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Stress – Reasons and Solutions

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“We boil at different degrees” is the statement given by Ralph Waldon Emerson in 1870. It was a remarkable assessment of human beings much before the twentieth century which has been named age of anxiety. Probably the twenty first century will be characterized by the “ Era of Stress” unless mankind evolves strategies to successfully cope with stress. Stress is a fact and part of life. Stress is defined as “a state of psychological and physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual’s ability and motivation to meet those needs”. Almost every change in the environment- even a pleasant change, such as a vacation – demands some coping and a little stress is useful in helping us adapt. But beyond some point, “stress” becomes “distress. What acts to produce distress varies greatly from person to person, but some events seem to be stressors for many of us. Chief among these are injuries or infections of the body ; annoying or dangerous events in our environments; major changes or transitions in life which force us to cope in new ways; and anticipated or actual threats to our self– esteem. It can be difficult to relax in the modern society of today. However it is very important that you relax if you wish to live a happier and healthier life. Additionally, if you find time to unwind, you will be better able to manage your stress levels. Stress is not something to be dismissed as being just part of the job, or the price you pay for being successful in your career. Stress has been shown to be either directly or indirectly responsible for early and untimely deaths through heart attack, high blood pressure and a multitude of other stress – related illness. While the physical and mental health of people are suffering due to unhealthy work environments, stress is still seen as a sign of weakness in many organizations and is kept quite so as to avoid negative repercussions. So in today’s age its mandatory to stay yourself away from stress because we all know that “ Health is Wealth” and without sound physical and mental health everything is worthless.

Introduction and Meaning of the term ‘STRESS’

Stress is defined as “a state of psychological and physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual’s ability and motivation to meet those needs”. The term stress has many definitions (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). We will define stress as an internal state which can be cause by physical demands on the body (disease conditions, exercise, extremes of temperature and the like) or by environmental or social situations which are evaluated as potentially harmful, uncontrollable or exceeding our resources for coping. The physical, environmental and social causes of the stress state are termed ‘stressors’. Once induced

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by stressors, the internal stress state can then lead to various responses. On the one hand, psychological responses such as anxiety, hopelessness, depression, irritability and a general feeling of not being able to cope with the world can result from the stress state.

Stress is a big problem in our society (Allen, 1983). Some 75 percent of bodily disease is said to be stress related. For example stress is often a factor in heart disease and cancer, two of the leading causes of death. Furthermore, stress – related diseases cost American industry billions of dollars a year; several billion tranquilizer pills are prescribed in the United States each year and it cannot be quantified, stress seems to be involved in much of our unhappiness, irritability and dissatisfaction.

Reasons of Stress

Almost every change in the environment- even a pleasant change, such as a vacation – demands some coping and a little stress is useful in helping us adapt. But beyond some point, “stress” becomes “distress. What acts to produce distress varies greatly from person to person, but some events seem to be stressors for many of us. Chief among these are injuries or infections of the body ; annoying or dangerous events in our environments; major changes or transitions in life which force us to cope in new ways; and anticipated or actual threats to our self – esteem. Change in one’s life are important stressors (T.H. Holmes, 1984). Major causes of stress are listed as:

I. General Causes

- 1. Threat** – A perceived threat will lead a person to feel stressed. This can include physical threats, social threats, financial threats and so on. In particular it will be worse when the person feels they have no response that can reduce the threat, as this affects the need for a sense of control.
- 2. Fear** – Threat can lead to fear, which again leads to stress. Fear leads to imagined outcomes, which are the real source of stress.
- 3. Uncertainty** – When we are not certain, we are unable to predict and hence feel we are not in control and may feel fear or feel threatened by that which is causing the uncertainty.
- 4. Cognitive Dissonance** – when there is a gap between what we do and what we think, then we experience cognitive dissonance, which is felt as stress. Thus, if I think I am a nice person then do something that hurts someone else, I will experience dissonance and stress. Dissonance also occurs when we cannot meet our commitments. We believe we are honest and committed but when circumstances prevent us from meeting our promises we are faced with the possibility of being perceived as dishonest or incapable.
- 5. Civic Amenities** – Poor civic amenities in the area in which one lives can be a cause of stress, inadequate or lack of public facilities like improper water supply, excessive noise or air pollution, lack of proper transport facility can be quite stressful.
- 6. Life changes** – Life changes can bring stress to a person. Life changes can be slow or sudden. Gradual life changes include getting older and abrupt life changes include death or accident of a loved one. Sudden life changes are highly stressful and very

