

LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



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Life Skills

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STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Introduction

Many people use the word "stress" to describe how they feel that their life's demands are becoming too much for them to handle. The capacity to handle stress differs throughout individuals. However, the truth is that stress and job go hand in hand. Everyone experiences stress in their line of work. Given that stress is defined as a sensation of strain, either bodily or emotional, in response to a challenging circumstance, various persons will find different situations to be stressful. A person can take charge of their future if they have the correct mindset, abilities, and information. (Alex, 2008)

Stress has become an unavoidable companion in the fast-paced, demanding world of modern living. The difficulties one faces in life, whether at job or in personal relationships, can frequently result in elevated stress levels. Unmanaged stress can have negative impacts on one's physical and mental health. To successfully sail the rapids of modern life, it is therefore essential to employ efficient stress management techniques.

Stress

Any kind of change that puts strain on one's body, mind, or emotions is referred to as stress. The body's response to everything that needs to be handled or addressed to is stress. (Elizabeth Scott, 2022). Stress is the body's and mind's reaction to an imagined danger or difficulty. It is the body's normal response to circumstances or occurrences that call for adaptation or action. Both happy and negative experiences can cause stress, which can take many different forms.



Stress is the physical deterioration that occurs when a person adjusts to their surroundings. It is the result of mental pressure from both inside and outside the body, causing emotional, physical, and psychological repercussions. The scientific idea of stress has suffered from being both too well-known and too poorly understood. Since stress is often ignored, it is in fact a proxy murderer. (Alex, 2008)

Stress is the term used to describe the reaction that arises when a person feels that the demands made of them are greater than their capacity to meet those demands.

The "stress response" or "fight or flight" response is a physiological and psychological reaction that is triggered when someone perceives a threat or challenge. Stress chemicals like cortisol and adrenaline are released during this reaction to get the body ready to handle the perceived threat. In this case, prolonged or severe stress can be harmful to one's physical and emotional well-being. Therefore, Stress is characterised as an individual's response—physical, mental, and emotional—to a particular stimulus, also referred to as a "stressor." Our bodies react to demands of any kind by producing stress. Stressors include loud noises, obnoxious people, a speeding car, a job, money problems, and family issues. Stress can arise from any circumstance. Sujaritha and others (2002)

Stress Factors

Different people experience stress in different ways depending on their coping strategies, personalities, and life situations. Stress can originate from a variety of sources. These are a few typical stressors.

Major change in life

Stress can arise from changes in one's life, both positive and negative.

Daily schedules

One's vitality is exhausted by daily tasks like commuting through rush hour traffic or finishing a significant project on time. Daily routines cause one to grow accustomed to them and easily overlook their cumulative effects.

Unrealistic expectations for oneself

While realistic expectations can cause one to set themselves up for failure and undermine their self-esteem, positive self-expectations inspire people to achieve their goals

Workplace

Stress can be exacerbated by demanding jobs, an overwhelming workload, close deadlines, and a lack of control over one's work. Significant causes may include job uncertainty and conflict with managers or colleagues.

Life changes

Significant life transitions like marriage, divorce, moving, or losing a loved one can be stressful. Even happy occasions, like getting a new job or having a child, can cause stress.

Financial pressure

Stressful situations involving money can include debt, unemployment, or unstable finances. Stress related to money is exacerbated by worries about living expenses or unforeseen costs.

Health issues

Chronic illnesses or personal health issues, along with worries about loved ones' well-being, can be extremely stressful. The strain is increased by medical procedures, doctor appointments, and the unpredictability of health issues.

Personal Expectations

Stress can be brought on by having unreasonable expectations for oneself or by feeling under pressure to live up to social norms. Two common contributors are the fear of failing and perfectionism.

Environment

Chronic stress can be exacerbated by living in a stressful environment, such as a high-crime or naturally disaster-prone location.

Kinds of Stress

Stress can be categorized into various types based on its duration, intensity, and source. Here are some common types of stress. They are

Eustress

The "good" or "positive" stress that arises in enjoyable environment is known as eustress. Unexpectedly, there are some pressures that can be beneficial. This kind of stress is regarded as constructive and inspiring. Examples are the excitement that comes with buying a new house, getting married, or feeling great after working out. A person can become more self-assured, capable, and driven with eustress. Though this kind of stress is sometimes disregarded when discussing stress management, an individual can treat "distress" more skilfully with the aid of comprehensible, constructive coping strategies. It improves performance and fosters personal development.

