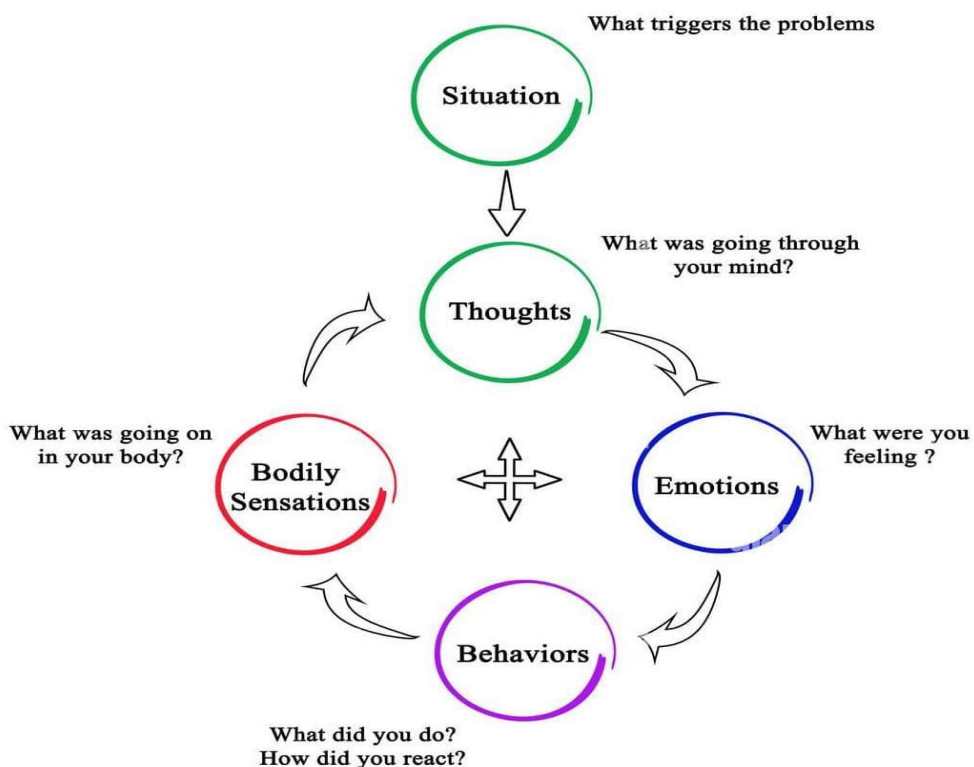


Behavioural theory of stress

It is a short-term therapeutic approach that focuses on how people's thoughts affect their emotions and behaviors. It attempts to influence a client's irrational thoughts while focusing directly on identifying and changing behaviors and thought patterns.

People may react to situations with fear and anxiety because those situations caused them harm or stressful in the past.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

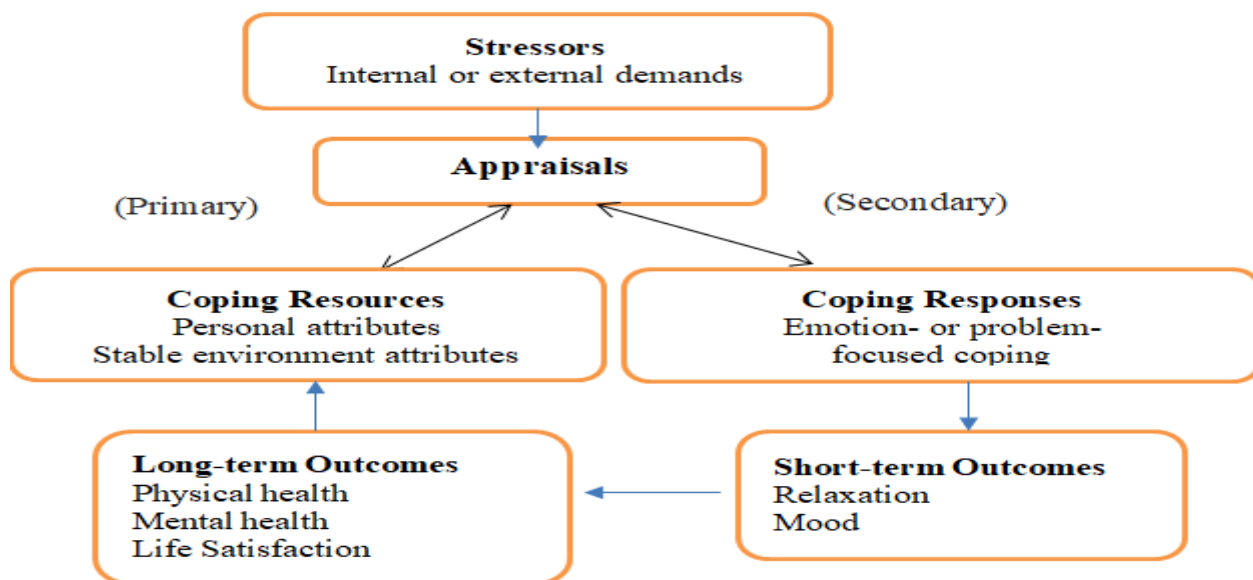


Transaction model of stress

Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman suggested in 1984 that stress can be thought of as resulting from an “imbalance between demands and resources” or as occurring when “pressure exceeds one's perceived ability to cope”. Stress management was developed and premised on the idea that stress is

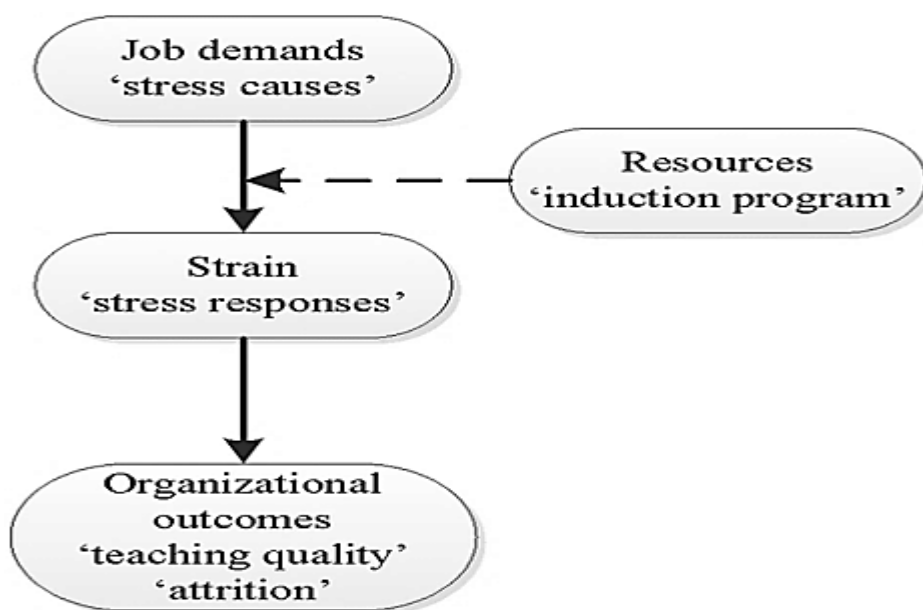
not a direct response to a stressor but rather one's resources and ability to cope mediate the stress response and are amenable to change, thus allowing stress to be controllable.

Lazarus and Folkman's interpretation of stress focuses on the transaction between people and their external environment. The model conceptualizes stress as a result of how a stressor is appraised and how a person appraises his/her resources to cope with the stressor. The model breaks the stressor-stress link by proposing that if stressors are perceived as positive or challenging rather than a threat. The model proposes that stress can be reduced by helping stressed people change their perceptions of stressors, providing them with strategies to help them cope and improving their confidence in their ability to do so.



Conceptual models of stress

The conceptual stress study model (SSM) is basically a schematic representation of the key elements associated with the study of mechanical forces on the human operator. It has been a useful tool for systematically describing the scope and effects of vibration stress study efforts.



Health realization/innate health model

The health realization/innate health model of stress is also founded on the idea that stress does not necessarily follow the presence of a potential stressor. The health realization model focuses on the nature of thought, stating that it is ultimately a person's thought processes that determine the response to potentially stressful external circumstances. In this model, stress results from appraising oneself and one's circumstances through a mental filter of insecurity and negativity, whereas a feeling of well-being results from approaching the world with a "quiet mind," "inner wisdom," and "common sense".

This model proposes that helping stressed individuals understand the nature of thought especially providing them with the ability to recognize when they are in the grip of insecure thinking, disengage from it, and access natural positive feelings will reduce their stress.

Measuring Stress

Levels of stress can be measured. One way is through the use of the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale to rate stressful life events. Changes in blood pressure and galvanic skin response can also be measured to test stress levels and changes in stress levels. A digital thermometer can be used to evaluate changes in skin temperature, which can indicate activation of the fight-or-flight response drawing blood away from the extremities.

How can you measure stress?

There are two components of stress:

Stress triggers: the factors that cause stress

Stress response: how people respond to stress triggers on an emotional, biological, or cognitive level

When people talk about measuring stress, we tend to be talking about measuring triggers or responses. Measuring stress triggers can include taking stock of the major life changes.

However, everybody responds to triggers differently. Events that might be very stressful for one person can be easily manageable for the other.

1. Heart rate variability (HRV)

Heart rate variability (HRV) analysis is a common way to measure stress. It involves recording the variation in time between consecutive heartbeats. In other words, it doesn't just look at how fast your heart is beating, but how the time period between heartbeats changes.

HRV is controlled by your autonomic nervous system (ANS). The ANS includes sympathetic nervous system — responsible for fight-or-flight response — and parasympathetic nervous system, which takes charge when relaxed.

When people chronically in fight-or-flight mode ANS is unbalanced. This imbalance can show up in HRV. HRV is lower when in fight-or-flight mode and higher when in a calm state. High HRV is associated with Trusted Source stress resilience and improved cardiovascular health.

A healthcare professional can check your HRV via an electrocardiogram. Personal wearables, such as chest strap monitors, can also measure HRV.

2. Brainwaves

Electroencephalography (EEG) measures brainwaves. An imbalance in alpha brainwave activity on different sides of the brain could be a potential biomarker for stress.

Mental health practitioners who use neuro feedback can measure brainwaves and train the brain with positive feedback when the EEG finds that treatment goals are being met.

3. Hormonal testing

Two hormones associated with stress are adrenalin and cortisol.

When people are stressed, body will produce adrenalin to give energy to handle stressor. It's a part of the fight-or-flight response, and it's why people might feel restless when anxious.

In times of stress, body also produces cortisol, which assists with the fight-or-flight response. Cortisol is a hormone produced by the adrenal gland. Cortisol is also involved in regulating:

- blood sugar
- inflammation
- metabolism

Cortisol naturally ebbs and flows during the day. Neither cortisol nor adrenalin is "bad," but when cortisol is chronically high, it can harm your health. For instance, it can lead to the following:

- acne
- difficulty concentrating
- fatigue
- headache
- high blood pressure
- irritability
- mood problems
- muscle weakness
- weight gain

Lab tests can assess cortisol levels via urine or blood samples. People can purchase home cortisol testing kits, which usually involve testing cortisol through urine.

4. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a questionnaire that was developed in 1983. It's used to assess the amount of stress

Unlike the above-mentioned methods of measuring stress, this tool relies on own perception of stress. The questions don't focus on the events currently experiencing, but the emotional and mental state.

Stress trackers

There are at-home devices that claim to track stress. Usually, these devices track stress by measuring your heart rate and heart rate variability. Many fitness trackers, including smart watches and chest strap monitors, have stress analysis features.

Symptoms of unhealthy stress levels

The symptoms of high stress levels can vary from person to person. The symptoms can include:

- acne
- anxiety
- chronic pain
- depression
- difficulty with sleep
- digestive issues
- fatigue
- frequent illness
- headaches
- irritability
- abdominal pain
- weight gain

Effectiveness of Stress Management

Positive outcomes are observed using a combination of non-drug interventions:

- treatment of anger or hostility,

- autogenic training
- talking therapy (around relationship or existential issues)
- biofeedback
- cognitive therapy for anxiety or clinical depression

Other models of stress

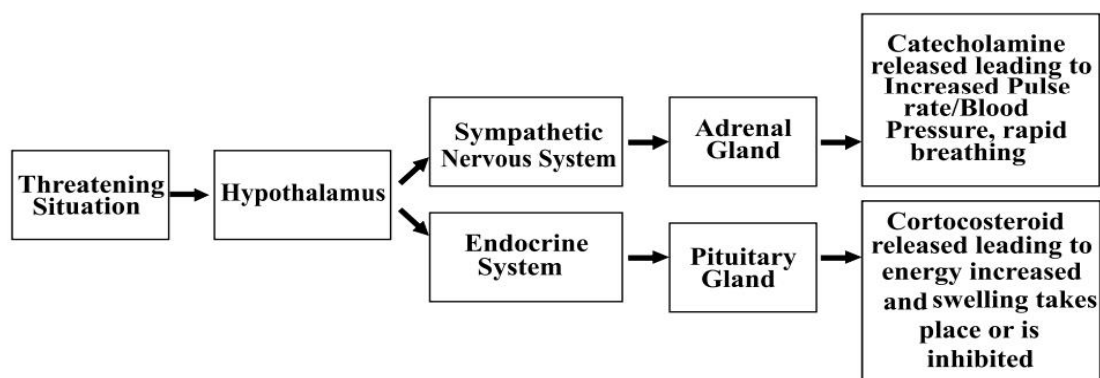
1. Fight or Flight Response:

Cannon initially termed stress as the emergency response and put forth the fight or flight response with regard to stress. According to Cannon stress is an outcome of an environmental demand that was external and that led to an imbalance in the natural steady state of an individual. He further stated that body encompasses natural defence mechanisms that play a role in maintaining the homeostasis or the natural steady state of an individual. Cannon was also interested in sympathetic nervous system activation in an individual when in stressful situation. Thus, when an individual faces a situation that is threatening, he/ she will either get ready to fight the threat or may flight or run away from the situation.

The individual will experience certain physiological changes that gets him/ her ready to fight or flight. These physiological changes include sweating, dry mouth, tensed muscles and so on. There is also increase in blood pressure and pulse rate. Besides the breathing may also become rapid and pupils may widen. Basically, in this moment, the individual's body will transfer the energy from body systems that are not required to respond to the situation to the body systems that are required to function in order to respond to the situation at hand. The stimulation of sympathetic nervous system and endocrine system takes place.