difficult to cope.

7. **Frustration** – Frustration is another cause of stress. It arises when goal- directed behavior gets blocked. Management should attempt to remove barriers and help employees to reach there goals.
8. **Racial, Caste and Religious conflicts** – employees living in areas, which are often prone to conflicts among people based on differences seen in their race, caste and religion do suffer more from stress. In the case of a religion, the minorities and lower caste people (especially in India) are subject to more stress.
9. **Personality** – We can classify people as ‘Type A’ and ‘Type B’.
The type ‘A’ people:
 - i. They feel guilty while relaxing.
 - ii. They get irritated by minor mistakes of self and others.
 - iii. They feel impatient and dislike waiting.
 - iv. They also multitask and prefer to do several things at one time.

The ‘Type B’ people are exactly opposite and hence are less affected by stress due to the above factors.

10. **Technological Changes** – When there are any changes in technical fields, employees are under the constant fear of losing jobs or need to adjust to new technologies can be a source of stress.
11. **Career Changes** – When a person suddenly switches to another job, he is under stress to shoulder new responsibilities adequately. Under promotion, over promotion, demotion and transfer can also cause stress.

II. Causes of Stress at Work or in Organization

1. **Career Concern** – If an employee feels that he is very much behind in the corporate ladder, then he may experience stress. If he seems that there are no opportunities for self growth, he may experience stress. Hence, unfulfilled career expectations are the significant source of stress.
2. **Role Ambiguity** – It occurs when the person doesn’t know what he is supposed to do on the job. His tasks and responsibilities are not clear. The employee is not sure what he is expected to do. It creates confusion in the minds of the worker and results in stress.
3. **Rotating Work Shifts** – Stress may occur in those individuals who work on different work shifts. Employees may be expected to work on day shift. That may create problems in adjusting to the shift timings and it can affect not only personal life but also family life of the employee.
4. **Role Conflict** – It takes place when people have different expectations from the person performing a particular role. It can also occur if the job is not as per expectation or when a job demands a certain type of behavior that is against the person’s moral values.
5. **Occupational Demands** – Some jobs are more demanding than others. Jobs that involve risk and danger are more successful. Researchers findings indicate, job that

causes stress needs constant monitoring of equipments and devices, unpleasant physical conditions, making decisions etc.

6. **Lack of Participation in Decision Making** – Many experienced employees feel that management should consult them on matters affecting their jobs. In reality, the superiors hardly ask the concerned employees before taking a decision. That develops a feeling of being neglected, which may lead to stress.
7. **Work Overload** – Excessive workload leads to stress as it puts a person under tremendous pressure. Work overload may take two different forms:
 - i. Qualitative work overload leads implies performing a job that is complicated or beyond the employee's capacity.
 - ii. Quantitative work overload is a result of many activities performed in a prescribed time.
8. **Work Under load** – In this case two little work or very easy work is expected on the part of the employee. Doing less work or jobs of routine and simple nature would lead to stress.
9. **Poor Working Conditions** – Employees may be subject to poor working conditions. It would include bad lighting and ventilation, unhygienic sanitation facilities, excessive noise and dust, presence of toxic gasses and fumes, inadequate safety measures etc. All these unpleasant conditions create physiological and psychological imbalance in humans thereby causing stress.
10. **Lack of Group Cohesiveness** – Every group is characterized by its cohesiveness, although they differ widely in its degree. Individuals experience stress when there is no unity among work group members. There are mistrust, jealousy, frequent quarrels etc in groups and this lead to stress to employees.
11. **Interpersonal and Intergroup Conflict** – These conflicts take due to differences in perceptions, attitudes, values and beliefs between two or more individuals and groups. Such conflicts can be a source of stress for group members.
12. **Organizational Changes** – When changes occur, people have to adapt to those changes and this may cause stress. Stress is higher when changes are significant or unusual like transfer or adoption of new technology.
13. **Lack of Social Support** – When individuals believe that they have the friendship and support of others at work, their ability to cope with the effects of stress increases. If this kind of social support is not available, then an employee experiences more stress.

