

Stay Stress-Free Life for Healthy living

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Stress has been defined as a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances. Further, stressor is anything that causes stress, real or imagined fears, anything anticipated or unexpected: people, objects, places are all potential stressors.

Stress is a universal phenomenon and all people experience it in their day to day life. Stress is present from womb to tomb. Stress is a condition in which the person experiences changes in the normal balanced state. Understanding the individual stress level is important, individuals become bored or may not be living up to their potential if there is no stress.

Three out of four people experience stress at least twice a month. Stress contributes to heart disease, high blood pressure, strokes, alcoholism, obesity, drug addiction, smoking, depression and other harmful behaviours. Living a stress-free life helps to promote health. Everyone must be aware of stressors and stress management to maintain balance in their life.

Various studies have revealed that: (1) 43% of adults reported insomnia due to stress, (2) 24% of adults reported extreme levels of stress in their life, (3) 35% of adults reported stress is more than the previous year, (4) 77% of people experience regularly physical symptoms caused by stress, (5) 54% of people said they fight with others due to stress, (6) 10% of adults report mental illness due to stress, (7) Generalised anxiety disorder affects women twice than men, (8) Suicide among girls between 15 - 20 years of age doubled from 2007 to 2016.

Review of Literature

Shinde & Prabuswami (2014) assessed stressors, level of stress and coping mechanisms adopted by undergraduate students at Krishna Institute in Secunderabad. The study concluded that 65.6 percent had moderate stress, 18.6 percent had mild stress and 15.8 percent had severe stress. Only 13.6 percent rated themselves as having a good coping ability, 70.9 percent of students reported moderate coping & 15.5 percent having poor coping methods.

Sakhardande et al (2014) studied the effectiveness of selected interventions on stress levels among nursing students of BVPUCON, Pune. The pre-test results

of the study showed that the majority 65% of the nursing students had mild stress: 32.5 percent had moderate stress and 2.5 percent of them had severe stress. Pranayama, music therapy and relaxation therapy were given to students to reduce their stress levels. The post-test results revealed that 92.5 percent of students had mild stress and 7.5 percent of them had severe stress.

Mahon et al (2017) studied how nurses perceived stress and compassion following a mindfulness and self-compassion training among 90 nurses working at three University teaching hospitals in Ireland. It was revealed that mindfulness meditation can impact positively on nurses with stress, and also enhances nurses' compassion. Mindfulness may well be a suitable self-care, stress management intervention that can effectively teach nurses coping skills to assist them in managing the daily stressors in their home and work life.

Mohsen Yazdani, Mojtaba Esmaeilzadeh et al (2012), in a quasi-experimental, two-group three-step study among 38 male nursing students in the nursing and midwifery school of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences in Iran studied the efficacy of Laughter and Yoga in mental relief. In the study group, eight sessions of one hour laughter and Yoga were held (two sessions a week), and in the control group, no intervention was conducted. The data of the present study were collected by Goldberg and Hiller's General Health Questionnaire and analyzed by SPSS version 12. The results showed a significant difference in the mean scores of general health before and after laughter Yoga intervention in the two groups of study and control. Laughter Yoga had a positive effect on students' general health and improved the signs of physical and sleep disorders, lowered anxiety and depression, and promoted their social function. Therefore, laughter Yoga can be used as an effective strategy for students' general health.

Virna Ribeiro Feitosa Cestari, Islene Victor Barbosa et al (2017) conducted an analytical study of stress in nursing students and their socio demographic and academic vulnerabilities in Brazil. The data were obtained from 455 nursing students through a questionnaire to identify sociodemographic and academic vulnerabilities, and by the *Lipp's Stress Symptoms Inventory*. The results showed that 64 percent presented stress with the following associated factors: sex ($p < 0.010$), age group ($p < 0.029$), marital status ($p < 0.001$), children ($p < 0.001$), occupational status ($p < 0.001$), cost of education ($p < 0.009$) and current study period ($p < 0.001$). Women, students with partners, and those in the senior year of college

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were more likely to present stress.