For instance, if a person suddenly comes across a snake, his/ her response would be either of fight or flight and in this case his/ her body will prepare the person for this situation. Thus, there is a disequilibrium that disturbs the homeostasis of the body. Though, once the situation is over and there are no more challenges or threats, the body will go back to normal and homeostasis will be restored.

Fig. 2. 1. : Physiological Changes during fight or flight response.



2. General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS):

There are three stages in stress response:

- Alarm
- Adaptation and
- Exhaustion or recovery.

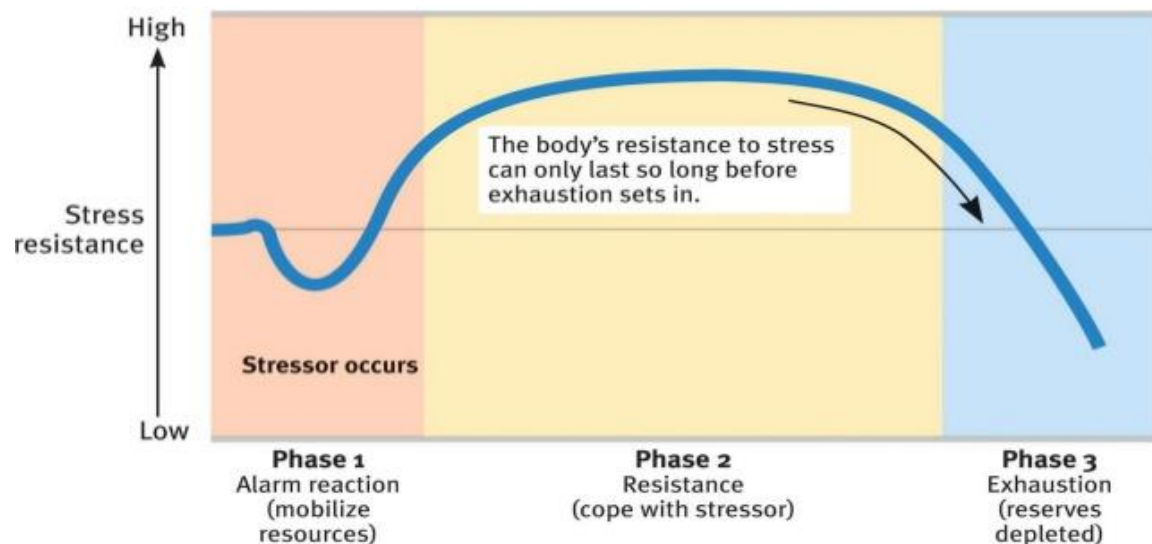
Alarm is the first stage that involves the ‘fight-or-flight’ response. This is the stage which enables us to deal with the difficult (adverse) situations. The body is prepared either to face the perceived threat, or to escape from it.

If the stressful situation isn’t resolved the body uses all its to adapt to the stressful situation. This is the **adaptation** stage.

If the body’s compensation mechanisms have succeeded in overcoming the stressor’s effect there follows the **recovery** stage. But if the body has used up its resources and is unable to maintain normal function it leads to **exhaustion** stage. If exhaustion stage persists for a long time it can cause long term effects where the individual is at risk of suffering from more serious health conditions. It may lead to depression, hypertension and coronary diseases.

General Adaptation Syndrome [GAS] (Identified by Hans Selye):

Our stress response system defends, then fatigues.



3. Person- Environment Fit Model (P-E Fit)

This model was proposed by French, Harrison and Caplan in 1982. The main assumption of this model is that individual differences exist with regard to needs and abilities and stress is created when there is a misfit between the demands that an individual is exposed to and the resources that he/ she possesses. An employee who is well prepared for one of the important presentations in his/ her organisation will look at this as an opportunity and not threat and thus will not experience any significant stress. But if the demands of the environment are high and the employee feels that he/ she does not possess adequate resources or ability to carry out the presentation, then he/ she will experience stress.

4. Psychodynamic Theory

The psychodynamic theory also explains stress. Freud described signal anxiety and traumatic anxiety. Signal anxiety can be said to occur when an external and objective danger that is consistent with relationship between stressor and strain is present and traumatic anxiety is anxiety that occurs within an individual and is related to the repressed sexual drives and instincts that are aggressive within the individual. Traumatic anxiety can lead to development of psychopathology. And though the anxiety may undergo a process where the ideas that are conflicting are converted to ideas that pose no harm, the energy emerging from the conflict may lead to strain in terms of physical symptoms experienced

by the individual. Further, we can also discuss about the explanation of stress given by Levinson that is based on the psychoanalytic theory by Freud. According Resources are insufficient

Introduction to Stress to Levinson, two main elements of personality, namely, ego ideal and self-image interact with each other and lead to stress. Ego ideal can be described as expression of an individual's perfect self, whereas self-image is the way an individual perceives himself/ herself (negatively or positively). Stress, thus, is an outcome of the gap between the ego ideal and self-image. Thus, this approach mainly focuses on how stress can result due to the unconscious personality factors in an individual.

5. Genetic Constitutional Theory

The main focus of this theory is on how stress is resisted and coped with the help of genotype and phenotype. To understand the terms genotype and phenotype, genotype denotes the genetic constitution of individual and phenotype is the physiological characteristics of the individual.

6. Diathesis- Stress Model

The genetic constitutional theory mainly focuses on how genetic predisposition can make an individual prone to stress. The diathesis- stress model, on the other hand, focuses on the role of both genetics and environment in determining whether the individual will experience stress or not. This theory also proposes that heredity and environment go hand in hand and complement each other in determining stress. For instance, an individual may experience breathing problem when he/ she is exposed to prolonged high levels of stress. But in absence of any stress he/ she may not experience any breathing problem, despite of the breathing problem being genetic in nature.

What are the symptoms of stress?

Symptoms of stress can mimic those of anxiety. A distinguishing feature of stress symptoms is that they typically go away once the stressor resolves.

Signs that a person may be under high stress:

- uneasiness
- excessive worry
- high blood pressure
- tension
- loss of sleep
- headaches or body pain

How can a person manage stress?

A person can take several steps to manage stress on their own,

- practicing meditation, mindfulness, and other relaxation techniques
- recording thoughts in a journal
- getting enough quality sleep
- getting enough regular physical activity or exercise
- avoiding excessive caffeine consumption
- reaching out to friends and family for help

A person who continues to experience stress may wish to consider contacting a healthcare professional who can provide additional services or connect the person to therapies that may help.

UNIT-3

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress management

Definition: The stress management meaning is to reduce the negative impacts caused by stress and to improve a person's physical and mental well-being.

Stress management consists of a wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's level of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. Stress management techniques are designed to keep stress levels within an optimal range.

Objectives of stress management

1. Identify stress triggers
2. Develop coping strategies
3. Enhance self-awareness
4. Promote holistic well-being:
5. Optimize performance
6. Foster self-care
7. Cultivate resilience

Causes of stress management

8. Work-related pressure
9. Academic expectations
10. Financial challenges:
11. Relationship issues
12. Health concerns
13. Life transitions
14. Environmental factors
15. personal expectations and perfectionism
16. Technology and information overload

Stress management techniques

Physical Activity and Exercise

Regular engagement in moderate exercise, such as a brisk walk, strengthens the immune system and decreases rates of illness. Exercise also strengthens body muscles, including the heart, preserves muscle mass, and helps with weight management. Individuals who exercise regularly are also at a reduced risk for some chronic diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension. Stress is a central risk factor for the development of panic attacks, generalized anxiety, posttraumatic stress, social anxiety, and phobias.

Healthy Eating

When experiencing high levels of stress, research suggests that many people change their eating patterns. One of the most common dietary changes associated with stress involves the increased consumption of caffeine in an effort to improve early morning or late night productivity. Ironically, although caffeine is associated with short term increases in alertness, caffeine can also exacerbate the stress response. Caffeine consumption can lead to other conditions that can affect the body's ability to respond to stress including insomnia, hypertension, and increased risk of heart disease, gastrointestinal problems, and immune system suppression, making you more prone to infections.

High levels of stress are also associated with increases in cortisol, which tend to lead to cravings for high fat or sugary foods. In addition, when busy, people often resort to skipping meals or eating fast foods. These dietary changes can actually make it more difficult for our bodies to manage stress. Eating a healthy diet full of nutrient rich foods can help you manage stress in several ways. For

example, complex carbohydrates, like oatmeal and whole grain breads and cereals cause brain to release Serotonin, a neurotransmitter associated with positive mood. Even simple carbohydrates, such as candy or chocolate can be good for a quick spike in Serotonin. Research suggests that foods rich in Vitamin C (e.g., oranges) and Omega-3 fatty acids (e.g., salmon) can help reduce levels of stress hormones and improve immune functioning.

Adequate Sleep

Research suggests that the relationship between stress and sleep is bidirectional in that high levels of stress tend to be associated with impaired sleep, and lack of sleep tends to exacerbate the experience of stress. Numerous studies have indicated that excessive stress tends to lead to diminished ability to fall and stay asleep, increased rate of nightmares, and poorer sleep quality.

On the other hand, lack of sufficient sleep often leads to suboptimal physiological and psychological functioning. Sleep deprivation affects cortisol (a stress hormone) levels, and neuroimaging studies indicate that sleep deprivation is associated with impaired neurological functions, including increased amygdala (part of the brain associated with emotional responses) reactivity and pre-frontal control regions of the brain.

Relaxation, Mindfulness, and Meditation

Relaxation, or easing of physical or mental stress, is often thought to be the antidote to stress. A variety of techniques have been devised with the intention of helping one to reach a state of relaxation, several of which have demonstrated reliable efficacy in psychological research:

1. Diaphragmatic breathing
2. progressive muscle relaxation,
3. guided imagery, and
4. meditation exercises.

Diaphragmatic breathing or deep abdominal breathing

It is a technique designed to slow one's breathing and regulate oxygen intake. Diaphragmatic breathing involves taking slow, deep breaths with the intention of expanding and contracting the diaphragm, which is a muscle separating the chest and abdominal cavities. Typically, diaphragmatic breathing exercises involve sitting in a comfortable chair or lying down and taking slow, deep breaths with the intention of breathing so that the air expands the abdomen more than the chest. The goal of PMR is to affect the autonomic arousal component of stress and anxiety via a reduction in skeletal muscle tension. It is believed that as skeletal muscle tension diminishes, other aspects of autonomic arousal, such as blood pressure and heart rate, also decrease.

Guided imagery, or visualization, refers to a type of relaxation training that involves the use of language to create calming, sensory rich experiences in one's imagination. Although guided imagery techniques can vary widely, most involve guiding an individual toward places or situations in which they feel calm and comfortable, and individuals are encouraged to free their minds of any interfering thoughts or daily concerns.

For example, a session might consist of having an individual imagine that they are sitting on a quiet beach on a perfect weather day or in the woods next to a gentle flowing stream. Research suggests that guided imagery techniques are effective in reducing stress and enhancing positive mood states. Guided imagery has also been shown to enhance feelings of well-being and calmness among individuals with a variety of chronic diseases.

Laughter, Self-Expression, and Social Support

Laughter produces many positive physiological and psychological changes in the body. Research indicates that laughter increases oxygen intake and stimulates various muscles and organs, including the heart and lungs. Laughter also reduces blood pressure and blood sugar levels, increases blood flow, and improves energy levels. In addition, laughter causes the release of endorphins, which can increase pain tolerance and induce feelings of euphoria.

Humor provides a psychological distance from the current state and enables us to replace our negative appraisals with more positive ones. In fact, some research suggests that laughter may be as effective as mild aerobic exercise or relaxation training at improving mood. Expressing negative emotions in an adaptive and socially acceptable manner can serve to reduce stress and improve immune function.

Talking about emotionally disturbing or traumatic events has also been shown to reduce anxiety, stress, and dysphoria. In fact, one of the most effective forms of psychological treatment for stress disorders involves intentionally recalling and talking about traumatic events repeatedly until the recollection of the event is less distressing. A strong social support system is also helpful when coping with stress. The strength of one's social support network is a predictor of health and is negatively associated with many mental health problems. In contrast, loneliness is associated with a variety of health problems, including high blood pressure, and lonely individuals have more stressful experiences and are more likely to assess situations as stressful.

Higher levels of perceived stress may explain the poorer health conditions of lonely individuals. Further, they have found that loneliness mediates the relationship between social support and health. Loneliness is best protected against with the quality, or closeness, of relationships over quantity, or number of relationships. Thus, effort should be put towards meaningful relationships rather than countless peripheral ones.

Cognitive Restructuring

Cognitive restructuring involves learning to recognize the irrational or maladaptive thoughts we experience that contribute to negative mood states and then altering them to more accurately reflect the situation. For example, if you are preparing for a presentation, and you repeatedly think, "I know I'm going to say something stupid, and everyone will laugh at me" or "Everyone is going to be able to see how anxious I am, and they will think I'm an idiot", you will likely be fairly anxious. However, are these rational thoughts? Unless you are particularly adept at foretelling the future (in which case, I would appreciate some help selecting my lottery numbers!), these thoughts are likely examples of catastrophizing thoughts, which serve to increase anxiety.

Although it is possible that you will say something stupid, what are the chances if you thoroughly prepare and rehearse your presentation? How many times have you given a presentation in the past and NOT said anything stupid? Even if you do say something that does not sound particularly intellectual, is it possible that some, most, or all of the people in the class might not notice or think negatively about you? If people do notice your anxiety, is it possible that they might interpret it in a different way than assuming you're "an idiot?" Might some people not have empathy for you considering that public speaking is one of the greatest fears among college students? After challenging the irrational or maladaptive thoughts in this manner, it is important to select a rational alternative to substitute.

A more rational alternative to the first assumption might be, "If I prepare well and know what I am going to say in advance, I will probably do a fine job of delivering the presentation." For the second statement, you might substitute, "most people will be anxious when they present, and even if they do notice my anxiety, they will probably be able to relate to it." Research suggests that cognitive restructuring or learning to recognize maladaptive thoughts and change them to reflect more adaptive, rational thought patterns can significantly improve mood, reduce stress, and decrease negative emotions.

