

“Stress Management” Bring Your Life into Balance Relieve Stress and Take Control of Your Life

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ABSTRACT: Stress, stress & only stress Everyone is surrounded by stress. Either work related or any other but it's true that it change the life style as well as family life, and some time you may spoil the life. You may lose the beauty of life because of STRESS. It may seem that there's nothing you can do about stress. The bills won't stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your career and family responsibilities will always be demanding. But you have more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you're in control of your life is the foundation of stress management. Managing stress is all about taking charge: of your thoughts, emotions, schedule, and the way you deal with problems. Stress produces numerous symptoms which vary according to persons, situations, and severity. These can include physical health decline as well as depression. The process of stress management is named as one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society. Although life provides numerous demands that can prove difficult to handle, stress management provides a number of ways to manage anxiety and maintain overall well-being.

I. STRESS MANAGEMENT AN INTRODUCTION

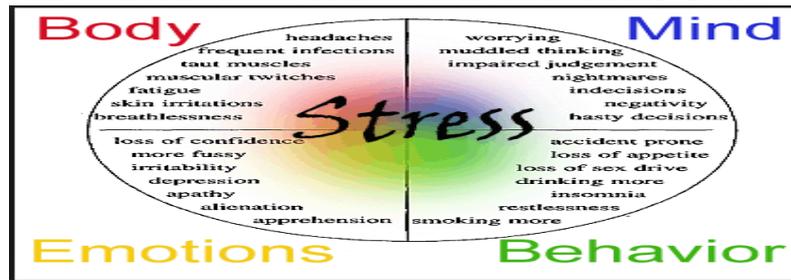
Stress management refers to the wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's levels of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. In this context, the term 'stress' refers only to a stress with significant negative consequences, or distress in the terminology advocated by Hans Selye, rather than what he calls eu-stress, a stress whose consequences are helpful or otherwise positive. Stress produces numerous symptoms which vary according to persons, situations, and severity. These can include physical health decline as well as depression. The process of stress management is named as one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society. Although life provides numerous demands that can prove difficult to handle, stress management provides a number of ways to manage anxiety and maintain overall well-being.

II. IDENTIFY THE SOURCES OF STRESS IN YOUR LIFE

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life. This isn't as easy as it sounds. Your true sources of stress aren't always obvious, and it's all too easy to overlook your own stress-inducing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Sure, you may know that you're constantly worried about work deadlines. But maybe it's your procrastination, rather than the actual job demands, that leads to deadline stress. To identify your true sources of stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses:

- Do you explain away stress as temporary (“I just have a million things going on right now”) even though you can't remember the last time you took a breather?
- Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life (“Things are always crazy around here”) or as a part of your personality (“I have a lot of nervous energy, that's all”).
- Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?

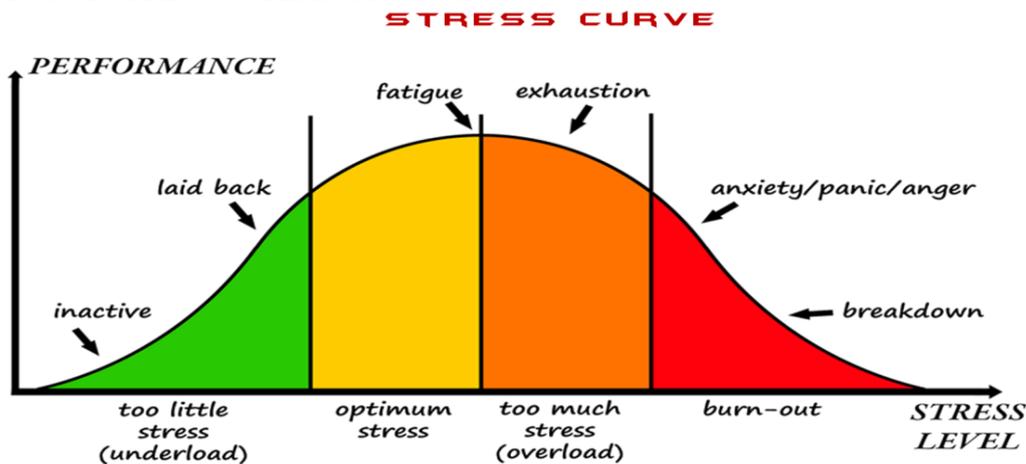
III. EFFECT OF STRESS ON HUMAN BEHAVIOR



3.1. LOOK AT HOW YOU CURRENTLY COPE WITH STRESS

Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. Your stress journal can help you identify them. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy, helpful or unproductive? Unfortunately, many people cope with stress in ways that compound the problem.