Types of stressors: External stressors are the Physical environment, social interaction, organisational issues, major life events and daily hassles. Internal stressors are lifestyle choices, negative self-talk, mind traps and personality traits.

Types of stress: There are four types of stress: Eustress or Positive stress, Distress or Negative stress, Acute and Chronic stress and Hyper and Hypo stress.

Causes of stress: Financial, workplace, personal, health problems, and irritants.

Manifestations of stress: *Physiologic* includes indigestion, increased blood pressure, decreased libido, poor memory, altered eating habits, constant aches and pains, cold and other viruses, obesity, diabetes, eczema, hair loss, ulcers, tooth and gum diseases. *Psychological* - Anxiety, fear, anger, depression, mood swings, short temper, feeling overwhelmed. *Cognitive* - forgetfulness, unwanted or repetitive thoughts, difficulty in concentration, fear of failure, self-criticism, suppression, and fantasy. *Verbal motor* - crying, verbal abuse, laughing, screaming, hitting and kicking, holding and touching.

Adaptation to stress: The Change that takes place as a result of the responses to a stressor is an adaptation. General adaptation syndrome consists of three stages.

Alarm and mobilisation stage - become aware of the stressor. The stressor stimulates the hypothalamus and sympathetic nervous system. Adrenal medulla releases catecholamines causing fight & flight response.

Resistance stage - the body has increased capacity to respond to the stressor.

Exhaustion stage - negative consequences of stress appear. In chronic stress situations, the individual's emotional, physical and mental resources suffer heavily. The body experiences adrenal exhaustion leading to decreased stress tolerance, progressive mental and physical exhaustion, illness and collapse.

Stress Management

Non-Pharmacological Management

Relaxation techniques: It is a method, process, procedure or activity that helps a person to relax, to attain a state of increased calmness or otherwise reduce levels of anxiety, stress or anger. The purpose of relaxation therapy is to calm the body & provide a natural cure for symptoms of stress & anxiety. Relaxation exercises reverse the negative response of stress on our body & mind. It is a systemic approach to relieve muscle tension and to promote rest & relaxation. Examples are deep breathing exercises, asanas, sayings or mantras, hypnosis, guided imagery, hydrotherapy, massage,

humor, hobbies, reflexology, acupuncture, acupressure and biofeedback therapy.

Laughter therapy is a part of human behaviour regulated by the brain. It signals acceptance and positive interactions with others. Laughter is a physical reaction in humans consisting typically of rhythmical, often audible contractions of the diaphragm and other parts of the respiratory system. It is a response to certain external or internal stimuli.

Physical, Mental and Social Benefits: Laughter helps to relax all muscles and increase blood flow to extremities and other muscles. It improves blood circulation and decreases the risk of forming clots, high blood pressure & heart disease, improves the lung capacity and oxygen levels in the blood. It alleviates asthma and bronchitis, increases levels of endorphins in our body which are natural painkillers. It strengthens the immune system by increasing the antibodies in the mucus of the nose & respiratory passages & creates protection against viruses, bacteria & other organisms. Laughter is the best aerobic exercise, best universal medicine, most effective wonder drug, without cost involvement.

Yoga Literally means union, it unites the mind, body & breath. It is a system of exercise to attain mental control and well-being to a path of liberation. Yoga helps to manage stress, increases the amount of oxygen supply, promotes sleep, boosts metabolism, delays aging, improves concentration, promotes emotional control, boosts the immune system, relieves depression, controls diabetes etc. Pranayama & surya-namaskaras are some of the yoga techniques these techniques help to prevent or treat various health problems such as asthma, respiratory infection, sinusitis, constipation, reducing cerebral tension, improving blood circulation, reducing blood pressure etc.