Prescription for Stress Management

1. **Exercise Regularly.** Engage in 3-5 sessions of moderate intensity exercise each week to enhance immune system and reduce the risk of developing anxiety and mood disorders. However, even if people cannot exercise regularly, remember that even a single episode of exercise can be a great way to relieve stress and improve mood.

2. **Eat a Healthy Diet.** Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fatty fish to maximize physical health and body's ability to manage stress.

3. **Sleep.** Get 7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night to improve mood and boost immune functioning.

4. **Practice Relaxation.** Engage in relaxation exercises on a regular basis or during periods of moderate to high stress. Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR), guided imagery, and meditation are great ways to reduce your overall level of arousal. Or, combine exercise with meditation or mindfulness by engaging in yoga two to three times per week!

5. **Express Yourself.** Humor in stressful situations, and find ways to express emotions through writing, art, or talking with friends and family.

6. **Reframe.** Attend to the ways in which people think about and interpret stressful situations and look for opportunities to reframe the situation in a more rational or positive manner.

Advantages of stress management

1. Improved physical health
2. Enhanced mental well-being
3. Increased productivity
4. Strengthened relationships
5. Enhanced self-esteem

Disadvantages of stress management

- Time commitment
- Initial challenge
- Individual differences
- Continuous effort
- Lack of support

Limitations of stress management

- Individual Variability
- Temporary Relief
- Workplace Factors:
- Overemphasis on Individual Responsibility
- Complex Causes
- Lack of Accessibility
- Time Constraints:
- Resistance to Change
- Ineffectiveness for Chronic Stress
- Reliance on Short-Term Strategies:
- Limitation of Time and Resources for Interventions:
- Individual Differences in Preferences

Time management

Time management is organizing and implementing a strategy related to the time required for different activities

The **objectives** of time management programs are:

1. It helps to decide the most expeditious and economic method of carrying out the work consistently with the available resources.
2. Provide continuous productive work for all labor and equipment employed, reducing unproductive time to a minimum.
3. Organize and control the work by early examination of all its aspects;

4. Recognize and deal with possible difficulties, thereby ensuring smooth and continuous progress.
5. Give accurate information relating to the timescale to use the resources employed.
6. Provide proper progress and control procedures.
7. Contribute factual data for use in future estimating and programming.

Techniques of time management

Learn to Say 'No'

Taking responsibility for a specific task is truly important, learn to say “no” to tasks that feel pressured to do. Instead, focus on activities that enjoy and that will enhance the career and personal development.

Organize a Realistic Schedule

Plan schedule before a week starts and make sure all the tasks are realistic. Don't strive for perfection. Instead, strive for excellence and don't worry about things that simply can't take on or control.

In addition to your work or class schedule, as well as shopping, laundry, errands and cooking, a realistic and health-promoting schedule should include the following:

Exercise. Thirty to sixty minutes of exercise each day helps reduce stress and promotes numerous health benefits. To save time and be efficient with exercise, set an alarm and go with a friend or family member. Keep gym clothes in car, office and make sure to have a gear ready the night before.

Relaxation: To ease stress, try belly breathing: slow, deep breaths through your nose that fill the stomach, not chest. Do this technique sitting or standing; try it when riding in a car or waiting in line.

Sleep: Try adding 15 minutes to your sleep schedule each night. Find the amount that keeps you energized the whole day. Most people need 8 to 9 hours of sleep each night.

Laughter: Laughter reduces stress, boosts immune system, decreases blood pressure and improves mood. Add laughter today by calling a friend or family member who typically makes laugh, watching a funny movie or video or inviting friends over for game night.

Create a Prioritized To-Do List

Create a list at the beginning of each day and note which items are the most important and which ones can put off. Number items by priority, or use color-coding: red for “do this right away,” orange for “do this next,” yellow for “do this last.”

Combine Tasks

Combine tasks and errands for time efficiency. Also, when planning a day or even week, determine what task you have to run and figure out which ones to combine into one trip.

Plan Ahead

Think about what plan have to accomplish in the near future, and come up with an action plan to guide through the workload with minimal stress. Don't let important tasks build up because they'll be more stressful to handle in a time-crunched situation.

Eliminate Time-Wasting Activities and Procrastination

Limit time spend watching shows and videos and surfing the internet. Finish an important task first and then do something. Try to work in intervals: work for 60 to 90 minutes and then take a 10-minute break.

Keep a Time Log

How much time people actually spend on accomplishing important tasks? How much time people spend on time-wasting activities? Once people figure out that ratio, try to change the habits to match a more productive — and therefore less stressful — lifestyle.

Advantages

1. Reduction in stress level
2. Provides focus on task
3. Decrease procrastination
4. Gain self confidence
5. A way to goal
6. Challenge productivity
7. Have an instinct for achievement
8. Time to relax and do recreational activities
9. Financial soundness
10. Become healthy

Disadvantages of time management

1. Non clear objectives
2. Mismanagement
3. Can't say no
4. Obstacles
5. Inactivity
6. Loads of different work at home
7. Fatigue and stress become the part of life
8. No time for recreation

Personal management

The individual may seek to satisfy needs such as:

- Competitive salaries and perks
- Peer recognition
- personal growth and development

The **symptoms** may be physical or emotional. Common reactions to a stressful event can include:

- Disbelief
- Feelings of fear, shock, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, desires, and interests
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares, concentrating, and making decisions
- Physical reactions, such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of [tobacco](#), [alcohol](#), and [other substances](#)

It is natural to feel stress, anxiety, grief, and worry during traumatic events such as mass shootings, natural disasters, or pandemics.

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including those on social media. It's good to be informed but hearing about the traumatic event constantly can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple of times a day and disconnecting from phone, tv, and computer screens for a while.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat healthy, exercise, get plenty of sleep, and give yourself a break if you feel stressed out.
- **Take care of your body.**
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or [meditate](#).

- [Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.](#)
 - [Exercise regularly.](#)
 - [Get plenty of sleep.](#)
 - Avoid [excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use.](#)
 - Continue with routine preventive measures (such as vaccinations, cancer screenings, etc.) as recommended by your healthcare provider.
 - [Get vaccinated](#) against COVID-19 as soon as possible; [get a booster shot](#) if you are age 18 or older.
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
 - **Talk to others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a parent, friend, counselor, doctor, or pastor.
 - **Connect with community-** faith-based organizations.
 - **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** These may seem to help, but they can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
 - **Recognize when you need more help.** If problems continue or you are thinking about suicide, talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counselor.

Therapy and systematic management

Stress Inoculation Therapy

Stress Inoculation Therapy (SIT) is a psychotherapy method intended to help patients prepare themselves in advance to handle stressful events successfully and with a minimum of upset. The use of the term "inoculation" in SIT is based on the idea that a therapist is inoculating or preparing patients to become resistant to the effects of stressors in a manner similar to how a vaccination works to make patients resistant to the effects of particular diseases.

Stress Inoculation Therapy is conceptually similar to Relapse Prevention methods used in addictions therapy. In SIT, patients are educated about stressful situations and the general nature of stress, the negative outcomes they may be vulnerable to experiencing when confronted with stress, and steps they can take to avoid those negative outcomes. At the conclusion of stress inoculation efforts, patients should feel like they can anticipate pitfalls that may occur during an event, and have a workable and practical plan in place for helping themselves avoid those pitfalls.

The most important aspects include:

- Increased functioning and focus.
- Identify skills to improve calm states
- Increased confidence
- Improved sense of self
- Decreased anxiety, even in high-stress situations.

Stress inoculation has three phases:

In the initial **conceptualization phase**, the therapist educates the patient about the general nature of stress and explains important concepts such as appraisal and cognitive distortion that play a key role in shaping stress reactions. Finally, the therapist works to develop a clear understanding of the nature of the stressors the patient is facing.

A key part of what needs to be communicated in the SIT conceptualization stage is the idea that stressors are creative opportunities and puzzles to be solved, rather than mere obstacles. Patients are

helped to differentiate between aspects of their stressors and their stress-induced reactions that are changeable and aspects that cannot change, so that coping efforts can be adjusted accordingly.

The second phase of SIT focuses on **skills acquisition and rehearsal**. The particular choice of skills taught is important, and must be individually tailored to the needs of individual patients and their particular strengths and vulnerabilities if the procedure is to be effective. A variety of emotion regulation, relaxation, cognitive appraisal, problem-solving, and communication and socialization skills may be selected and taught on the basis of the patient's unique needs.

In the final SIT phase, **application and follow through**, the therapist provides the patient with opportunities to practice coping skills. The patient may be encouraged to use a variety of simulation methods to help increase the realism of coping practice, including visualization exercises, modeling and vicarious learning, role playing of feared or stressful situations, and simple repetitious behavioral practice of coping routines until they become over-learned and easy to act out.

Advantages of SIT

- No side-effects
- Combats the problem itself

Disadvantages

- Needs the person to be motivated to make the therapy work
- Expensive and time consuming

Jacobson's relaxation technique

It is a type of therapy that focuses on tightening and relaxing specific muscle groups in sequence. It's also known as progressive relaxation therapy. By concentrating on specific areas and tensing and then relaxing them, you can become more aware of your body and physical sensations.

Dr. Edmund Jacobson invented the technique in the 1920s as a way to help his patients deal with anxiety. Dr. Jacobson felt that relaxing the muscles could relax the mind as well. The technique involves tightening one muscle group while keeping the rest of the body relaxed, and then releasing the tension.

Professionals who teach this technique often combine it with breathing exercises or mental imagery. A guide may talk you through the process, starting at the head or feet and working through the body.

A multitude of possible health benefits

Practicing relaxation techniques can have a variety of health [benefits](#) such as:

- relieving [anxiety](#)
- reducing [work-related stress](#)
- lowering your blood pressure
- reducing the likelihood of seizures
- improving your [sleep](#)

It shows a connection between relaxation and blood pressure, perhaps because stress is a contributing factor to high blood pressure. Jacobson's relaxation technique may help people with epilepsy reduce the amount and frequency of their seizures.

Jacobson's relaxation technique is commonly used to help people with [insomnia](#). People who didn't get more sleep still felt better rested after relaxation therapy.

Steps in Whole-body technique

Joy Rains is the author of *Meditation Illuminated: Simple Ways to Manage Your Busy Mind*. She recommends beginning the relaxation therapy with a breathing exercise and then moving from the feet up. She suggests the following exercises:

Feet

1. Bring attention to the feet.
2. Point feet downward, and curl toes under.
3. Tighten toe muscles gently, but don't strain.
4. Notice the tension for a few moments, then release, and notice the relaxation. Repeat.
5. Become aware of the difference between the muscles when they're tensed and when they're relaxed.
6. Continue to tense and relax the leg muscles from the foot to the abdominal area.

Abdomen

1. Gently tighten the muscles of the abdomen, but don't strain.
2. Notice the tension for a few moments. Then release, and notice the relaxation. Repeat.
3. Become aware of the difference between the tensed muscles and the relaxed muscles.

Shoulders and neck

1. Very gently shrug the shoulders straight up towards your ears. Don't strain.
2. Feel the tension for a few moments, release, and then feel the relaxation. Repeat.
3. Notice the difference between the tensed muscles and the relaxed muscles.
4. Focus on the neck muscles, first tensing and then relaxing until people feel total relaxation in this area.

Localized technique

Nicole Spruill, CCC-SLP, is a speech specialist. She uses Jacobson's relaxation technique to help professionals who sing or do a lot of public speaking prevent and recover from vocal cord strain.

Here is the three-step process Spruill recommends:

1. Close the hands tightly to feel the tension. Hold for 5 seconds, and slowly allow the fingers to release one by one until they're completely relaxed.
2. Press lips tightly together and hold for 5 seconds, feeling the tension. Slowly release. The lips should be completely relaxed and barely touching after the release.
3. Finally, press tongue against the roof of mouth for 5 seconds, and notice the tension. Slowly relax the tongue until it's sitting on the floor of the mouth and jaws are slightly unclenched.

Demerits

1. Don't relieve all stress together
2. Can worsen depression and anxiety
3. Don't reduce cortisol levels

Systematic desensitization therapy

It is a type of behavioral therapy used to treat anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), phobias, and a fear of things like snakes or spiders.

The aim of this therapy is to change the way you respond to objects, people, or situations that trigger feelings of fear and anxiety. People will learn coping tools to help you stay relaxed and calm.

Steps in Systematic Desensitization Therapy

- First, learn ways to relax your muscles.
- Next, make a list of your fears and rank them based on how intense the fears are.
- Last, start exposing people to their fear in stages so that they get more and more comfortable dealing with it.

Step 1: Deep muscle relaxation techniques. In the first stage of the treatment, people with anxiety and fears are taught breathing exercises and muscle relaxation techniques. Relaxation techniques are generally these types:

- **Autogenic relaxation.** Repeat words, phrases, or suggestions in mind that create a feeling of relaxation and calm. The repetition in the mind leads to the muscles of your body getting more and more relaxed.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** People learn to slowly tense and relax each muscle group. Normally start from toes and work way up to neck and head muscles.
- **Visualization.** Imagine a journey to a peaceful and calm situation, place, or setting, like a seashore or a garden. This aids muscle relaxation and feelings of relaxation.

Learning muscle relaxation techniques is important because of a principle called ‘**reciprocal inhibition.**’ The idea behind reciprocal inhibition is that people can’t be relaxed and fearful at the same time. When feeling relaxed, it’s hard to feel tense. Relaxation techniques can help you learn a different way of responding to your phobias.

Step 2: Creating a fear hierarchy. In the second stage, create a list where people write out all your fears and rank them on a scale of 1 to 10. First list the level-10 fear, which causes the highest amount of anxiety that can imagine. Next, list your level-1 fear, which causes the least amount of anxiety. After this, brainstorm the remaining fears and list them in order from 2 to 9.

Step 3: Working up through the fear scale through exposure. The process of exposure can be done in two ways:

- In vitro – the patient imagines being exposed to the object of fear in the mind's eye.
- In vivo - the patient is actually exposed to the fear.
-

A third type of exposure therapy called **virtual reality exposure therapy (VRET)** has become popular in recent years. Virtual Reality (VR) technology mimics real-life situations in a computer-generated environment. Virtual reality exposure therapy helps people work through fears in a safe and controlled place.