3.2. EFFECT OF STRESS ON PERFORMANCE



3.3. UNHEALTHY TECHNIQUES OF COPING WITH STRESS

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much
- Overeating or under-eating
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

3.4. HEALTHY TECHNIQUES TO OVERCOME WITH STRESS

High demand levels load the person with extra effort and work. A new time schedule is worked up, and until the period of abnormally high, personal demand has passed, the normal frequency and duration of former schedules is limited. Many techniques cope with the stresses life brings. Some of the following ways induce a lower than usual stress level, temporarily, to compensate the biological tissues involved; others face the stressor at a higher level of abstraction:

- Autogenic training
- Social activity
- Cognitive therapy
- Conflict resolution
- Exercise
- Getting a hobby
- Meditation

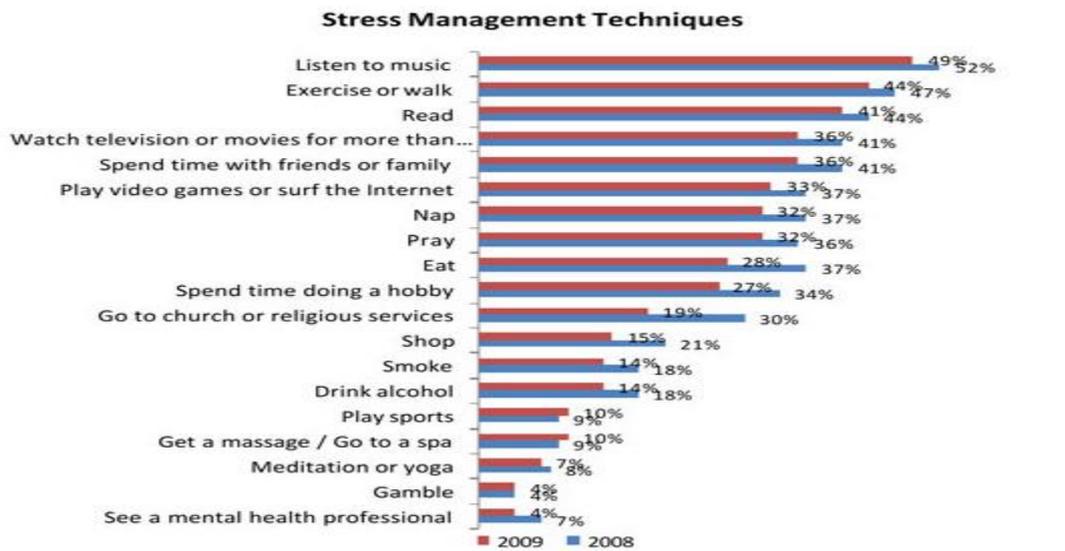
- Mindfulness (psychology)
- Deep breathing
- Yoga Nidra
- Reading novels
- Prayer
- Relaxation techniques
- Artistic expression
- Fractional relaxation
- Progressive relaxation
- Spas
- Spending time in nature
- Stress balls
- Natural medicine
- Clinically validated alternative treatments
- Time management
- Planning and decision making
- Listening to certain types of relaxing music
- Spending quality time with pets

3.5. DEALING WITH STRESSFUL SITUATIONS: THE FOUR A’S

Change the situation:

- Avoid the stressor
- Alter the stressor Change your reaction:
- Adapt to the stressor
- Accept the stressor

IV. EFFECT OF HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY TECHNIQUES TO REDUCE STRESS



V. TYPES OF STRESS

5.1 ACUTE STRESS

Acute stress is the most common form of stress among humans worldwide. Acute stress deals with the pressures of the near future or dealing with the very recent past. This type of stress is often misinterpreted for being a negative connotation. While this is the case in some circumstances, it is also a good thing to have some acute stress in life. Running or any other form of exercise is considered an acute stressor. Some exciting or

exhilarating experiences such as riding a roller coaster is an acute stress but is usually very fun. Acute stress is a short term stress and in result, does not have enough time to do the damage that long term stress causes.