III. Social Media – A Big Cause of Stress

It keep us connected to friends, occupies those spare five minutes while we're waiting for the bus and let's face it –we wouldn't be without it. But sometimes social networking drives us crazy. Here are the reasons social media stretches us out.

1. **Prying Bosses** - It's bad enough having prepare a job interview outfit ,prepare your CV and prepare well thought out and intelligent interview questions, but now research has suggested we should also be worrying about what's on our Facebook pages if we

want to bag our dream job. According to a study by career builder, 37 percent of hiring managers had checked prospective employees' social media pages before offering than the job, and are third of these had been put off by what they had seen there!

2. **Identity Fraud** - Thanks to the abundance of personal details many of us share on social media sites, it seems we are making the job of identity frauders much easier. With the click of a few buttons, it is easy to bring up a whole host of information on users who believe they are simply sharing innocent information with friends. In fact, according to experts, you could be providing enough information for somebody to easily up a bank account in your name. Which later becomes stress.
3. **“You have been tagged...”** - If prying bosses and identity thieves weren't enough to contend with, we now also have to deal with every fat day and fashion faux pas being broadcast for all to see. And, according to a recent study, our pals are doing it on purpose! According to a study by Mymemory.com, one in four women deliberately post unflattering photos of their friends wearing bikinis online and two fifths had deliberately posted photos of their friends without makeup. No wonder a study by Fitbit identified unflattering Facebook photos as the new number one weight loss trigger!
4. **No introductions necessary** - Before Facebook and Twitter, we could carefully craft out our own first impressions and choose which parts of our personality we wanted to reveal to new acquaintances. Now, we have to live with the fact that new colleagues and “blind dates” may know everything about us from our favourite band to our relationship history before we have actually been formally introduced. Yep, pre-date online stalking has truly taken all the mystery out of dating – are we the only ones who miss the days of actually getting to know each other in person?
5. **The relationship status** - Those early are-we-or-aren't-we days in a relationship have always been slightly tricky territory. However, prior to the rise of social media, all we had had to contend with were those common dilemmas of when to say I love you, how you should introduce them to your friends, and whether you were ready to meet the parents. Now we have had another obstacle thrown in our way: the relationship status. After all, you know you're official but are you “Facebook official”? Are you ready to take your relationship to that next ever-so-public level? And who should do it first? In the increasingly stressful world of dating, we're just not sure social media is helping!
6. **Relationship drama** - On the subject of relationships, social media sites seem to have thrown yet another spanner in the works for couples. According to a study conducted by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, more than 80 per cent of divorce attorneys have seen an increase in the number of divorce cases which use social networking as evidence in the past five years, whilst Divorce-Online have stated that a huge one in five divorces are caused by Facebook. Flirty messages, befriending exes and suspicious photos can all spell out trouble, so try to conduct yourself on social media sites as you would in real life to avoid unnecessary relationship drama.
7. **Lifestyle envy** - We all know those people who not only appear to live incredible lives but who just love to tell the world all about it (repeatedly) via social media. It's

hard not to feel a touch envious when yet another idyllic proposal/travelling/night out status or photo pops up while you are sat at home mourning the state of your love/social life. In fact, research carried out by a team at the Utah Valley University found that the longer we spend on Facebook, the more we start to think everyone else has much better lives than we do. However, it's important to remember that everyone is probably not leading the perfect lives you imagine, and they are probably having the same thoughts as you!