How Long Will Treatment Take?

The number of sessions needed to successfully treat fears will depend on how severe the condition of the people is. Therapist will decide the specific goal that people want to meet before starting the therapy. It can take anywhere from 4 to 6 sessions to see results, but people may need up to 12 sessions for a severe phobia.

Benefits

1. Systematic desensitization is a form of exposure therapy, which aids patients by breaking cycles of avoidance, fear, and anxiety.
2. Through therapy, patients can tackle their fears in a safe environment with a mental health professional who help them develop relaxation and coping strategies.

Limitations

Systematic desensitization only treats the observable and measurable symptoms of a phobia. This is a significant weakness because cognitions and emotions are often the motivators of behavior, and so the treatment is only dealing with symptoms, not the underlying causes

UNIT-4 STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress intervention and perception

Interventions can be categorised as primary, secondary, and tertiary. Each category targets different stages of stress: causes, reactions, and consequences.

1. Primary interventions aim to eliminate organisational causes of stress at their source, and can be further broken down into two sub-groups:

- **Sociotechnical interventions** which are concerned with changes to aspects of work design which can create stress such as staffing levels, work schedules and work patterns.
- **Psychosocial interventions** are concerned with adjusting employees' perceptions of the work environment. Typical responses include health and wellbeing communications and promotions.

2. Secondary interventions aim to target the reactive stages of stress in individuals. Such interventions help employees and managers better identify and manage stressors and associated symptoms as they occur. These intervention types can be both active and passive:

- **Active interventions** include interventions which encourage employees to identify negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones or give them the tools to reduce their exposure to them.
- **Passive interventions** are focused on minimising the consequences of reactions by reducing tension and anxiety, through stress management techniques.

3. Tertiary interventions focus on treating the consequences of stress in individuals. These interventions typically include Employee Assistance Programmes, occupational health services and counselling.

Table 1. A Typology of Stress Management Interventions

Intervention type	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Organisational</i>
<i>Primary</i>	Selection & Assessment Pre-employment medical examination	Job Redesign Working time and schedules Management training, e.g. mentoring
<i>Secondary</i>	Mindfulness training Health promotion, e.g., exercise Cognitive behavioral therapy Relaxation Meditation Personal and interpersonal skill training Acceptance and commitment therapy Psychosocial intervention training Coping skills training Resilience training	Improving communication and decision making Conflict management Peer support groups Coaching & career planning
<i>Tertiary</i>	Employee Assistance Programmes Counselling Posttraumatic stress assistance Disability management	Vocational rehabilitation Outplacement

Stress Intervention: Interpersonal

Interpersonal intervention means feel free to express us and satisfy our own needs. Try to feel good about this without at the expense of the others. If we do not assert ourselves, we will deny and sacrifice our own needs in order to satisfy someone else's. At the other extreme situation, we will perform

aggressively, i.e. to seek to dominate others, and even to satisfy our own needs at the expense of others.

A) **Express ourselves assertively**

Both verbal and non-verbal techniques are equally important.

(i) **Verbal assertiveness:**

- Describe the situation and person encountered clearly
- Express our feeling
- Identify the respective changes and the following consequences specifically

(ii) **Non-verbal assertiveness**

- Stand straight and maintain eye contact with the person when speaking
- Speak clearly, fluently, loudly, with assurance and confidence

(B) Communication

Communication skills can help people to get along better with family, friends, and co-workers, with the result of being less stress. To improve communication skills, we have to pay attention to both verbal and non-verbal communication.

(i) **Verbal communication**

- Schedule our time and allow sufficient time to have a meaningful talk
- Listen and paraphrase the words of the others, it is a good demonstration of an understanding to the others
- Start our conversation with a mutual agreement, which can make communication better
- Describe our thinking and feeling clearly, do not expect someone can guess our meaning
- Avoid the use of 'I', 'why', or 'but' statements. 'I' statements give a sense of self-centred and ignorance of others. 'Why' questions stress the necessity of giving explanations. "But" statements seems to turn down the words before 'but' and emphasize the words after 'but'

(ii) **Nonverbal communication**

Body languages and facial expressions, e.g. a smile, an eye contact, a hug, etc., are good ways to communicate different information, especially when we find it difficult to express our thoughts and feelings verbally.

(C) Conflict Resolution

Everybody have different background, and different points of view. Therefore, conflicts are likely to happen. However, conflict can become a stressor. If we can resolve conflicts effectively, our interpersonal relationship will be improved. This improvement will result in lesser stress and better health. There are simple procedures to resolve interpersonal conflicts:

- Be calm, honest, and co-operative
- Listen and paraphrase the words of the others, it is a good demonstration of an understanding to the others
- Listen to the others, and demonstrate an understanding of the others
- Identify our position, and state our thoughts and feelings clearly
- Explore alternative solutions

(D) Social Support Networking

The hypothesis behind social support networking is that "significant others help an individual mobilize his/her psychological resources and master his/her emotional burdens; they share his/her tasks, and they provides him/her with extra supplies of money, materials, tools, skills, and cognitive guidance to improve his/her handling of the situation". That means, when we can find somebody (family members,

friends or lovers) to let us feel a sense of being loved and accepted, we can feel better, can deal with our stressors, and reduce the negative consequences of stressors.

To develop a social support network, we have to be self-confident and open. Try to take care of the others and develop a sense a commitment. Don't be afraid of the embarrassment and ridicule caused by being rejected. Don't fear that we are unable to be intimate, caring, and loving. If we can develop a successful social support network, it can enhance our ability to face stress.

(E) Perception Intervention

Everything has a positive side and a negative side. However, we often focus on one side and ignore the other, and thus raising our stress level. Actually, we are free to choose what to think and what to focus. Therefore, we have to learn to think comprehensively and critically. In addition, it is important to be positive. If we have negative thoughts, we need to use thought stopping and to re-organize our thinking in order to reduce the stress level.

Humors can be used in stressful situations because it can moderate stressful atmosphere and reduce the negative consequences resulted from stress.

Time Management

'Time is life. It is irreversible and irreplaceable. To waste your time is to waste our life, but to master our life can make the most of it'. There is twenty-four hours a day, some people often claim that time is not enough while some people often claim that time is too excessive. If we can manage our time properly, don't rush and don't waste time, it can eliminate putting ourselves in stressful situations. The followings are some time management skills:

- (1) Assessing how we spend time - find out which things require more time to do and which do not, then distribute our time accordingly.
- (2) Setting goals - set up long-term and short-term goals in order to create a clear plan for us. Fully utilize every chance to achieve our goals.
- (3) Prioritizing - prioritize our goals in terms of their importance, e.g. in a list of
 - A things: must to do
 - B things: want to do, and need to do
 - C things: want to do, but we can wait after the completion of A and B things
- (4) Scheduling - after the list of prioritization has been made, schedule them into our daily and monthly timetable.
- (5) Say 'No' - to avoid of being overloaded, we have learnt to say 'no' when necessary.
- (6) Delegating - if we are short of time, we can get somebody to do the things that needs to be done, but do not need our personal attention.
- (7) Limiting Interruptions - try to keep interruptions to a minimum, e.g. phone calls, visitors, etc., and adhere to our schedule as much as we can.

Religious/Spiritual Practice for Stress Reduction

It's not necessarily connected to a specific belief system or even religious worship. Instead, it arises from our connection with us and with others, the development of our personal value system, and our search for meaning in life.

For many, spirituality takes the form of religious observance, prayer, meditation or a belief in a higher power. For others, it can be found in nature, music, art or a secular community. Spirituality is different for everyone.

Spirituality has many benefits for stress relief and overall mental health. It can help you:

- **Feel a sense of purpose.**
Cultivating our spirituality may help uncover what's most meaningful in our life. By clarifying what's most important so that people can focus less on the unimportant things and eliminate stress.
- **Connect to the world.**
The more people feel they have a purpose in the world, the less solitary people may feel — even when they are alone. This can lead to a valuable inner peace during difficult times.
- **Release control.**
When people feel part of a greater whole, people may realize that they aren't responsible for everything that happens in life. They can share the burden of tough times as well as the joys of life's blessings with those around them.
- **Expand your support network.**
Whether people find spirituality in a church, mosque or synagogue, in their family, or in nature walks with a friend, this sharing of spiritual expression can help build relationships.
- **Lead a healthier life.**
People who consider themselves spiritual may be better able to cope with stress and may experience health benefits.

Discovering spirituality

Uncovering people spirituality may take some self-discovery. Here are some questions to ask yourself to discover what experiences and values define you:

- What are your important relationships?
- What do you value most in your life?
- What people give you a sense of community?
- What inspires you and gives you hope?
- What brings you joy?
- What are your proudest achievements?

The answers to such questions can help people identify the most important people and experiences in their life. With this information, people can focus on their search for spirituality on the relationships and activities in life that have helped define them as a person and those that continue to inspire their personal growth.

Cultivating spirituality

A key component is self-reflection. Try these tips:

- Try prayer, meditation, mindfulness and relaxation techniques to help focus on thoughts and find peace of mind.
- Keep a journal to help people express their feelings and record their progress.
- Seek out a trusted adviser or friend who can help you discover what's important in life. Others may have insights that they haven't yet discovered.
- Read inspirational stories or essays to help people evaluate different philosophies of life.
- Talk to others whose spiritual lives admire. Ask questions to learn how they found their way to a fulfilling spiritual life.

Nurturing relationships

Spirituality is also nurtured by relationships with others. Realizing this, it's essential to foster relationships with the people who are important to them. This can lead to a deepened sense of place in life and in the greater good.

- Make relationships with friends and family a priority. Give more than receive.
- See the good in people and in themselves. Accept others as they are, without judgment.
- Contribute to community by volunteering.

Pursuing a spiritual life

Staying connected to inner spirit and the lives of those around can enhance the quality of life, both mentally and physically. Personal concept of spirituality may change with age and life experiences, but it always forms the basis of your well-being, helps you cope with stressors large and small, and affirms your purpose in life.

Spiritual and religious people find various ways to express these qualities by praying, attending religious services, interacting with people who share the same beliefs, meditating, viewing or making art or music, visiting nature, etc. Because many people view the term "spirituality" as the more all-encompassing term, we will use it in this discussion as well.

Spirituality can decrease stress, by allowing a person to:

- **Create a sense of quiet, stillness, and peace.** We spend a great deal of time either listening to (or vigorously trying to distract ourselves from) a myriad of thoughts that are rushing around in our minds. Practicing spirituality can give us a quiet respite from all of this rushing around. Time spent meditating, praying, or just appreciating what is around and within us in that given moment can allow space to detach from and find perspective on stressors, enhance our sense of awe at the amazing world that is around us, as well as give us time to gain some or all of the other positive benefits described next.
- **Give up control.** Believing in something greater than ourselves allows us to realize that we aren't responsible for everything that happens in our lives. Bad things and good things will happen no matter what, through no fault (or through no specific effort) of our own. Spirituality can allow us to release (or at least decrease) the need to always blame ourselves for bad times and/or continuously scramble to achieve good outcomes.
- **Increase meaning.** When those inevitable positive and negative events happen, spiritual practice can help us look for a way to think about those events in a meaningful way. Asking "What can I learn?" or "How can I grow stronger?" instead of asking "Why me?" when something bad happens can serve to decrease negative stress feelings fuel constructive behavior. Similarly, feeling grateful when good things happen can help to spur us to "spread the wealth" and practice altruistic acts toward others.
- **Enhance a sense of connectedness.** Feeling a part of something greater than ourselves can make us feel less isolated and alone. In addition, many people who belong to religious and/or spiritual groups receive social support benefits (interpersonal interactions; group activities; mentoring; help with money, food, transportation, respite, etc. in times of need). Most stressors seem smaller and more easy to deal with if we know that we belong to and can connect with a group (or a higher power, or the universe) who can offer acceptance, solace, strength and possibly even solutions.
- **Maintain a sense of purpose.** Most of us have spent some time wondering what life is "all about." People who start to think that meetings, unpleasant chores, and the "rat race" is all that there is to life frequently start to feel depressed and stressed. The enhanced sense of connectedness and increased sense of meaning derived from spiritual practices allow us to look beyond ourselves, which increases our sense of responsibility for our wider community and universe.
- **Gain perspective.** Spiritual practice can help us to shrink obstacles that seem insurmountable into something approaching a manageable size. In addition, spirituality helps us to clarify our values, and focus on related goals that are important, rather than becoming consumed by material things or circumstances that are truly unimportant.

Meditation

Meditation is a practice that incorporates different techniques that help people focus their attention and achieve a heightened state of awareness. It can result in changes in consciousness and has been shown to have a number of health benefits.

Meditation involves sitting in a relaxed position and clearing your mind, or focusing your mind on one thought and clearing it of all others. People may focus on a sound, like "ooooommm," or on breathing, counting, a mantra, or nothing at all.

It's generally necessary to have at least five to 20 distraction-free minutes to spend, though meditation sessions can really be any length. Longer meditation sessions tend to bring greater benefits, but it is usually best to start slowly so you can maintain the practice long-term.

Many practitioners of meditation attach a spiritual component to it, but it can also be a secular exercise. Really, there is no wrong way to meditate.

Meditation and Stress

One of the main benefits of meditation is its ability to reduce stress. The body's stress response causes the body to automatically react in ways that prepare to fight or run. In some cases of extreme danger, this physical response is helpful. However, a prolonged state of such agitation can cause physical damage to every part of the body.

Meditation affects the body in exactly the opposite way that stress does—by triggering the body's relaxation response. It restores the body to a calm state, helping the body repair itself and preventing new damage from the physical effects of stress.

The Role of Relaxation

There is an element of more direct physical relaxation involved in meditation as well, obviously, so this double dose of relaxation can really be helpful for shrugging off stress. A greater gain that meditation can bring is the long-term resilience that can come with regular practice.

Some of this is thought to be the result of the increase in positive mood that can come from meditation; research shows that those who experience positive moods more often are more resilient toward stress. Other research has found changes in the brains of regular meditation practitioners that are linked with a decreased reactivity toward stress.

The practice of learning to refocus that their thoughts can also help people redirect ourself when people fall into negative thinking patterns, which in itself can help relieve stress. Meditation offers several solutions in one simple activity.