5.2. CHRONIC STRESS

Chronic stress is the exact opposite of acute stress. It has a wearing effect on people that can become a very serious health risk if it continues over a long period of time. Chronic stress can lead to memory loss, damage special recognition and produce a decreased drive of eating. The severity varies from person to person and also sex difference can be an underlying factor. Women are able to take longer durations of stress than men without showing the same maladaptive changes. Men can deal with shorter stress duration better than women can but once males hit a certain threshold, the chances of them developing mental issues increases drastically.

VI. MODELS OF STRESS

6.1. TRANSACTIONAL MODEL

Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman suggested in 1984 that stress can be thought of as resulting from an “imbalance between demands and resources” or as occurring when “pressure exceeds one's perceived ability to cope”. Stress management was developed and premised on the idea that stress is not a direct response to a stressor but rather one's resources and ability to cope mediate the stress response and are amenable to change, thus allowing stress to be controllable.

Among the many stressors mentioned by employees, these are the most common:

The way employees are treated by their bosses/supervisors or company

- Lack of job security
- Company policies
- Coworkers who don't do their fair share
- Unclear expectations
- Poor communication
- Not enough control over assignments
- Inadequate pay or benefits
- Urgent deadlines
- Too much work
- Long hours
- Uncomfortable physical conditions
- Relationship conflicts
- Coworkers making careless mistakes
- Dealing with rude customers
- Lack of cooperation

6.2. HOW THE COMPANY TREATS CO-WORKERS

In order to develop an effective stress management programme it is first necessary to identify the factors that are central to a person controlling his/her stress, and to identify the intervention methods which effectively target these factors. Lazarus and Folkman's interpretation of stress focuses on the transaction between people and their external environment (known as the Transactional Model). The model contends that stress may not be a stressor if the person does not perceive the stressor as a threat but rather as positive or even challenging. Also, if the person possesses or can use adequate coping skills, then stress may not actually be a result or develop because of the stressor. The model proposes that people can be taught to manage their stress and cope with their stressors. They may learn to change their perspective of the stressor and provide them with the ability and confidence to improve their lives and handle all of types of stressors.

6.3. HEALTH REALIZATION/INNATE HEALTH MODEL

The health realization/innate health model of stress is also founded on the idea that stress does not necessarily follow the presence of a potential stressor. Instead of focusing on the individual's appraisal of so-called stressors in relation to his or her own coping skills (as the transactional model does), the health realization model focuses on the nature of thought, stating that it is ultimately a person's thought processes that determine the response to potentially stressful external circumstances. In this model, stress results from appraising oneself and one's circumstances through a mental filter of insecurity and negativity, whereas a feeling of well-being results from approaching the world with a "quiet mind". This model proposes that helping stressed individuals understand the nature of thought—especially providing them with the ability to recognize when they

are in the grip of insecure thinking, disengage from it, and access natural positive feelings—will reduce their stress.

6.4. STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY #1: AVOID UNNECESSARY STRESS

Not all stress can be avoided, and it’s not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed. You may be surprised, however, by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

- **Learn how to say “no”** – Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, refuse to accept added responsibilities when you’re close to reaching them. Taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.
- **Avoid people who stress you out** – If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can’t turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.
- **Take control of your environment** – If the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic’s got you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.
- **Avoid hot-button topics** – If you get upset over religion or politics, cross them off your conversation list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it’s the topic of discussion.
- **Pare down your to-do list** – Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you’ve got too much on your plate, distinguish between the “shoulds” and the “musts.” Drop tasks that aren’t truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

6.5. STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY #2: ALTER THE SITUATION

If you can’t avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Figure out what you can do to change things so the problem doesn’t present itself in the future. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don’t voice your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will likely remain the same.
- **Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you’ll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.
- **Be more assertive.** Don’t take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them. If you’ve got an exam to study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk.
- **Manage your time better.** Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you’re stretched too thin and running behind, it’s hard to stay calm and focused. But if you plan ahead and make sure you don’t overextend yourself, you can alter the amount of stress you’re under.

6.7. STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY #3: ADAPT TO THE STRESSOR

If you can’t change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

- **Reframe problems.** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.
- **Look at the big picture.** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- **Adjust your standards.** Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with “good enough.”
- **Focus on the positive.** When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

6.8. STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY #4: ACCEPT THE THINGS YOU CAN’T CHANGE

Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can’t prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept

things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it’s easier than railing against a situation you can’t change.

