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Stress—Reasons and Solutions

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Stress is seen in every corner of the world and which occurs to everyone. Although the phenomenon of stress is existing since ancient times, conscious attempts to study the concepts systematically have began in the later half of the 20th century. In 17th century stress denoted “Hardship, Adversity or Affliction.” During the 18th and 19th centuries, it meant force, pressure, strain or strong effort. It came in social sciences from engineering and physics.

People use the term stress to describe the feeling of strain and pressure, when they are overloaded and don't feel that they are able to meet all the demands placed upon them. It is considered as a detrimental factor leading to a greater degree of maladjustment with the self and the environment and thus resulting into the poor mental health conditions of an individual. It is a body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response. A child burdened with heavy bag right from School to Manager of Corporate world, stress has become a new lifestyle disease. Stress is simply a problem in almost all the countries of the world, irrespective of whether the economy is strong or weak. Considered from an individual's point of view, stress is our body's physical, mental and chemical reactions to circumstances that frighten, confuse, endanger or irritate you. If controlled, stress is a friend that strengthens us for the next encounter. If handled poorly, it becomes an enemy which can cause diseases like high blood pressure, asthma and overactive thyroid. As per medical explanation of the term “stress is the body's general response to environmental situations”. It can lead to:

- 1) *Physiological discomfort*
- 2) *Some kind of emotional unhappiness*
- 3) *Strained relationships with other people*

To quote a definition: “Stress is an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological and/or behavioral deviations for organizational participants.”

In very simple words, stress refers to an individual's reaction to a disturbing factor in the environment.

Thus, the aim of this study is to create awareness about the causes of stress and how the people have been trying to cope with this problem. The paper proceeds to explain what is actually stress, what are the causes of stress and what are the appropriate ways of dealing with it.

Introduction

Modern life is full of frustrations, deadlines, and demands. For many people stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life. Stress isn't always bad, though. Stress within

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your comfort zone can help you perform under pressure, motivate you to do your best, even keep you safe when danger looms. But when stress becomes overwhelming, it can danger your health, mood, relationships and quality of life.

The term 'STRESS' was coined by Hans Selye in 1936; the recognized father of Stress. In 1951, he wrote his first article on stress and since then there have been more than a million scientific publications related to stress. He defined it as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change".

What is Stress?

Researchers define stress as a physical, mental or emotional response to events that cause bodily or mental tension. Simply put, stress is any outside force or event that has an effect on our body or mind.

Acc. To Kyriacou (1981), "Stress is an unpleasant emotional state threatening the well being of an organism".

Acc. To Cofer and Appley (1964), "Stress is the state of organism when he perceives that his well being is endangered and that he must elevate all of his energies to his protection".

The word 'Stress' in psychology and mental health is employed to carry two different meanings:

Stress as a Class of Stimuli: In the first sense, stress is regarded as a class of stimuli—(the condition, force or object) which threaten an individual in some way and thus cause disturbance in behavior.

Stress as a state of Organism: In the second sense, stress may be regarded as a state of psychological upset or disequilibrium in the human beings caused by internal as well as external stimuli. That is why it is often remarked that he/she is in stress (as one seems to be behaving in a quite disorganized way, losing his equilibrium, showing signs of anxiety, tension or pressure).

Types of Stress

When thinking about the types of stress, there are there are two perspectives to consider (besides whether it is good stress or bad stress of course).

- Stress from a Physicist's perspective
- Stress from a Psychological perspective

In Physics, stress is a reaction to an external force. Too much stress, and an object breaks or changes form.

In Psychological perspective, stress is good stress and bad stress.

Good Stress: Eustress

EUSTRESS is created by desirable and successful effects. EUSTRESS is healthy, positive and developmental stress response. It can be fun, exciting and energizing especially in the short term. For e.g. getting dressed for wedding, racing to meet an exciting deadline.