Health Benefits of Meditation

The benefits of meditation are great because, among other things, it can reverse your stress response, thereby shielding you from the effects of chronic stress.

- Use oxygen more efficiently.
- Adrenal glands produce less cortisol.
- Blood pressure normalizes.
- Heart rate and breathing slow down.
- Immune function improves.
- Mind ages at a slower rate.
- Mind clears and your creativity increases.
- Sweat less.

People who meditate regularly find it easier to give up life-damaging habits like smoking, drinking, and drugs. They also find it easier to stop rumination from ruining their day.

It helps many people connect to a place of inner strength. Numerous studies have found that, in diverse populations, meditation can minimize stress and build resilience. Meditation research is still relatively new, but promising.

The Pros And Cons of Meditation

There are many benefits to meditation, both mentally and physically:

- People with physical limitations may find it easier to practice than strenuous physical exercise for stress relief. Plus, no special equipment is required.
- Unlike enlisting the help of a professional, meditation is free.
- Unlike some medications and herbal therapies, meditation has few potential side effects.
- Meditation is always available and can be done anywhere at any time.
- It is amazingly effective in short-term stress reduction and long-term health. The benefits of meditation can be felt in just one session.

While meditating is a great tool for many people, there are a few things to be aware of before beginning the practice:

- It does take discipline and commitment to make meditation a regular habit. Some people find it more difficult to maintain as a habit than methods that enlist the help of someone or something outside themselves for added motivation. If you are one of these people, finding a meditation group may be the perfect solution.
- Some people may find it more difficult to free their minds from the thoughts of the day. This may make it more difficult than methods that involve focusing on these events, like journaling, or methods that are distracting, like physical exercise or the use of humor.
- Some people may have mental or physical health conditions that don't allow them to comfortably meditate while sitting. Instead, try a moving meditation like running or yoga.

Keep these four things in mind when you begin your mediation practice.

Consistency Is Key

Consistent practice matters more than long practice. This means that it's better to meditate for five minutes, six times per week than for 30 minutes once a week. The former can calm your body's stress response several times in a week, while the latter may calm your body into a deeper state of relaxation, but it will only reverse your stress response once.

It's OK for Your Mind to Wander

If people notice their mind wandering, that's good. Meditation can be challenging for some people, particularly perfectionists. We sometimes fall into the trap of wanting to do it "right" and becoming frustrated with ourselves when our mind drifts off. The thing to remember is that if you notice this happening, that's a good thing—you noticed.

Getting Started

Two major types of meditation include concentrative meditation (where attention is focused on a specific point) and mindfulness meditation (which focuses on building awareness and acceptance of the present moment).

Begin at a Relaxed Time

Even if we plan to use it only as needed and not as a daily exercise, it is a good idea to practice meditation when people aren't feeling particularly stressed first, rather than trying it for the first time when you're feeling overwhelmed—unless, of course, people can't find a time when they don't feel this way. The most important thing to remember is to practice meditation for a few minutes per day and to try to sit for at least five minutes each session.

Focus on Your Breath

If people don't know where to start, they may simply focus on listening to breathing for five minutes. To do this, relax body, sit comfortably, and notice breath. If people find themselves thinking of other things, simply redirect their attention back to their breath.

Another simple strategy is to count breaths. When people inhale, count "one" in their head, and then count "two" as they exhale. Keep going as they breathe and start over at "one" if they notice they've become distracted by other thoughts.

Guided meditation is a practice that involves being directed through the process by another person. This guide often helps people focus on mental imagery, describes breathing exercises, utilizes mantras, and guides the process using other techniques.

Meditation and emotional well-being

When people meditate, they may clear away the information overload that builds up every day and contributes to stress.

The emotional benefits of meditation can include:

- Gaining a new perspective on stressful situations
- Building skills to manage your stress
- Increasing self-awareness
- Focusing on the present
- Reducing negative emotions
- Increasing imagination and creativity
- Increasing patience and tolerance

Meditation and illness

With that in mind, some research suggests that meditation may help people manage symptoms of conditions such as:

- Anxiety
- Asthma
- Cancer
- Chronic pain
- Depression
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Sleep problems
- Tension headaches

Types of meditation

Ways to meditate can include:

- Guided meditation.** Sometimes called guided imagery or visualization, with this method of meditation you form mental images of places or situations you find relaxing.
- Mantra meditation.** In this type of meditation, people silently repeat a calming word, thought or phrase to prevent distracting thoughts.
- Mindfulness meditation.** This type of meditation is based on being mindful, or having an increased awareness and acceptance of living in the present moment. In mindfulness meditation, people broaden your conscious awareness, but let them pass without judgment.
- Qi gong.** This practice generally combines meditation, relaxation, physical movement and breathing exercises to restore and maintain balance. Qi gong (CHEE-gung) is part of traditional Chinese medicine.
- Tai chi.** This is a form of gentle Chinese martial arts. In tai chi (TIE-CHEE), people perform a self-paced series of postures or movements in a slow, graceful manner while practicing deep breathing.

□ **Transcendental Meditation.** Transcendental Meditation is a simple, natural technique. In Transcendental Meditation, people silently repeat a personally assigned mantra, such as a word, sound or phrase, in a specific way.

□ **Yoga.** People perform a series of postures and controlled breathing exercises to promote a more flexible body and a calm mind. As people move through poses that require balance and concentration, they are encouraged to focus less on busy day and more on the moment.

Elements of meditation

Features in meditation include:

□ **Focused attention.** Focusing attention is generally one of the most important elements of meditation.

□ **Relaxed breathing.** This technique involves deep, even-paced breathing using the diaphragm muscle to expand your lungs. The purpose is to slow breathing, take in more oxygen, and reduce the use of shoulder, neck and upper chest muscles while breathing so that you breathe more efficiently.

□ **A quiet setting.** If you're a beginner, practicing meditation may be easier if people are in a quiet spot with few distractions, including no television, radios or cellphones.

□ **A comfortable position.** You can practice meditation whether you're sitting, lying down, walking, or in other positions or activities. Just try to be comfortable so that you can get the most out of your meditation. Aim to keep good posture during meditation.

□ **Open attitude.** Let thoughts pass through your mind without judgment.

Here are some ways you can practice meditation on your own, whenever you choose:

□ **Breathe deeply.** This technique is good for beginners because breathing is a natural function.

□ **Scan your body.** When using this technique, focus attention on different parts of your body. Become aware of your body's various sensations, whether that's pain, tension, warmth or relaxation.

□ **Repeat a mantra.** You can create your own mantra, whether it's religious or secular. Examples of religious mantras include the Jesus Prayer in the Christian tradition, the holy name of God in Judaism, or the om mantra of Hinduism, Buddhism and other Eastern religions.

□ **Walk and meditate.** Combining a walk with meditation is an efficient and healthy way to relax. You can use this technique anywhere you're walking, such as in a tranquil forest, on a city sidewalk or at the mall.

□ **Engage in prayer.** Prayer is the best known and most widely practiced example of meditation. Spoken and written prayers are found in most faith traditions.

□ **Read and reflect.** Many people report that they benefit from reading poems or sacred texts, and taking a few moments to quietly reflect on their meaning.

□ **Focus your love and gratitude.** In this type of meditation, you focus your attention on a sacred image or being, weaving feelings of love, compassion and gratitude into your thoughts. You can also close your eyes and use your imagination or gaze at representations of the image.

Personal responsibility

It is a skill that people can build through self-awareness. It is when people can take full responsibility for their action, decisions and thoughts and more.

5 ways to develop personal responsibility

There are many ways in which you can learn to be more personally responsible. Here are five examples:

1. Identify personal strengths and weaknesses

The first step to developing responsibility at work is to be honest. People can identify strengths and weaknesses by looking at areas where they feel take enough responsibility and areas where they could take more. People may also wish to ask for feedback from people they trust. They can then use this information to develop a plan for working on your weaknesses and building on strengths. There are always areas to improve, so try this as the first step in developing a greater sense of responsibility.

2. Set goals and create a plan to improve yourself

People who set goals and make plans to achieve them often have a greater chance of success at work. Goals are important because they give direction and structure to your efforts, keep accountable for actions and help them stay on track for long-term success. If people can take more responsibility in an area, try setting yourself a goal to do so. Then maintain focus on that goal until you achieve it.

3. Learn from your mistakes

Mistakes are inevitable, but you can learn from them and make improvements to your behaviour in the future. A developed sense of responsibility encourages you to understand that everyone makes mistakes and what's important is how you address them. Learning from your mistakes, rather than attempting to avoid them, can often cause a change to happen. For example, if you set a goal and don't accomplish it within the timeline you planned, you can use that understanding to set more realistic goals in the future. Understanding your capabilities more deeply can also help you achieve more success at work.

4. Follow through on commitments

Taking responsibility means that when you make a commitment to someone, you fulfil it to the best of your abilities. Following through with commitments demonstrates your integrity and trustworthiness and helps you feel confident in yourself. It's important to note that being aware of your capabilities regarding time and energy is key to successfully following through on commitments. This can ensure that you take on only as much as you can handle, meet deadlines and deliver as you have agreed.

5. Develop excellent communication skills

A professional with effective communication skills can convey their thoughts, feelings and instructions more clearly to others. This can help you express how and why something has happened, which may help to reduce its impact. Communication includes both verbal or written forms of expression and nonverbal communication like body language, tone of voice and facial expressions. A person with efficient communication skills may also make meaningful connections with people and may even influence the decisions they make at work.

What are the key attributes of a highly responsible person?

There are many attributes that make up a highly responsible person, such as some of the following qualities:

Self-awareness

This is one of the most important traits that you can develop and is what may set you apart from others. The first step in self-awareness is to understand that you have different strengths and weaknesses. With this knowledge, you can become more aware of which situations you may be more likely to perform well in.

Courage

It takes courage to own up to a mistake, especially when you know it may affect your team or possibly a client's experience. The short-term discomfort of owning up to a mistake might help to motivate you to improve your skills. It also shows your team that you're honest and willing to take responsibility for your actions and learn from your mistakes.

Honesty

Honesty requires courage and confidence. It's often easier to hide a mistake than speak up about it and take ownership. It's about not just telling the truth but also handling the consequences. Being open about what you've done gives you the opportunity to grow and develop and while maintaining your integrity.

Authenticity

Authenticity refers to when the actions you take and personality you present at work are genuine. You can do this by not worrying about the judgement of others, admitting when you make a mistake and accepting when you're wrong. Authenticity also involves being honest about the flaws in your character rather than hiding them. You can demonstrate your authenticity at work by noting your flaws and discussing with your colleagues or supervisor how you plan to improve.

Diligence

This means taking care in dealing with all matters, whether or not they appear important. To be diligent doesn't always require a tremendous effort, but it requires you to be consistent with your attention. Being diligent every day requires self-discipline, awareness and the desire to give your full attention to whatever you're doing.

Commitment

Commitment to your role or to a specific task shows that you care about what you're doing and its outcome. It also shows you're invested in the success of the business. When you're committed to something, you can address mistakes or problems that arise more swiftly because your attention is on the outcome rather than the problem that you have.

Decision-making skills

The ability to make good decisions is a key attribute for someone who takes responsibility. When there's a problem to handle, you could resolve it by making a decision quickly. If you can make important decisions without procrastinating, this helps you take ownership of a task or the duties that you have at work.

Accountability

Holding yourself accountable for something means that you accept full responsibility for the outcome and success of any given task. This is arguably one of the most important elements of being a highly responsible person. By being accountable, you're showing that you believe in yourself and your ability to deliver on your promises.

Exercise and stress

Exercise in almost any form can act as a stress reliever. Being active can boost your feel-good endorphins and distract you from daily worries. Virtually any form of exercise, from aerobics to yoga, can act as a stress reliever. If you're not an athlete or even if you're out of shape, you can still make a little exercise go a long way toward stress management. Discover the connection between exercise and stress relief — and why exercise should be part of your stress management plan.

Exercise and stress relief

Exercise increases your overall health and your sense of well-being, which puts more pep in your step every day. But exercise also has some direct stress-busting benefits.

- **It pumps up your endorphins.** Physical activity may help bump up the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins. Although this function is often referred to as a runner's high, any aerobic activity, such as a rousing game of tennis or a nature hike, can contribute to this same feeling.
- **It reduces negative effects of stress.** Exercise can provide stress relief for your body while imitating effects of stress, such as the flight or fight response, and helping your body and its

systems practice working together through those effects. This can also lead to positive effects in your body — including your cardiovascular, digestive and immune systems — by helping protect your body from harmful effects of stress.

- **It's meditation in motion.** After a fast-paced game of racquetball, a long walk or run, or several laps in the pool, you may often find that you've forgotten the day's irritations and concentrated only on your body's movements. As you begin to regularly shed your daily tensions through movement and physical activity, you may find that this focus on a single task, and the resulting energy and optimism, can help you stay calm, clear and focused in everything you do.
- **It improves your mood.** Regular exercise can increase self-confidence, improve your mood, help you relax, and lower symptoms of mild depression and anxiety. Exercise can also improve your sleep, which is often disrupted by stress, depression and anxiety. All of these exercise benefits can ease your stress levels and give you a sense of command over your body and your life.

A successful exercise program begins with a few simple steps.

- **Consult with your doctor.** If you haven't exercised for some time or you have health concerns, you may want to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.
- **Walk before you run.** Build up your fitness level gradually. Excitement about a new program can lead to overdoing it and possibly even injury.
- **Do what you love.** Almost any form of exercise or movement can increase your fitness level while decreasing your stress. The most important thing is to pick an activity that you enjoy. Examples include walking, stair climbing, jogging, dancing, bicycling, yoga, tai chi, gardening, weightlifting and swimming.
- **Pencil it in.** In your schedule, you may need to do a morning workout one day and an evening activity the next. But carving out some time to move every day helps you make your exercise program an ongoing priority. Aim to include exercise in your schedule throughout your week.