Distress

Stress that is perceived as dangerous, strange, unfair, or painful is called distress, or the "bad" kind of stress. Examples include losing one's job, experiencing a catastrophic injury, a long-term illness, divorce, depression, and a catastrophic injury. (Sujaritha and others, 2002)

Acute strain

The most prevalent and typical kind of stress is acute stress. It is the outcome of transient shocks. It fades rapidly after being fairly intense (Alex, 2008). It happens in reaction to certain occasions or circumstances, including an impending deadline at work, an almost-accident in traffic, or an unexpected fight. The body goes into "fight or flight" mode, but after the stressor is eliminated or dealt with, the body goes back to normal.

Chronic stress

Chronic stress is defined as long-term tension brought on by persistent issues that don't seem to go away (Alex, 2008). Stressors that are continuous and unyielding and last for a long time cause chronic stress. Long-term health problems, ongoing work-related challenges, and financial difficulties are some of the variables that may contribute to this kind of stress. Prolonged stress can lead to serious health issues, such as immune system weakness, mental health issues, and cardiovascular problems. Chronic stress poses a risk because some people just adapt to it, give up on finding answers, and lose hope. According to Alex (2008), violence, heart attacks, and suicide are all caused by chronic stress.

Episodic Acute stress

People who encounter acute stresses on a regular basis may endure acute stress episodes. These people frequently lead hectic, stressful lives that are fuelled by a sense of urgency and an inclination to take on excessive amounts of responsibility. Recurrent stressors can have a negative impact on one's health and general quality of life. Individuals who frequently go through these intense moments of stress are often tight, apprehensive, irritable, overly stimulated, and short-tempered. They might define themselves as highly anxious. According

to Alex (2008), the symptoms of prolonged over-arousal include chronic tension, headaches, migraines, stomach issues, hypertension, chest pain, and heart disease.

Traumatic stress

In reaction to a severe and frequently fatal incident, such as a violent crime, an accident, or a natural disaster, trauma stress develops. Long-term psychological effects, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), may result from it. Recovery from traumatic stress necessitates expert intervention and assistance.

Recurrent traumatic stress

When people indirectly experience another person's tragedy, they develop secondary traumatic stress disorder, commonly referred to as vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue. Professionals who are frequently exposed to the trauma of their patients or clients, such as therapists, first responders, and healthcare personnel, may be impacted by this.

Signs of Stress

Stress can take many different forms, and it can have both psychological and physical impacts. It may have a short or long duration. While both can cause a wide range of symptoms, prolonged stress can have a detrimental impact on the body over time and have long-term consequences for health. (Scott Elizabeth, 2022). Although each person's symptoms of stress are unique, some typical ones include

Physical symptoms

- ***Headaches***: Stress induced tension can lead to headaches or migraines
- ***Muscle tension***: Increased muscle tension, especially in the neck, shoulders, or jaws

- ***Fatigue:*** Feeling tired or exhausted even after sufficient rest.
- ***Sleep disturbances:*** Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or experiencing restless sleep
- ***Digestive issues:*** Stress can contribute to stomach aches, indigestion or change in bowel habits
- ***Change in appetite:*** Stress may cause overeating or loss of appetite

Emotional and Behavioural Signs

- ***Irritability:*** Increased sensitivity, impatience or a shorter temper
- ***Anxiety:*** Feeling anxious, restless or on edge
- ***Depression:*** Persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness
- ***Mood swings:*** Rapid shifts in mood or emotional states
- ***Isolation:*** Withdrawing from social activities or avoiding others
- ***Increased substance use:*** A reliance on substances like alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism.

Cognitive symptoms

- ***Difficulty concentration:*** Trouble focusing or making decisions
- ***Memory issues:*** Forgetfulness or difficulty recalling information
- ***Negative thinking:*** Pessimistic thoughts or an increased focus on the negative aspects of situations
- ***Racing thoughts:*** An overactive mind with constant thoughts and worries
- ***Poor Judgement:*** Impaired decision-making abilities

Behavioural Changes

- ***Change in work or academic performance:*** Decreased productivity or difficulties meeting responsibilities.
- ***Social withdrawal:*** Avoiding social interactions or isolating oneself
- ***Increased Agitation:*** Restlessness or heightened states of agitation
- ***Nervous habits:*** Developing new or worsening habits like nail-biting or pacing

Physical health issues

- ***Weakened immune system:*** Increased susceptibility to illnesses
- ***Cardiovascular issues:*** Elevated blood pressure or an increased risk of heart problem
- ***Skin problem:*** Stress can contribute to skin conditions such as eczema or psoriasis

Stress management tips

Managing stress is essential for maintaining overall well-being. Here are some effective stress management tips

Identify stressors

Recognise and understand the specific situation or factors that trigger stress in life. Awareness is the first step to manage stress.