Pharmacological Management:

Various drugs are used to treat anxiety, depression, nightmares, sleep disturbances etc. Drugs used for stress management are prazosin, clonidine, propranolol, carbamazepine, topiramate, zolpidem, valproic acid, risperidone etc.

Stress among Nursing Students: The stressors in nursing students are academic, interpersonal, family and emotional stress. The challenges for nursing students: great academic demands, unstructured time, being on your own in a new environment, changing the relationship with family. The total theory and clinical hours for nursing curriculum in India for BSc (N) as per INC syllabus is 3,760 hours. It is quite high when compared with the hours in other countries.

Exam stress: The students have an increased sense of panic or anxiety in the days, weeks or months be-

fore, during or after an assessment or test. Causes of exam stress are lack of preparation & planning, the high expectation from others, low motivation levels, competition from peers, internal pressure, low confidence and comparison with others. Manifestations of exam stress are forgetfulness, poor appetite or over-eating, dizziness, blurred vision, inability to sleep, concentrate and relax, fear, anxiety, worry, migraines or headaches, stomach ache, nail-biting, increased heart rate, vomiting, mood swing, depression, nervousness and low or no communication.

Management of academic stress in students

Plan for studying- today's date, days remaining for the exam, plan for 24 hours; Schedule the subjects-prime study time i.e. morning 3hrs, afternoon 3 hrs, evening 3 hrs, night 3 hrs, reading plan, writing plan, revision plan; Take disciplined action- act on the plan, follow the schedule, review the progress; Do exercises to improve concentration- deep breathing, palming: rub the palms and cover the eyes, listen to music, making vision boards for formulae, charts and graphics; Be away from rebuttal people- avoid listening or taking advice from friends who are hyper and keep pestering, talk to them openly and do not get carried away by their negative emotions; Start the most difficult subject first, avoid postponing the unpleasant task, ask help from expert teachers and friends, refer to the additional references other than your notes; Avoid distractions at home, neighbourhood, cricket matches, mobile/ internet chats; minimize time with TV and phone calls; Take the right amount of rest- take the right amount of sleep every day; unwind yourself- take a break, relax your mind, smile and make someone smile talk to someone; Focus on health, drink lots of water, take proper diet, eat a wholesome meal, have fruits and dry fruits, a glass of milk, eat healthy snacks, avoid junk or fast food; Have a positive attitude- think and feel good about self, stop comparing yourself with others; Affirm positive self-talk like "I can & I will", "Everything is possible", "I trust & believe in myself." Be confident, talk with parents & teachers, share your aspirations & goals, communicate & clarify; Make a commitment today- take ownership & responsibility of yourself, exams, career and your life; Crosscheck, avoid useless discussion & manage time.

Stress among Nurses: Nurses working in healthcare settings develop a lot of stress. Normal reasons are:

Causes of stress: Job design; Poor interpersonal relationships at work, patients & their families; Poor time management, technical aspects, personal reasons; Dealing with death & dying, ambiguity; Lack of resources such as manpower & material; Consumer demand, less pay & delay in promotion etc.

Interventions for stress among nurses: Plan for the day's work; Maintain interpersonal relationships with patients, family members, team members etc.; Orientation & training, in-service training; Continuous monitoring & supervision; Nurse managers to discuss with team members regarding stressors and how to overcome stress in the workplace; Make arrangements for recreational activities, grievance redressal, adjustments for break timings; Motivate by giving credits, rewards, and awards for best service; arrange for resources such as manpower, material, provide extra pay for extra work/overtime and provide quality care to patients.

Conclusion

Stress is a common problem that affects almost all of us at some point in our lives. Learning to identify when we are under stress, what is stressing us and different ways of coping with stress can greatly improve both our mental and physical wellbeing. By taking control of our thoughts, emotions, and environment we can control our lives instead of letting stress control us. So, let us live stress-free life for healthy living to make a better qualitative individual, student, family, society, and world.

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