- **Don’t try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control— particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- **Look for the upside.** As the saying goes, “What doesn’t kill us makes us stronger.” When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.
- **Share your feelings.** Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you’re going through can be very cathartic, even if there’s nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.
- **Learn to forgive.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

6.9. STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY #5: MAKE TIME FOR FUN AND RELAXATION

Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you’ll be in a better place to handle life’s stressors when they inevitably come.

Healthy ways to relax and recharge

- Go for a walk.
- Spend time in nature.
- Call a good friend.
- Sweat out tension with a good workout.
- Write in your journal.
- Take a long bath.
- Light scented candles.
- Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea.
- Play with a pet.
- Work in your garden.
- Get a massage.
- Curl up with a good book.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a comedy.

Don’t get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.

- **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don’t allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.
- **Do something you enjoy every day.** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.
- **Keep your sense of humor.** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

6.10. STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY #6: ADOPT A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.

- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you’ll feel more relaxed and you’ll sleep better.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don’t avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.
- **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

6.11. Stress Management Programs in Workplace

Many businesses today have begun to use Stress Management Programs for employees who are having trouble adapting to stress at the workplace or at home. Many people have spill over stress from home into their working environment. There are a couple of ways businesses today try to alleviate stress on their employees. One way is individual intervention. This starts off by monitoring the stressors in the individual. After monitoring what causes the stress, next is attacking that stressor and trying to figure out ways to alleviate them in any way. Developing social support is vital in individual intervention, being with others to help you cope has proven to be a very effective way to avoid stress. Avoiding the stressors all together is the best possible way to get rid of stress but that is very difficult to do in the workplace. Changing behavioral patterns, may in turn, help reduce some of the stress that is put on at work as well. Employee Assistance Programs can include in-house counseling programs on managing stress. Evaluative research has been conducted on EAPs that teach individual stress control and inoculation techniques such as relaxation, biofeedback, and cognitive restructuring. Studies show that these programs can reduce the level of physiological arousal associated with high stress. Participants who master behavioral and cognitive stress-relief techniques report less tension, fewer sleep disturbances, and an improved ability to cope with workplace stressors. Another way of reducing stress at work is by simply changing the workload for an employee. Some may be too overwhelmed that they have so much work to get done, or some also may have such little work that they are not sure what to do with themselves at work. Improving communications between employees also sounds like a simple approach, but it is very effective for helping reduce stress. Sometimes making the employee feel like they are a bigger part of the company, such as giving them a voice in bigger situations shows that you trust them and value their opinion. Having all the employees mesh well together is a very underlying factor which can take away much of workplace stress. If employees fit well together and feed off of each other, the chances of lots of stress is very minimal. Lastly, changing the physical qualities of the workplace may reduce stress. Changing simple things such as the lighting, air temperature, odor, and up to date technology. Intervention is broken down into three steps: Primary, Secondary, Tertiary. Primary deals with eliminating the stressors all together. Secondary deals with detecting stress and figuring out ways to cope with it and improving stress management skills. Finally, tertiary deals with recovery and rehabbing the stress all together. These three steps are usually the most effective way to deal with stress not just in the workplace, but overall.

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AUTHOR’S PROFILE

Author (*Shubhendu S. Shukla*), has completed his MA (Economics) in 2005 and MBA in 2007, and M.Phil (Management) in 2009. He has done Post Graduated Diploma in Computer Applications from IGNOU and Post Graduated Diploma in International Business from Annamalai University.He has worked with a prominent IT Company (Wipro Technologies) as Project Manager for e-Governance that was a Central Govt. Project about e-District, during his job he was responsible for Dealing with Consultant (Wipro), dealing with Techno team i.e. Trainer and other staff, he also Co-ordinate with District Administrative staff for monitoring, reporting, and his proposals and finally developed the Study materials. Author has more than 6 years of experience in academics as he is currently working as Asst professor in SR Group of Institutions, Lucknow. With the academics author has publish 5 International Research Paper, 7 national Research Papers, attended 7 National Conferences and Seminars, 2 International Seminars. Apart from SR Group of Institutions, Lucknow, he is Guest and Visiting Faculty of Study Centers of Global Open University Nagaland, Karnataka State Open University, Sikkim Manipal University and Rajarshi Tandon Open University.

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