Eliminate outside sources of stress

Try to avoid external stressors. If not, find strategies to deal with stress on own to keep the relationship intact. (Maggie Wooll, 2022)

Frequent physical activity

Any type of exercise has the potential to be a powerful stress reducer. Exercise releases endorphins, which are inherently uplifting hormones. One benefit of taking a quick stroll is that it might help one detach from stressful situations (Maggie Wooll, 2022).

Taking deep breaths

Breathing deeply for a short while can help reduce stress right away. Breathe deeply into stomach since shallow breathing tells body that still need to trigger a stress reaction. (Maggie Wooll, 2022)

Balanced diet

Eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains to support overall health.

Adequate sleep

Everyone should make sure that they receive a good night's sleep every day. Elevated stress levels can be attributed to sleep deprivation.

Time management

Effective time management is a crucial ability for managing stress. A person can arrive on time for meetings and fulfil deadlines more effectively by using time blocking. Make sure to account for unanticipated obstacles. Prioritize tasks and break them into smaller, manageable steps. This helps prevent feeling overwhelmed.

Mindfulness and Relaxation techniques

Try gradual muscle relaxation, deep breathing exercises, or mindfulness meditation to relax body and mind. Changing negative ideas to positive ones also helps.

Social support

Continue to have close social ties. Talk to family members or trustworthy friends about the feelings and worries.

Set Realistic Goals

Refrain from over committing. It's acceptable to turn down more work if one is feeling overburdened.

Social support

Maintain strong social connections. Share the feelings and concerns with trusted friends or family members.

Learn to say No

Try not to over commit. It's acceptable to turn down more tasks if feeling overburdened.

Limit the stimulation

Cut back on or give up using nicotine, coffee, and other stimulants, especially right before bed.

Time for hobbies

Take part in things that enjoy doing to give one's mind a rest and foster a sense of accomplishment.

Thinking positively

Positive ideas should be used to counter negative ones. Retain a positive but realistic perspective.

Seek expert assistance

If stress becomes intolerable or chronic, seek guidance from a mental health professional, such as a therapist or counsellor.

Express yourself

Look for constructive ways to communicate feelings, including writing in a diary, creating art, or speaking with a trusted friend.

Humour

Preserve sense of humour. Laughing is a fantastic way to decompress.

Self-care

Schedule self-care activities, such as reading a book, having a bath, or going outside.

Conserve time.

Finding time for oneself can be difficult, which can lead to stress and a sense of suffocation. Spending quality time with oneself and the things one enjoys is vital. (Wooll, Maggie, 2022)

Give someone you love an embrace

Surprisingly, hugging is a powerful strategy to reduce stress. It causes the production of oxytocin, also known as the "love hormone," which promotes bonding. Moreover, it lowers blood pressure and norepinephrine, the stress hormone. The relaxation response is triggered by this hormone, which facilitates rapid relaxation. (Maggie Wooll, 2022)

Refrain from multitasking.

At work, multitasking decreases effectiveness. Furthermore, it increases stress levels and increases the likelihood of making mistakes. It is less stressful and will help to get better outcomes to work on one activity at a time. (Maggie Wooll, 2022)

Conclusion

In summary, maintaining physical and mental well-being in the face of life's unavoidable obstacles requires good stress management. People can strengthen their resilience and more skilfully negotiate the challenges of contemporary life by combining positive coping

mechanisms, mindfulness practices, and lifestyle adjustments. Taking proactive steps to treat the underlying causes of stress, identifying its symptoms, and comprehending its different forms enable people to take charge of their mental health. To effectively manage stress, it is imperative to prioritize self-care, cultivate social connections, and establish adaptive coping mechanisms. In addition, getting help from a professional when required is a strength rather than weakness and can offer insightful advice on creating individualized stress-reduction plans. Effective stress management is a vital skill in a society where stress is becoming more and more common. The proverb that states prevention is vital and a holistic approach is the cornerstone of a healthy and robust existence also applies to the journey towards stress management.

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