

Stress and its Management in Indian Society

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ABSTRACT

Everyone is affected by stress and reacts to it in different ways. Stress is a way that our body responds to the demands made upon us by the environment, our relationships, and our perceptions and interpretations of those demands. We all experience both "good stress" and "bad stress." Good stress is that optimal amount of stress that results in our feeling energized and motivated to do our best work. Bad stress occurs when our coping mechanisms are overwhelmed by the stress and we do not function at our best. People experience stress in different ways and for different reasons. The reaction is based on perception of an event or situation. If a person view a situation negatively, will likely feel distressed—overwhelmed, oppressed, or out of control. Distress is the more familiar form of stress. The other form, eustress, results from a "positive" view of an event or situation, which is why it is also called "good stress. There are two major ways to cope with stress. One way is PROBLEM SOLVING. This involves trying to deal with the problem by changing the situation or getting rid of the problem. Another way of handling stress is MANAGING EMOTIONS. This involves handling the thoughts and feelings caused by the problem.

Introduction

"Stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world." Stress is a common term used by people when they encounter a problem in their life. This problem could be anything from the work environment to the death of a family member. However, when you hear someone mention that they are 'stressed out', the likelihood is that this person does not know the full extent of what stress actually is. Stress, in biological terms refers to the after effects of a person failing to respond properly to an event that has occurred in their life, whether physical or emotional. Imagine a person encountering a problem and bottling up these emotions inside without releasing them. This behaviour brings stress upon the body and gets worse with time. Stress is shown to happen in three stages. The first is an initial state of alarm which produces a

rush of adrenaline in the persons' body. The second stage is a short term 'resistance' mechanism that your body sets up to cope with the problem. The final stage is a state of exhaustion in the body.

The Three Stages of Stress

1. The Initial Alarm

Alarm is the first stage of stress. When an event occurs, the body's initial response is to set itself into an alarm state. In this state, the body will produce adrenaline and give the person a chance to either respond to the event, or hold back (otherwise known as the fight or flight response).

2. The Resistance Stage

The second stage of stress is when the body goes into a state of Resistance. This happens if there is no response to the event causing the stress. If there is no response, the body forms a

mechanism that learns to cope with the event, rather than resolve the situation. Even if it seems like the body is coping with the stressful event, its resources are gradually being drained and there will eventually come a time where the body's resistance will fade away.

3. The Exhaustion Stage The Exhaustion stage occurs when the body has used up all its resources (from coping with the stress) and can no longer behave in the manner that it normally does. This is where you will start to see the first symptoms of stress. If the situation is not taken care of, stress can deal long term damage to the body and the immune system.

Symptoms of Stress

You will know you are suffering from stress when you start to notice changes in your body. These changes/symptoms indicate that you are in the exhaustion stage of stress. The following are some of the symptoms that you may encounter when you suffer from stress.

- Muscle tension
- Loss of focus/concentration
- Headaches
- Increased heart rate
- Having a short temper
- An edgy personality
- Irritations (Rashes, Eczema etc.)
- Loss of appetite

The above are symptoms that occur when the body is in the initial period of the exhaustion stage. If the stress is not treated, it is possible for further damage to be inflicted on the body, resulting in degeneration. External features such as ulcers and sores can appear. Stress can also inflict long term illnesses to the body. Examples of these illnesses include:

- Diabetes
- Depression

- Mental health problems
- Heart/Cardiovascular problems
- Bowel/Digestive Problems

Sources of stress

The Environment

The environment can bombard you with intense and competing demands to adjust. Examples of environmental stressors include weather, noise, crowding, pollution, traffic, unsafe and substandard housing, and crime.

Social Stressors

We can experience multiple stressors arising from the demands of the different social roles we occupy, such as parent, spouse, caregiver, and employee. Some examples of social stressors include deadlines, financial problems, job interviews, presentations, disagreements, demands for your time and attention, loss of a loved one, divorce, and co-parenting.

Physiological

Situations and circumstances affecting our body can be experienced as physiological stressors. Examples of physiological stressors include rapid growth of adolescence, menopause, illness, aging, giving birth, accidents, lack of exercise, poor nutrition, and sleep disturbances.

Thoughts

Your brain interprets and perceives situations as stressful, difficult, painful, or pleasant. Some situations in life are stress provoking, but it is our thoughts that determine whether they are a problem for us.

Stress management techniques

Here are five healthy techniques that psychological research has shown to help reduce stress in the short- and long-term.

Take a break from the stressor. It may seem difficult to get away from a big work project, a crying baby or a growing credit card bill. But when you give yourself permission to step away from it, you let yourself have time to do something else, which can help you have a new perspective or practice techniques to feel less overwhelmed. It's important to not avoid your stress (those bills have to be paid sometime), but even just 20-minutes to take care of yourself is helpful.

Exercise. The research keeps growing — exercise benefits your mind just as well as your body. We keep hearing about the long-term benefits of a regular exercise routine. But even a 20-minute walk, run, swim or dance session in the midst of a stressful time can give an immediate effect that can last for several hours.

Smile and laugh. Our brains are interconnected with our emotions and facial expressions. When people are stressed, they often hold a lot of the stress in their face. So laughs or smiles can help relieve some of that tension and improve the situation.

Get social support. Call a friend, send an email. When you share your concerns or feelings with another person, it does help relieve stress. But it's

important that the person whom you talk to is someone whom you trust and whom you feel can understand and validate you. If your family is a stressor, for example, it may not alleviate your stress if you share your works woes with one of them.

Meditate. Meditation and mindful prayer help the mind and body to relax and focus. Mindfulness can help people see new perspectives, develop self-compassion and forgiveness. When practicing a form of mindfulness, people can release emotions that may have been causing the body physical stress. Much like exercise, research has shown that even meditating briefly can reap immediate benefits.

Conclusion

Stress can have consequences far beyond temporary feelings of pressure. By learning to cope with stress, and by recognizing the symptoms of depression and the warning signs of suicide, you will be better prepared to help not only yourself, but also friends, fellow students, and others.

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