8. **The ex factor** - Whether or not your relationship breakup was one of the increasing numbers of those instigated by social media, when it all goes wrong in a relationship the availability of social media sites – and access to your ex – can make the whole thing so much harder. According to research, 88 per cent of people use Facebook to stalk their ex and 31 per cent post photos to deliberately try and make them jealous. Breaking up is never easy, so try to take some of the pain out of the process by helping yourself to move on – which means leaving your ex's online profiles also.
9. **Catching a bad mood** - Just as we are all familiar with those social media friends who can't stop gushing about how wonderful their lives are, on the other side of the coin are those folks who seem to use social media as their own personal sounding board to rant about just about everything, from that guy who looked at them funny on the train to the state of the world at large. However, research has found that this can be just as detrimental to our happiness, as Facebook moods can be contagious! The study found that the emotions of Facebook users directly affect the emotions of their friends for up to three days.
10. **Virtual friendships** - When it comes to separating 'real' friends from virtual ones, sometimes the lines are blurred. Do we invite that girl we IM'd a couple of times to our party? What about that guy who always likes our statuses? The distinction can get even more difficult when deciding which of our real-life acquaintances to accept into our virtual world. Being inundated with updates from people who cause you stress in any way can easily ruin your mood, as can tailoring your content for the approval of your colleagues or boss, so try to be selective about who you add to help cut social media stress.

Solutions To Remove Stress

It can be difficult to relax in the modern society of today. However it is very important that you relax if you wish to live a happier and healthier life. Additionally, if you find time to unwind, you will be better able to manage your stress levels. Presented below are ways to relax your mind as well as your body:

1. **Light scented candles:** Some scents can be beneficial for calming and relieving stress. Try a candle with lavender scent or some other smell that might help you calm down.
2. **Read a good Book:** Reading an interesting story in a book can help you relax and forget about the troubles you are having a little bit.
3. **Get a massage:** Go to a massage parlor or ask your partner to give you some good

massage. This can help alleviate some of your mental and physical stress symptoms.

4. **Immerse yourself inside a hot tub:** Immersing yourself within a hot tub will help to relax your stiff joints and aching muscles.
5. **Engage in an activity you enjoy:** Get away from your apprehensions by engaging in an activity you like. For instance, you can take a long walk or browse bookstores.
6. **Breathe in deeply and slowly:** A good way to quickly de-stress your body is through breathing exercises.
7. **Play around with a pet:** The affection and love provided by pets can be a superb stress reliever.
8. **Make a nice dish:** Cook or bake something for your neighbors. The process of preparing the dish will help you relax.
9. **Go for a run:** Running is a good way to exercise your body and it has a soothing effect on your body and mind.
10. **Go Snowboarding or skiing:** Aside from being a good form of exercise, snowboarding or skiing will help you connect with nature and even boost your psyche.
11. **Do a bit of yoga:** Yoga is beneficial to both your body and mind as it helps you stretch your aching muscles and focus on your breathing.
12. **Fantasize:** As your mind wanders away from reality, take it to some happy place that is devoid of anxiety.
13. **Write in your dairy:** If no one is around to talk with you, you should try writing in your diary. This can help you release your pent up emotions.
14. **Dance:** Dancing can help put you in a good mood, thus helping you relax.
15. **Watch a hilarious comedy:** Laughter they say is the best medicine. This is true, particularly as regards dealing with stress.
16. **Go to the beach and watch the waves:** Watching the sea waves as they strike the seashore can be extremely calming.
17. **Lie Down and take a nap:** Sleep will calm you down and help you control any anxiety you feel.
18. **Talk to a Psychiatrist:** At times when you are highly stressed, a good way to deal with the problem is by speaking with an expert.
19. **Work at some easy tasks:** Performing such chores as gardening within the yard, doing the dishes or sweeping can help to reduce stress.
20. **Log on the internet and play a computer or video game:** Computer games can help you widen out and lose yourself in a different world.
21. **Exercise:** Exercising your body regularly has several physical benefits, so engage in it and enjoy the endorphins rush.
22. **Take a hot shower:** The hot water can help eliminate the anxieties you have and help you get better.
23. **Go Camping:** When you have some time to spare, go to the woods or mountains to enjoy a camping retreat.
24. **Indulge yourself:** Whatever it is that you enjoy, take some time to treat yourself to it as such simple pleasures can help ease your worries.