Starting an exercise program is just the first step. Here are some tips for sticking with a new routine or refreshing a tired workout:

- **Set SMART goals.** Write down SMART goals — specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-limited goals. If your primary goal is to reduce stress in your life, your specific goals might include committing to walking during your lunch hour three times a week. Or try online fitness videos at home. Or, if needed, find a babysitter to watch your children so that you can slip away to attend a cycling class.
- **Find a friend.** Knowing that someone is waiting for you to show up at the gym or the park can be a powerful incentive. Try making plans to meet friends for walks or workouts. Working out with a friend, co-worker or family member often brings a new level of motivation and commitment to your workouts. And friends can make exercising more fun!
- **Change up your routine.** If you've always been a competitive runner, take a look at other, less competitive options that may help with stress reduction, such as Pilates or yoga classes. As an added bonus, these kinder, gentler workouts may enhance your running while also decreasing your stress.
- **Exercise in short bursts.** Even brief bouts of physical activity offer benefits. For instance, if you can't fit in one 30-minute walk, try a few 10-minute walks instead. Being active throughout the day can add up to provide health benefits. Take a mid-morning or afternoon break to move and stretch, go for a walk, or do some squats or pushups.

Diversity

Working with people who are different than you can be stressful but it doesn't have to be. It may be hard for many of us to admit, especially with all the conversation about diversity, equity and inclusion. Denying being uncomfortable won't make you more comfortable.

Here are three of the ten most effective diversity stress management tools

1-Take slow deep breaths when you think a situation or interaction may be uncomfortable. You'll feel and appear more calm and confident and be more present. Other people will find it easier to interact with you. That extra second of breath will also make it less likely you'll act on a wrong assumption.

2- Send a new message to yourself. Use this self-talk, "It's normal to feel uncomfortable around people I don't know or know little about. They may feel the same way. I never know what I'll learn."

3- Get outside your own head. Visualize yourself interacting with one person at a time, and feeling relaxed, calm and comfortable. Most people think of themselves as individuals, but think of other individuals as a whole group which contributes to diversity anxiety and discomfort. Change the internal picture and see yourself being calm, relaxed and comfortable.

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

Feeling emotional and nervous or having trouble sleeping and eating can all be normal reactions to stress. Here are some healthy ways you can deal with stress:

- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including those on social media. It's good to be informed but hearing about the traumatic event constantly can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple of times a day and disconnecting from phone, tv, and computer screens for a while.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat healthy, exercise, get plenty of sleep, and give yourself a break if you feel stressed out.
- **Take care of your body.**
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
 - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
 - Exercise regularly.
 - Get plenty of sleep.
 - Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use.
 - Continue with routine preventive measures (such as vaccinations, cancer screenings, etc.) as recommended by your healthcare provider.
 - Get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible; get a booster shot if you are age 18 or older.
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Talk to others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a parent, friend, counselor, doctor, or pastor.
- **Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations.**
- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** These may seem to help, but they can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.

- **Recognize when you need more help.** If problems continue or you are thinking about suicide, talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counselor.

Rational emotive behaviour theory

Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) is a type of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) developed by psychologist Albert Ellis. REBT is an action-oriented approach that's focused on helping people deal with irrational beliefs and learn how to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in a healthier, more realistic way.

When people hold irrational beliefs about themselves or the world, problems can result. REBT helps people recognize and alter those beliefs and negative thinking patterns in order to overcome psychological problems and mental distress.

How Rational Emotive Therapy Works

According to REBT, our cognition, emotions, and behavior are connected. In order to understand the impact of events and situations that people encounter throughout life, it's essential to look at the beliefs people hold about these experiences and the emotions that arise as a result of those beliefs.

The main goal of REBT is to help people respond rationally to situations that would typically cause stress, depression, or other negative feelings. When faced with this type of situation in the future, the emotionally healthy response would be to realize that it is not realistic to expect success in every endeavor. All you can do is learn from the situation and move on.

Main Beliefs

Rational emotive behavior therapy operates under a few main beliefs. The three main beliefs of REBT are:

- You are worthy of self-acceptance no matter what even when you struggle or make mistakes; there is no need for shame or guilt.
- Others are also worthy of acceptance, even when their behavior involves something that you don't like.
- Negative things will sometimes happen in life, and that doesn't mean that things are happening in a way they shouldn't be. Life is not positive all of the time, and there's no rational reason to expect it to be.

ABC Model

A core concept of REBT is the ABC model. This model explains how, while we may blame external events for our unhappiness, it is our interpretation of these events that truly lies at the heart of our psychological distress.

"ABC" is an acronym for

- **A:** Activating event, which is when something happens in the environment around you
- **B:** Belief, which describes your thoughts about the event or situation
- **C:** Consequence, which is your emotional response to your belief

Some of the most common irrational beliefs addressed in rational emotive behavior therapy include:

- Feeling excessively upset over other people's mistakes or misconduct
- Believing that you must be perfectly competent and successful in everything to be valued and worthwhile
- Believing that you will be happier if you avoid life's difficulties or challenges
- Feeling that you have no control over your own happiness; that your contentment and joy are dependent upon external forces

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Techniques

Disputation

One step toward changing your beliefs is undergoing a process called disputation. Disputation is meant to teach life-long skills to help you manage your emotional response and overall mental health. During disputation, your therapist will challenge your irrational beliefs using direct methods. They may question your beliefs head-on, causing you to rethink them, or they could ask you to imagine another point of view that you haven't considered before.

Targeting Emotional Responses

An important part of the REBT process is learning how to replace your irrational beliefs with healthier ones. This process can be daunting and upsetting, and it's normal to feel some discomfort or to worry that you've made a mistake. While REBT uses cognitive strategies, it focuses on emotions and behaviors as well. In addition to identifying and disputing irrational beliefs, therapists and clients also work together to target the emotional responses that accompany problematic thoughts.

Techniques that might be encouraged include:

- Meditation
- Journaling
- Guided imagery

REBT has some data to support its benefit for a variety of conditions, including:

- Anxiety and distress
- Depression
- Disruptive behavior in children
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Social anxiety disorder
- Psychotic symptoms

Overall, REBT offers several behavioral benefits, like:

- Reduced feelings of anger, anxiety, depression, and distress
- Improved health and quality of life
- Better school performance and social skills

Effectiveness of REBT

REBT has a wide range of potential applications. Because it's focused on education and taking action, it may be effective for a variety of situations and mental health conditions. It may even lead to lasting change in those who undergo this form of therapy.

- Burnout at School or Work
- Researchers have studied the impact that REBT has on professional and academic performance.
- Group REBT reduced their job-related stress and burnout while increasing their job satisfaction and commitment to their organization.

Depression and Anxiety

REBT may be effective in reducing symptoms for people with depression or anxiety. The positive effects also appear to last even after therapy ends.

REBT has also shown promising results for adolescents experiencing depression. This may be due to its emphasis on teaching techniques like:

- Identifying cognitive errors
- Challenging irrational beliefs
- Separating individuals from their behaviors
- Practicing acceptance

Massage

Reduced stress is a benefit often gained through massage. Stress can be both physical and mental. Stress can physically occur within muscles after injury or overuse causing a buildup of tension resulting in an increase in pain. Stress can occur mentally due to restricted movement, pain or injury. Mental stress is caused by a hormone called cortisol which can also increase anxiety and depression. Where small amounts of stress can be good for a person, too much stress can cause pain, fear of returning to sport or injury and self-doubt. Our massage therapists at Physio.co.uk reduce stress through massage to help increase relaxation, reduce pain and improve a person's overall mood.

The most common massage types used to reduce stress include:

- Deep Tissue Massage
- Swedish Massage
- Therapeutic Massage

Soft Tissue Massage targeting trapezius back muscles Above: Soft Tissue Massage targeting trapezius back muscles

A deep tissue massage is used to reduce stress. A **deep tissue massage** focuses on the deeper layers within soft tissues. Stress can quite often be caused by a buildup of tension within muscles that restricts movement and increases pain. A deep tissue massage aims to relieve tension by stretching and spreading muscle fibres and tissues in order for muscles to relax and loosen. Loosened muscles increases movement, decreases pain and reduces stress.

Stress can be reduced through **Swedish massage**. The main aim of a Swedish massage is to relax a person both physically and mentally through the manipulation of muscles. Manipulation of the muscles encourages them to relax and stretch to relieve any tightness or tension, reducing physical stress. Tightness and tension causes" pain, increasing stress mentally levels. The relief of tightness and tension through Swedish massage also decreases mental stress.

A **therapeutic massage** is regularly used to reduce stress. A therapeutic massage uses a gentle pressure throughout on areas containing soft tissues. The main aim of a therapeutic massage is relaxation. When relaxation is poor, stress levels increase causing tension build-up, anxiety and muscular knots. A therapeutic massage increases localised blood flow. Within the blood flow are positive hormones endorphins, serotonin and dopamine. The positive hormones give a sense of well-being, increase relaxation and reduce stress. Increasing blood flow can also help to increase tissue elasticity by rising muscle temperature. Increased tissue elasticity reduces tension and prevent muscular knots from forming. Reduction in tension and prevention of muscular knots reduces stress.

Techniques are used to reduce stress

- Deep Strokes
- Trigger Pointing
- Lymphatic drainage

Deep strokes are regularly used to reduce stress. Deep strokes involve using a firm pressure to get deep within muscle tissues. A lot of muscle stress can often come from deeper tissues as well as superficial. Stress located deeper within muscle tissues can cause increased pain and restricted movement. Deep strokes increase muscle temperature to increase tissue elasticity. Increasing tissue elasticity, loosens muscles and reduces stress and tension. Reduction of stress within muscles also decreases pain and increases movement.

Trigger pointing is an effective technique used to reduce stress. A trigger point is found in the centre of a muscle fibre. Trigger points are a buildup of stress and tension that form muscular knots. Trigger points can cause referred pain, headaches and can increase mental stress. Fingers and thumbs are used during trigger pointing to apply a firm pressure. As the pressure is applied an ischemic reaction occurs. An ischemic reaction is where blood flow is restricted to an area and then increases when pressure is released. Before the pressure is released, the pressure applied will start to soften, creating a numbing

sensation. When the numbing sensation has occurred, more pressure can be applied depending on how deep or how big the trigger point is or the pressure can be released. Softening and numbing the trigger point reduces pain and headaches and relieves both mental and physical stress.

Stress can be reduced through **lymphatic drainage**. Lymphatic drainage involves the stimulation of the lymphatic system to remove metabolic wastes more efficiently. A buildup of metabolic wastes can occur after an injury, surgery or over use of a muscle. Metabolic wastes increase muscular fatigue and weakness and can result in swelling and pain. Swelling, muscular fatigue and muscular weakness can restrict movement and prevent injuries from healing. Restricting movement and preventing healing can increase mental stress as a person can become frustrated not being able to use the area of the body properly or returning to their exercise or sport. A massage stimulates the lymphatic system. A variety of long, deep strokes are used to flush out the metabolic wastes from the body and replace them with healthy oxygen and nutrients. Flushing metabolic wastes from the body more efficiently through lymphatic drainage reduces swelling, pain and restriction. Decreasing swelling pain and restriction reduces mental stress.

The situations most commonly helped through reduced stress include:

- Acute Pain
- Post Injury
- Relaxation

The most common situations reduced stress through massage can help include acute pain, post injury and relaxation.

Acute pain can be decreased when stress is reduced. Both physical and mental stress can increase pain. Physical stress can restrict movement and create a build-up of tension. Mental stress occurs when there is already pain in the body. A stress hormone called cortisol is released in response to pain, further increasing pain. The more pain increases, the more stress increases which will in turn keep increasing the pain levels a massage aims to increase both muscle relaxation and mental relaxation. Muscles are encouraged to relax as an increase in temperature improves the muscle flexibility and range of movement. A massage will also try to flush the cortisol out of the body in order to reduce stress levels and decrease pain.

Reduced stress can help **post injury**. After an injury, conditions such as swelling, muscle fatigue and muscle weakness can arise. Stress can increase due to the inability to return to exercise and sport or due to the pain. A massage helps to encourage relaxation psychologically. Relaxation increases psychologically as the level of positive hormones increase. Positive hormones include endorphins, serotonin and dopamine. Increasing positive hormones can give person a sense of well-being as well as a positive frame of mind and "happy mood". Giving a sense of well-being and putting them in a positive frame of mind helps to reduce stress. Reducing stress increases healing time allowing a person to return to sport more quickly. Allowing a person to return to sport more quickly will reduce stress further.

Relaxation can be increased when stress is reduced. When stress levels are high both physically and mentally, relaxation is prevented. Muscle become tense meaning they stay in the state of contraction, and the pain created by tension can cause stress and frustration. A massage aims to relieve muscle tension. Friction is created between the skin and fingers during a massage, encouraging blood flow to increase. Increasing blood flow results in muscle temperature rising. Tissue elasticity increases when temperature rises, allowing muscle relaxation. Relaxation of muscles allows mental relaxation to also increase due to an increase in movement and decrease in pain.

Physiological effects of massage to reduce stress

A variety of physiological effects occur during a massage to help reduce stress. The most common physiological effects that occur include:

- Increased endorphines, serotonin, dopamine
- Decreased cortisol

The physiological effects that most commonly occur during a massage to help reduce stress include increased endorphins, serotonin and dopamine, decreased cortisol and increased tissue elasticity.

An increase in endorphins, serotonin and dopamine occurs during a massage to reduce stress. Endorphins, serotonin and dopamine are neurotransmitters released by stimulation of the autonomic system. Endorphins are responsible for relieving anxiety, serotonin prevents depression and gives a sense of well-being and dopamine increases motivation and prevents self-doubt. When the body lacks the positive hormones endorphins, serotonin and dopamine, a person can become stressed, anxious and can often have a feeling of loneliness. A massage stimulates the autonomic system, encouraging the release of the positive hormones. Increasing the level of positive hormones within the body, reduces stress and anxiety and can improve a person's overall mood.

Stress is reduced when a decrease in cortisol occurs. Cortisol is a negative hormone released from the adrenal gland when the hypothalamus had been stimulated. The adrenal gland is located on top of the kidneys and the hypothalamus is part of the brain. Cortisol is released into the blood flow and is transported around the body. Cortisol increases stress, anxiety and depression but is also responsible for the "fight or flight" response. When too much cortisol is released in response to factors such as pain, stress levels increase and the immune system becomes suppressed. A massage aims to flush out the cortisol from the blood flow and replace it with positive hormone endorphins, serotonin and dopamine. Replacing cortisol with positive hormones decreases stress and increases relaxation.