Bad Stress: Distress

DISTRESS is created by undesirable outcomes. It is primarily the DISTRESS form of

stress which requires examination and steps to cope with it; because distress is generally associated with heart disease, alcoholism, drug abuse, marital problems, absenteeism etc.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

The following table lists some of the common warning signs and symptoms of stress:

PHYSICAL SIGNS	EMOTIONAL SIGNS	MENTAL SIGNS	SPIRITUAL SIGNS	BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS
Appetite Changes	Bad Temper	Lacking Humor	Apathy	Pacing
Headaches	Anxiety	Lethargy	Doubt	Nail Biting
Fatigue	Nightmares	Boredom	Cynicism	Restlessness
Nausea	Moodiness	Memory problems	Loss of direction	Nervous

Causes of Stress

Stress is the reality of everyday life. It was pointed out by *Near, Rice and Hunt in 1980*, by *Sekaran in 1986* and by many others, that the situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. Stress can come from any situation that makes you feel frustrated, angry, nervous or anxious. For example, if one experiences much distress at work, that stress will be carried over to the home, which will increase the sense of awareness of even small distresses experienced in a family sphere. The main factors responsible for causing stress can be broken down into both external and internal stressors:-

1. External Stressors

- Misplacing Keys
- Traffic Jams
- Job Dissatisfaction
- Office Politics
- Shopping
- Pollution
- Gossip
- Arguments

2. Internal Stressors

- i. Work Stressors
 - Being Unhappy in job
 - Low Pay
 - Hazardous Jobs
 - Job Insecurity
- ii. Life Stressors
 - Death of a loved one
 - Divorce
 - Chronic Illness
 - Depression

- iii. Social Stressors
 - Fear of Crime
 - Poverty
 - Low Social Support
 - Red Tapism

Effects of Stress

The effects of stress can be studied under three general categories:

Physically: According to the researchers high degrees of stress are typically accompanied by severe anxiety, frustration and depression. The Heart pumps faster making the heart pound and the blood pressure rise; some people experience palpitations. Muscle tension increases leading to headaches, chest pain and dizziness.

Mentally: A certain amount of stress can be mentally stimulating but too much stress can affect our thinking ability. Thoughts may become jumbled and confused. Thinking becomes focused on worrying.

Emotionally: People respond to stress in many different ways. Common emotional effects are anger, irritability, fear, anxiety, self-doubt, insecurity.

Thus, Stress is not automatically bad for individual. It is the dysfunctional aspects of high level of stress that should be and a major concern for contemporary society in general and for effective individual in particular.

Coping Strategies for Stress

Coping refers to the thoughts and actions we use to deal with a threatening situation. A stressful situation may be considered a threat for you but not necessarily for your neighbor. Stress has a major impact on mental and physical health. After all, we all become stressed for various reasons we will need to choose different coping strategies.

There forth there are different classifications for coping stress:

A. Physiological Coping Techniques: - Acc. To Jacobson common physiological responses to stress include muscle tenses, uneasy stomach or sweating. Important physiological coping techniques are:

- i. **Relaxation-** Progressive relaxation is the most effective procedure to reduce the tension in our muscle.
- ii. **Controlled Breathing-** Controlled breathing is important. When you are tense, you tend to take in relatively short, shallow breaths. Relaxation and breathing procedures are effective in reducing emotional as well as physical tension.
- iii. **Meditation-** A related technique that is often effective for achieving a relaxed state is mediation.

B. Behavioral Coping Techniques: We overload our schedules with too many responsibilities. It all adds up to stress. There are plenty of things we can do to reduce stress in our lives. One method is time management. Learning how to make time work for us instead of against us. Adhering to a well planned schedule can help us make more efficient use of our time.

C. Appraisal Focused Techniques: these strategies occur when the person modifies the way they think, for example employing denial or distancing oneself from the problem. People may alter the way they think about a problem by altering their goals and values.

D. Problem Focused Strategies: Problem-focused coping is aimed at changing or eliminating the source of the stress. The three problem- focused strategies identified by Folkman and Lazarus are taking control, information seeking, and evaluating the pros and cons.

Conclusion

To conclude we can say that stress is one of the human nature that every one expresses. Moreover, everyone can choose his/her own way to reduce his stress. If people will handle stress effectively this can provide a lot of advantages to people. But if people will not handle stress effectively this may lead to a lot of problem to people. Stress is a common problem in modern life. Stress is a normal quantity of everyday life and there is no way to escape. So people need to learn how to effectively manage the stress. In other words, it's an omnipresent part of life.

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