25. **Take a siesta:** If you feel overworked, block off a whole day during the weekend and lie around catnapping as you please.
26. **Play a musical instrument:** Making music is a superb way to unwind mentally and physically. If you know how to play a musical instrument, find time to play it.
27. **Drink Herbal Tea:** Any time you feel tensed, a cup of herbal tea will help ease your tension.
28. **Go Shopping:** At times, going for shopping can be a highly effective method to deal with your stress.
29. **Visualize happy moments:** Shut your eyes and visualize a situation that gladdens your heart. Think about and cherish those pleasing moments for a couple of minutes. This will totally relax you.
30. **Meditate:** Meditation will help take your mind off all negative worries and thoughts
31. **Walk Your Dog:** A simple walk with your dog around the block can help divert your attention from the challenges you are facing and you get to exercise your body in the process.
32. **Listen to Music:** Listening to some meditation music can help to calm you down.
33. **Contact a friend:** At times, just talking with individuals that you are acquainted with will provide you with some comfort.
34. **Run around your house:** Run around your house five times, and then lay down on the ground. The physical tiredness will help your body and mind relax.
35. **Eat a nice dish:** Sometimes a nice dish can help ease the tension.
36. **Laugh:** Be with friends and family and discover your sense of humor once more. Laughter is a fantastic way to unwind and it does not have to cost you anything.
37. **Lie down beneath the stars:** On a crisp and clear evening, get out of the city and find a place to stare at the stars and be in tune with nature.
38. **Switch off your electronic appliances:** Sometimes you should just turn off your TV set, your landlines, mobile phones, and your computer. Doing so will help you calm down.
39. **Go Hiking:** A walk through the woods will help clear your head.
40. **Stretch:** Slow stretching is one other great way to unwind. Whether you are seated or standing, ensure that your spine is straight and your arms dangle loosely beside you.
41. **Paint something:** Painting can be highly therapeutic. As you paint allow your mind to wander.
42. **Fresh air:** Open the windows of your home and allow the fresh air to get into your nostrils.
43. **Take a vacation:** When you take a vacation, you leave your worries at home. However, make sure you select the appropriate place otherwise your vacation can become another source of stress.
44. **Sit still and do nothing:** Sit in a relaxed position, shut your eyes and just remain still. Many thoughts will come to your mind; however do not pay any attention to them.
45. **Go to a riverside and watch as the river runs over pebbles**
46. **Go to the beach and collect shells**

- 47. Get your photo albums and look at your past photos**
- 48. Get on your adjustable seat, sit back and place your feet up**
- 49. Attend a sporting event**
- 50. Lay or sit on the grass within your garden**

Conclusion

Stress is not something to be dismissed as being just part of the job, or the price you pay for being successful in your career. Stress has been shown to be either directly or indirectly responsible for early and untimely deaths through heart attack, high blood pressure and a multitude of other stress – related illness. While the physical and mental health of people are suffering due to unhealthy work environments, stress is still seen as a sign of weakness in many organizations and is kept quite so as to avoid negative repercussions. So in today's age its mandatory to stay yourself away from stress because we all know that "Health is Wealth" and without sound physical and mental health everything is worthless.

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