Yoga

Yoga, meditation, and other mind-body practices train your body and mind to be able to cope with stress better and improve overall health and well-being. In a national survey, over 85% of people who did yoga reported that it helped them relieve stress. Exercise is a very useful way to relieve stress, but yoga is different from spinning class or weight-lifting in that it powerfully combines both physical fitness with an underlying philosophy of self-compassion and awareness.

One of the main concepts in yoga is being non-judgmental toward both yourself and others, which is a powerful tool for stress relief since much of our stress comes from us being hard on ourselves or frustrated with others. A fundamental principle of yoga is that your body and mind are one and connected. Stress in one domain will affect the other and vice versa. Many of us live primarily in either our mind or our body, which creates imbalance and even a lack of awareness.

Yoga also trains your counter-stress response system called the parasympathetic nervous system. With regular yoga practice, your chronic daytime stress hormone levels drop and your heart rate variability increases, which is measure of your ability to tolerate stress. This has been shown to improve even after a few sessions of yoga.

Techniques

1. Use your breath.

Breath is key to connect with your body and turn down the dial of stress. Start with learning Ujjayi breath (a.k.a. Ocean Breath) and use it in each pose. Take a deep slow breath through your nose and exhale through your nose while constricting the back of your throat in the —hal shape, but keep your mouth closed. Your breath should be loud enough that someone next to you could hear it and should sound like the waves of the ocean or like Darth Vader from Star Wars.

Try a calming breath called Alternate Nostril Breathing.

2. Here are **yoga poses for stress relief. Use your Ujjayi breath in each pose.**

- Child's Pose
- Standing Forward Bend
- Low Lunge Pose
- Yogi Squat / Garland Pose
- Fierce Pose
- Lizard Pose

- Bound Angle Pose
- Legs Up the Wall
- Modified Legs Up the Wall using a chair

3. Take 15 minutes a day to do a guided meditation.

Meditation is an important part of yoga and has been shown to effectively reduce stress. Try a short guided meditation to unwind at the end of a stressful day:

4. Practice RAIN.

Tara Brach, a psychologist and meditation teacher, describes this acronym RAIN-- a mindfulness tool to help you deal with stress and cope with difficult situations:

- R – Recognize what is happening
- A – Allow life to be just as it is
- I – Investigate inner experience with kindness
- N – Non-Identification—the realization or awareness that we are not defined or limited by our emotions or stories.

5. Aim to be kind to yourself.

Kindness and positive emotions protect and cushion you from the burdens of stress and have been shown to improve physical health and depression.

It's really easy to learn to be hard on ourselves, so unlearning that self-judgment can be difficult but worthwhile. Being self-compassionate doesn't come naturally for most people, so it takes concerted practice and intention every day.

UNIT-5

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

Occupational Stress

Occupational stress is the negative psychological and physical effects an employee experiences due to the responsibilities, environment, or other pressures of the workplace.

Here are five common types of workplace stress:

- **New Job Stress:** New employees can easily feel overwhelmed during the onboarding process. They have to simultaneously learn about their job responsibilities, build relationships with their coworkers, and acclimate to a new company culture, all while trying to perform at a high level to make a good first impression.
- **Acute Stress:** This is situational and is caused by passing issues such as an upcoming deadline or a big presentation. Usually, acute stress dissipates as soon as the stressful event is over.
- **Workplace Conflict Stress:** Workplace conflict can be caused by disagreements on business decisions or personality clashes. It can manifest as gossip or bullying which can have harmful effects on your employees' mental health. Other consequences include decreased productivity and increased absenteeism.
- **Fear-Based Stress:** Situations that threaten employees' job security can make it difficult for them to perform well. Examples include potential layoffs, a difficult relationship with their boss, or added responsibilities that they were not prepared for.
- **Burnout:** Employees experience burnout when they feel physically and emotionally exhausted from work for an extended period, hindering their efficacy. Burnout can be caused by different factors such as being on an understaffed team or consistently having unreasonable deadlines.

Taking steps to manage occupational stress

Track your stressors.

Keep a journal for a week or two to identify which situations create the most stress and how you respond to them. Record your thoughts, feelings, and information about the environment, including the people and circumstances involved, the physical setting, and how you reacted. Did you raise your voice? Get a snack from the vending machine? Go for a walk? Taking notes can help you find patterns among your stressors and your reactions to them.

Develop healthy responses.

Instead of attempting to fight stress with fast food or alcohol, do best to make healthy choices when people feel the tension rise. Exercise is a great stress-buster. Yoga can be an excellent choice, but any form of physical activity is beneficial. Also make time for hobbies and favorite activities. Whether it's reading a novel, going to concerts, or playing games with your family, make sure to set aside time for the things that bring you pleasure. Getting enough good-quality sleep is also important for effective stress management. Build healthy sleep habits by limiting your caffeine intake late in the day and minimizing stimulating activities, such as computer and television use, at night.

Establish boundaries.

In today's digital world, it's easy to feel pressure to be available 24 hours a day. Establish some work-life boundaries. That might mean making a rule not to check email from home in the evening, or not answering the phone during dinner. Although people have different preferences when it comes to how much they blend their work and home life, creating some clear boundaries between these realms can reduce the potential for work-life conflict and the stress that goes with it.

Take time to recharge.

To avoid the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout, we need time to replenish and return to our pre-stress level of functioning. This recovery process requires “switching off” from work by having periods of time when you are neither engaging in work-related activities, nor thinking about work. That’s why it’s critical that you disconnect from time to time, in a way that fits your needs and preferences. Don’t let your vacation days go to waste. When possible, take time off to relax and unwind, so you come back to work feeling reinvigorated and ready to perform at your best. When you’re not able to take time off, get a quick boost by turning off your smartphone and focusing your attention on nonwork activities for a while.

Learn how to relax.

Techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, and mindfulness (a state in which you actively observe present experiences and thoughts without judging them) can help melt away stress. Start by taking a few minutes each day to focus on a simple activity like breathing, walking, or enjoying a meal. The skill of being able to focus purposefully on a single activity without distraction will get stronger with practice and you’ll find that you can apply it to many different aspects of your life.

Talk to your supervisor.

Employee health has been linked to productivity at work, so your boss has an incentive to create a work environment that promotes employee well-being. Start by having an open conversation with your supervisor. The purpose of this isn’t to lay out a list of complaints, but rather to come up with an effective plan for managing the stressors you’ve identified, so you can perform at your best on the job. While some parts of the plan may be designed to help you improve your skills in areas such as time management, other elements might include identifying employer-sponsored wellness resources you can tap into, clarifying what’s expected of you, getting necessary resources or support from colleagues, enriching your job to include more challenging or meaningful tasks, or making changes to your physical workspace to make it more comfortable and reduce strain.

Get some support.

Accepting help from trusted friends and family members can improve your ability to manage stress. Your employer may also have stress management resources available through an employee assistance program, including online information, available counseling, and referral to mental health professionals, if needed. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by work stress, you may want to talk to a psychologist, who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behavior.

Major Causes of Occupational Stress

While the sources of occupational stress can vary from person to person, employees of all organizations—regardless of how big or how small they may be—can be affected by occupational stress.

Some common examples of occupational stressors include:

- Strict company policies and protocols
- Performance expectations that far surpass an employee’s training and abilities
- Little to no occupational guidance or direction
- Being overworked
- Limited opportunities for professional and personal growth
- Poor time management
- Conflicts between team members or different departments
- Micromanagement and mismanagement
- Lack of support from their HR department
- Personal, situational, or professional issues
- Bullying or discrimination
- Loss of wages, pay cuts, or benefits
- Regular threats of termination

Regardless of the cause, the effects of occupational stress can be monumentally damaging to the productivity and overall well-being of the employee—in both their professional and personal life.

Employees may not feel comfortable voicing that they're burned out, so keep an eye out for these common symptoms:

- Lacking the motivation to complete basic job requirements
- Missing deadlines
- Feeling inferior to co-workers
- Inability to perform or communicate in a productive manner
- Frequent feelings of general stress, chaos, and confusion
- Burnout
- Sleep deprivation and irritability
- Abnormal feelings of anxiety, depression, hopelessness, helplessness, dejection, and failure

Role of work place environment

All the following issues have been identified as potential stressors at workplaces. A risk management approach will identify which ones exist in your own workplace and what causes them. Stressors can include:

- organisation culture
- bad management practices
- job content and demands
- physical work environment
- relationships at work
- change management
- lack of support
- role conflict
- trauma.

Causes of work-related stress

Some of the factors that commonly cause work-related stress include:

- long hours
- heavy workload
- changes within the organisation
- tight deadlines
- changes to duties
- job insecurity
- lack of autonomy
- boring work
- Insufficient skills for the job
- over-supervision
- inadequate working environment
- lack of proper resources
- lack of equipment
- few promotional opportunities
- harassment
- discrimination
- poor relationships with colleagues or bosses
- crisis incidents, such as an armed hold-up or workplace death.

Benefits of preventing stress in the workplace

The benefits of preventing stress in the workplace include:

- reduced symptoms of poor mental and physical health
- fewer injuries, less illness and lost time

- reduced sick leave usage, absences and staff turnover
- increased productivity
- greater job satisfaction
- increased work engagement
- reduced costs to the employer
- improved employee health and community wellbeing.

Symptoms of work-related stress

The signs or symptoms of work-related stress can be physical, psychological and behavioural.

Physical symptoms include:

- fatigue
- muscular tension
- headaches
- heart palpitations
- sleeping difficulties, such as insomnia
- gastrointestinal upsets, such as diarrhoea or constipation
- dermatological disorders.

Psychological symptoms include:

- depression
- anxiety
- discouragement
- irritability
- pessimism
- feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to cope
- cognitive difficulties, such as a reduced ability to concentrate or make decisions.

Behavioural symptoms include:

- an increase in sick days or absenteeism
- aggression
- diminished creativity and initiative
- a drop in work performance
- problems with interpersonal relationships
- mood swings and irritability
- lower tolerance of frustration and impatience
- disinterest
- isolation.

Five major work stress models

There are a lot of work stress models to reflect the work stress complexity. There are five popular models have been applied to measure the work stress: cognitive-behavioural, person environment fit, emotional overload, equity theory and demand-support-control.

The cognitive-behavioural

According to Lazarus & Folkman's stress experience is an individual phenomenon and a cognitive process. The cognitive-behavioural model proposed a, transaction" concept where stress comes from the relationship between the inherent aspects of a person and the environment. There is nothing as stressor by itself, but if a stimulus is perceived as stressor then there is a stressor. This theory explains the varying stress responses of people when they faced with similar scenarios and similar scenarios at different situations.

Person-environment theory

According to the person-environment fit theory, where the poor person-environment fit occurs, there the person experience role ambiguity, role conflict and work overload. Stress results from the level of

fit among the person and the environment. There are three distinctions related to person– environment fit. The first distinction is between the person and the environment. It is the precondition of the person–environment fit conceptualization. The next distinction is among the subjective and objective illustration of the person and the environment. It is the subjective fit concept, where the perception of themselves and the perception of the environment may vary from person to person. This perception causes work stress. The last distinction focuses on two elements of fit. Firstly, there needs, the needs-supplies element. Here the needs are explained as the natural psychological and biological needs of the person. The supplies are explained as the job rewards that meet the needs of the person. The supplies could be social, financial or the opportunity to achieve. Secondly, there is the abilities- demands element. This element describes the fit between the job demands and the person’s abilities to meet those demands (Edwards et al. 1999). Demands consist of qualitative and quantitative features of the work. Ability refers to the energy, skills and time required in order to achieve the demands.

The emotional overload

The model of emotional overload explained three aspects of burnout: reduced personal accomplishment, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. The stress component of emotional exhaustion refers to being exhausted of emotional resources. Interpersonal relations correlated to depersonalization and personal achievement with self-evaluation. Burnout is supposed to happen in human service professions such as health care and education. The studies have identified that burnout can be occurred in a range of work scenarios, especially in the nursing profession as emotional aspects are involved.

Equity theory

Equity theory of work stress is a popular social exchange theory. The model believes that the people have a tendency to assess their relationships. According to the theory the person intends to seek equity when he/she is in another relationship. The theory assumes that the person will feel that a relationship is equitable when the person perceives the similar ratio of inputs and outcomes from different relationships. The theory is appropriate to interpersonal relationships and to employee-employer relationships as well. If there is an unbalanced relationship, the distress will be happening. This distress will be comparable to the perceived inequity degree.

The demand–control–support theory

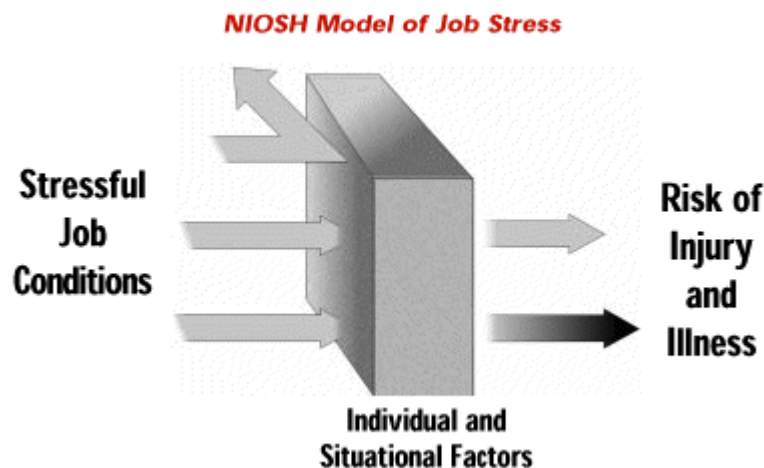
The demand–control–support model proposes that the interaction between the work demand perception, perceived degree of support from workers and the perception of control influence the development of work stress. The concept of control is referred as the degree of control of workers over their work. Support is categorized as social-emotional support and instrumental support. The degree of social-emotional integration and mutual reliance between employees, supervisors, and others are accounted in social-emotional support. The extra assistance or resources given by the colleagues and supervisors is accounted as Instrumental support. Support at work place can promote general well-being, quality of work life and active coping and act as a buffer. The high risk of work stress will be carried by high demand, low control and low support. The demand–control–support model has suggestions for job design in order to develop support and control with a vision to increase worker productivity and engagement

NIOSH APPROACH TO JOB STRESS

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) favors the view that working conditions play a primary role in causing job stress. However, the role of individual factors should not be ignored. According to NIOSH, exposure to stressful working conditions (called job stressors) can have a direct influence on worker safety and health. Individual and other situational factors can intervene to strengthen or weaken this influence.

For example, a person’s need to care for his/her ill mother, a death in the family, marital or family strife are examples of individual or situational factors that may intensify the effects of stressful working conditions. Ways to reduce the effects of stressful working conditions from such individual and situational factors include the following:

- Balance between work and family or personal life
- A support network of friends and coworkers
- A relaxed and positive outlook



Stressful working conditions can influence worker safety and health, but individual and situational factors can intervene to increase or decrease the risk of occupational injuries and illnesses.

Examples of job conditions that may lead to stress include the following:

- 1. The Design of Tasks:** Heavy workload, infrequent rest breaks, long work hours and shift work; hectic and routine tasks that have little inherent meaning, do not utilize workers' skills, and provide little sense of control.
- 2. Management Style:** Lack of participation by workers in decision-making, poor communication in the organization, and lack of family-friendly policies.
- 3. Interpersonal Relationships:** Poor social environment and lack of support or help from coworkers and supervisors.
- 4. Work Roles:** Conflicting or uncertain job expectations or too much responsibility.
- 5. Career Concerns:** Job insecurity and lack of opportunity for growth, advancement, or promotion; rapid changes for which workers are unprepared.
- 6. Environmental Conditions:** Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions such as crowding, noise, air pollution, or ergonomic problems.

JOB STRESS AND HEALTH

Stress can also have a negative impact on a person's well-being. Our bodies are designed with a set of automatic responses to deal with stress. Stress sets off an alarm in the brain, which responds by preparing the body for defensive action. The nervous system is aroused and hormones are released to sharpen the senses, quicken the pulse, deepen respiration, and tense the muscles. This response (sometimes called the fight or flight response) is important because it helps us defend against threatening situations. Everyone responds in much the same way, regardless of whether the stressful situation is at work or home. The body's pre-programmed response is called "Generalized Stress Response" and includes the following:

- Increased blood pressure
- Increased metabolism (e.g., faster heartbeat, faster respiration)
- Decrease in protein synthesis, intestinal movement (digestion), immune and allergic response systems
- Increased cholesterol and fatty acids in blood for energy production systems
- Localized inflammation (redness, swelling, heat and pain)

- Faster blood clotting
- Increased production of blood sugar for energy
- Increased stomach acids

Short-lived or infrequent episodes of stress pose little risk. But when stressful situations go unresolved, the body is kept in a constant state of activation, which increases the rate of wear and tear to biological systems. Ultimately, fatigue or damage results, and the ability of the body to repair and defend itself can become seriously compromised. As a result, the risk of injury or disease escalates.

Early warning signs of job stress are usually easy to recognize which include headaches, sleep disturbances, difficulty in concentrating, short temper, upset stomach, job dissatisfaction, and low morale. But the effects of job stress on chronic diseases are more difficult to see because chronic diseases take a long time to develop and can be influenced by many factors other than stress. None-the-less, evidence suggests that stress plays a role in several types of chronic health problems as indicated below.

- **Cardiovascular Disease:** Many studies suggest that psychologically demanding jobs that allow employees little control over the work process increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.
- **Musculoskeletal Disorders:** Research by NIOSH and many other organizations suggest that job stress increases the risk for development of back and upper-extremity musculoskeletal disorders.
- **Psychological Disorders:** Several studies suggest that difference in rates of mental health problems (such as depression and burnout) for various occupations are due partly to differences in job stress levels.
- **Workplace Injury:** Although more study is needed, there is growing concern that stressful working conditions interfere with safe work practices and set the stage for injuries at work.
- **Suicide, Cancer, Ulcers, and Impaired Immune Function:** Some studies suggest a relationship between stressful working conditions and these health problems.

STRESS, HEALTH, AND PRODUCTIVITY

Some employers assume that stressful working conditions are a necessary evil to remain productive and profitable in today's economy. However, research findings challenge this belief. Studies show that stressful working conditions are actually associated with increased absenteeism, tardiness, and intentions by workers to quit their jobs - all of which have a negative effect on the bottom line.

According to a 2001 report by the American Institute of Stress (AIS), job-related stress costs the U.S. industry \$300 billion annually, as assessed by absenteeism, diminished productivity, employee turnover, direct medical costs, compensation claims, and legal and insurance fees. AIS estimates that one million workers are absent on an average workday because of stress-related complaints.

Studies of so-called healthy organizations suggest that policies benefiting worker health also benefit the bottom line. A healthy organization is defined as one that has low rates of illness, injury, and disability in its workforce and is also competitive in the marketplace. Research conducted by NIOSH has identified organizational characteristics associated with both healthy, low-stress work, and high levels of productivity. Examples of these characteristics include the following:

- Recognition of employees for good work performance.
- Opportunities for career development.
- An organizational culture that values the individual worker.
- Management actions that is consistent with organizational values.

PREVENTING STRESS AT WORK

Job stress can be a significant causal factor to poor health and/or organizational failures, including workplace accidents. Preventing stress at works involves a comprehensive approach, which includes stress management and organizational change.

College Stress

College students commonly experience stress because of increased responsibilities, a lack of good time management, changes in eating and sleeping habits, and not taking enough breaks for self-care. Transitioning to college can be a source of stress for most first-year students. Some predictable stressful times include studying for exams, competing for admissions or internships, and trying to master large amounts of content in small amounts of time. Sudden changes, unexpected challenges, or traumatic events can be unpredictable sources of stress. Students are expected to make decisions about their careers and academic life and foster new meaningful relationships in their time in college. Take a moment to think about the things in your life that may be causing you stress so that you can better address it effectively.

Effect of college stress

Small amounts of stress for short periods of time can be healthy, as good stress can help us motivate ourselves to prepare for exams or make positive changes in our lives. However, stress becomes harmful when it occurs for too long or is chronic—when our bodies don't have a clear indication of when to return to normal functioning. Chronic high stress has several negative affects on our bodies and brains. It can:

- interfere with studying or class attendance
- interfere with cognitive processes such as attention and concentration
- contribute to major health issues such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and anxiety.

Tips to reduce and manage stress

Manage your time

Research shows that students who manage their time are less likely to feel stressed. Time management can be especially difficult when living away from home for the first time, when studying from home, or when juggling many roles and responsibilities at the same time. Use a weekly planner, priorities chart, or semester-at-a-glance

Engage in mindful leisurely activities

We all have personal needs that need to be met and leisurely activities that we enjoy (eating, sleeping, relaxing, reading, socializing). Taking a break can be as simple as grabbing a snack, going for a walk around campus or around your neighborhood, meeting a friend for lunch, or catching up with a friend on a video call.

Plan for the worst case scenario

When you are able to predict what will happen in the future, you are better able to put in supports to help you manage when the 'worst case' scenario happens. For example, if you feel as though you might be failing a class (worst case scenario), you can talk to your professor about receiving an incomplete, talk to academic advising to see how that affects your grade, create a study schedule to help yourself catch up, and see a peer tutor to support you with the material. If you are dealing with a sudden change or difficult situation that is impacting your learning, consider reaching out to your professor, reaching out to your friends and family, or making an appointment with an Academic Coach at the Learning Center.

Engage in self-care and self-compassion

We are often harder on ourselves when we are unsuccessful or when things get challenging. One way to combat stress is to engage in self-compassion. Extend the same kindness you would to a friend to yourself. Know that you do deserve to take care of yourself. Be aware of when you are distressed and create a self-care plan for when you are. Integrating leisure and social activities is a great way to take care of yourself. You can also do simple relaxation exercises—such as deep breathing—multiple times during the day to help alleviate some stress.

Write it out!

Research suggests that when you are feeling stressed, rather than avoid the uncomfortable feeling, it is better for you to address it by writing about it. Studies show that individuals who write out the causes of their stress, thoughts, and emotions tend to do better academically. To do this activity effectively it is recommended that you write everything you are feeling with no hesitation or worry.

Regarding to health

Healthy eating. The majority of the time tries to choose fresh whole foods, and limit your intake of fried, processed, and fast foods.

Hydration. Drink plenty of water, and be careful not to overdo it with caffeine.

Physical activity. Knowing how to properly work out and making time for it can be challenging. However, there are many ways to engage in physical activity—going to the gym, attending fitness classes, swimming laps, jogging, playing basketball or another sport you enjoy, or doing yoga. You can also add in some simple modifications to your day to increase physical activity without having to go to the gym or play a sport. Try walking rather than taking the bus, getting off a bus early and walking the rest of the way, using stairs rather than elevators, biking, parking farther in a parking lot, etc. There are also fun recreational activities such as gardening, dancing, hiking, etc that you can engage in.

Restful sleep. Sleep is often the first habit that is compromised when students enter college. However, time and time again research supports the importance of sleep—for memory consolidation and recall, increasing learning abilities, energy conservation, muscle growth, and tissue repair, just to name a few. Long-term sleep deprivation is associated with many illnesses and overall poor health and mental health. To work and live at your optimal level each day, build enough time into your schedule for 7-9 hours of sleep every night and protect and prioritize that time.

Create SMART goals

Often, students create grandiose goals that are unattainable. Use the classic SMART goals mnemonic when framing your goals: make sure they are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound to maximize the possibility that you'll complete them.

Use problem-solving techniques

Often, students find themselves in situations where they feel stuck. When a problem arises, they have a difficult time solving it. Students often ruminate about problems, which causes more stress and anxiety. Rather than engaging in negative thinking patterns, it is more helpful to strategically approach problems. This worksheet can help guide you through solving problems. While problem solving, focus on what you can and cannot control. Creating goals around things you can control will allow you accomplish more, while thinking or worrying about things you cannot control takes away energy you need.

Try relaxation techniques

While in the previous tips we talk more about preventing stress, using relaxation techniques will help calm you when you are actively stressed. Studies show that engaging in mindfulness significantly helps reduce stress. The following two are examples of mindfulness relaxation techniques that can help calm you when you are stressed:

- Diaphragmatic Breathing
- Love and Kindness Meditation

These techniques are especially helpful during exam times.

Make connections

Creating meaningful connections with other people fosters overall wellbeing. Two ways to do this is by providing service to others and creating a supportive network. Humans are inherently social; we need connectedness to survive and thrive. For this particular reason, peer support and self-help are often effective. There is great power in knowing that you are not alone. Everyone needs a supportive

person with whom they can reach out to during the good and bad times. There are many ways to connect with your peers, whether you choose to meet in person, make time to schedule a video chat, or play online games together. Belonging to a community is essential to handling stress.

Visit CAPS

CAPS refers to Counseling and Psychological services, which is an on-campus services for students. They provide a variety of mental health services, and they specialize in helping college students.

Family stress

Stress caused by loved ones can be tough. Even though we love them, children, elderly parents, and visiting relatives can leave us frazzled.

The pandemic's impact on family routines, from virtual schooling to child care disruptions, has left parents more stressed. Even without additional burdens, balancing the demands of work and family life, caring for an older parent, or financial troubles can feel overwhelming.

Family stress can happen when there are more stressors in family members' lives than they can handle. Family stress can be caused by many stressful events that build on each other or a single high-stress circumstance. These may occur either inside or outside the family.

Family stress can show up as:

- arguments
- missed commitments
- illness

Family stress examples

Parenting has always been a high-stress job. Add the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on children and adults, and parenting has become more stressful than ever.

Some examples of situations that can cause stress include:

- trying to balance work and parenting
- caring for a new baby while trying to maintain previous responsibilities
- relationship conflict
- the time and scheduling burden of driving children to school, activities, and more
- worrying about your child's safety in public settings
- social isolation
- children's education disruption
- child care disruption
- death or illness of a loved one
- visiting or hosting relatives

The impact of stress on families

A family is like an electrical outlet that short-circuits when it's overloaded. Families under too much stress for a long time can develop long-term dysfunctional behavior patterns. Other results of unaddressed stress may include:

- **Arguments:** This is one of the first effects of stress, commonly fueled by overloaded emotions and poor communication.
- **Health problems:** Exhaustion or burnout in busy, conflicting schedules can build and cause both physical and mental illness.
- **Substance overuse:** Increased dependence on food, alcohol, or drugs may occur due to stress.
- **Family discord:** Lasting feuds or estrangement can occur among family members, especially those who don't live together.

- **Difficulties outside the home:** New challenges may arise at school or home, either with productivity or behavior.

Many family scenarios that signal family stress may not seem related to stress. If your child starts acting out at school, stress may not be the first thing that comes to mind as its cause, but it could be the main factor.

Causes of family stress

Some of the most common causes of family stress include:

- child discipline
- financial challenges
- work-life balance
- overloaded schedules
- divorce or separation
- serious illness, both physical and mental
- death of a loved one
- birth of a child
- stress at work
- parenting responsibilities
- caregiving for another family member

Stress management for families

For parents: Parenting can be especially stressful, but to ease tension, it may be helpful to try:

- adjusting your priorities and standards
- avoiding taking on unnecessary duties
- finding out where you are on the parental stress scale
- practicing meditation or relaxation exercises
- accepting help that's offered or hire outside help if you can afford it
- taking advice from people whose opinions you trust
- taking care of yourself first
- getting ahead by preparing as much as possible for the following day
- keeping communicating with your children, and taking the time to ease their worries

For kids: Some helpful ways kids and teens can ease stress might be:

- talking about what's troubling you
- exercising every day
- eating nutritious foods, like protein and vegetables
- sticking to a daily routine
- getting enough sleep

For family relative: Family dynamics can be complex and stressful at times.

When you visit relatives, consider:

- planning your visit so that you don't stay too long
- having reasonable responses prepared for potentially stressful conversations
- communicating to children that it's important to behave well
- going for a walk or taking a nap if you get upset

When relatives visit you, try:

- planning your sleeping arrangements, meals, and budgeting in advance
- accepting help with cooking and cleaning
- stocking the kitchen with food that's easy to prepare

- keeping alcohol consumption to a minimum, especially if you tend to argue

For caregiver

Caregiving is an important — but often stressful — role. Try these tips for managing caregiver stress in your family:

- asking for and accepting help when you need it
- taking the training you need to help your loved one
- making time to take breaks every day
- practicing self-care
- visiting friends and family outside the house, even on Zoom, for a pick-me-up