

## Stress and Stress Management

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### Abstract

Stress has become a part and parcel of everyone's life. It has pervaded our life style and there is no respite from it. In fact, it is accumulating with every breath that we take. It has become life-threatening and if steps are not taken to remove it there is a dark abyss in front of us.

There are various kinds of stress which affect our life. We need to analyse the causes of stress to remove it from our life because if the symptoms are not known treatment cannot be given. It is very easy to go to a doctor for a medicine, but if the cause is unknown, curing stress is impermeable.

We can try simple life skills to de-stress ourselves and look at life with a different perspective. But for this, we need to accept that we are stressed and take life in our stride, without buckling down under the pressure.

**Keywords:** *Stress, Types of Stress, Stress Management, Life Style Modification, Meditation*

### Introduction

Today, stress is as ubiquitous as changing shirts. It's all pervading. Whether it be an adult or a school-going kid, the signs, symptoms and consequences, are visibly perceptible everywhere. Before we delve deeper into stress, we need to know what stress is.

*Stress is your body's way of responding to any kind of demand or threat. When you sense danger—whether it's real or imagined—the body's defenses kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the "fight-or-flight" reaction or the "stress response."*

*The stress response is the body's way of protecting you. When working properly, it helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert. In emergency situations, stress can save your life—giving you extra strength to defend yourself, for example, or spurring you to slam on the brakes to avoid an accident.*

*Stress can also help you rise to meet challenges. It's what keeps you on your toes during a presentation at work, sharpens your*

*concentration when you're attempting the game-winning free throw, or drives you to study for an exam when you'd rather be watching TV. But beyond a certain point, stress stops being helpful and starts causing major damage to your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships, and your quality of life.(1)*

### Kinds of Stress

There are various kinds of stress but the three basic ones are Physical, Mental and Psychological.

- **Physical stress** can be removed by taking rest, taking proper nutritious food and adopting a lifestyle wherein a person gets eight to nine hours of sleep.
- **Mental stress** is usually caused because of overwork. For tackling this stress, one has to become organised, remove clutter and reduce the mental work by taking time for relaxation and hobbies and making little changes in day to day routine.

- **Psychological stress** is the gift of 21st century. It has to be dealt with a multi-pronged approach. First we need to delve into the psyche. Is it pain, grief, trauma, failures, disputes between mother and father, death of a near and dear one or heart break? Once we are able to pin point the cause, the remedy can be easily found.

The first step in relieving Psychological stress requires the acceptance. The person concerned has to accept and acknowledge that there is a problem. The first step is always the most difficult. People the world over do not accept there is a problem.

### Causes of Stress

There are various causes of stress. Let's analyse them one by one.

**Procrastination:** The first and foremost cause of stress is procrastination. We keep on postponing things in the hope that tomorrow will be longer, but that doesn't happen in reality. We keep on thinking, wondering, reflecting, planning how the task is to be accomplished but never get going. This train of thought keeps on telling us to begin, however the lack of will doesn't allow the start. The result is stress as the pending tasks keep on accumulating.

**Suffocated Emotions:** The biggest tragedy of modern times is suffocated emotions. In the era of internet and social media, we hardly have true relationships. All those rosy pictures hide the real pain. Do we today have those listening friends? The non-judgemental ones who would like to hear about your life and remain loyal? Of late, the conversations have become short, shallow, rare and artificial. Neither does one want to hear nor does one want to speak. The adults do not open up for different reasons. The idea of face-to-face talking with friends is a proverbial mirage. The hand-holding conversations are not common. 'Let me hear you' is hard to find.

Even children have bottled up emotions, which later result in various kinds of mental disorders like panic attacks, anxieties and fear psychosis. Working parents and the disintegration of the joint family system does not let children get time to talk to someone or open up. The busy all-demanding lifestyle has also left no space for emotions.

**Expectations:** Expectations are just like a merry-go-round. If we receive gifts and favours from someone, we start developing an attitude where we take someone for granted. And in case that person does not oblige us the next time, we get frustrated and irritated, which ultimately lead to stress in the long run. Another aspect is that we should not expect anything in return from anyone. We, as grown-ups, land into trouble when we underestimate a child and overestimate another adult. The less we expect, the better self-confident human beings we will become. *The deepest fear we have, 'the fear beneath all fears,' is the fear of not measuring up, the fear of judgment. It's this fear that creates the stress and depression of everyday life.(2)*

**Communication:** There was a time when friends would sit next to you and listen to your silence. Words were never required for communication. They could read your eyes, face and expressions and would subsequently gauge your pain, anguish, hurt and fears. Further, remedies and measures were suggested to alleviate one's suffering. Today, we simply have an awkward silence. The warmth, caring, pairing and sharing has just fizzed out.

**Silent stress:** Stress caused by access to mobile phones is an altogether different genre of ailment which has gripped the teenagers. Firstly it has led to less sleep, change in sleep patterns and sometimes insomnia. Anxiety comes with mobiles. One gets impatient to text and waits anxiously for replies and likes. This problem is further aggravated by delayed responses and adverse comments. Online gaming is also taking its toll. Some of the games have caused kids to

commit suicide. The addiction to mobiles has now become a full-blown disease. In the near future, we are going to see de-addiction centers for mobiles. The *all in all* showy lifestyle on Facebook and other networking sites has troubled teenagers and adults alike. This ultimately causes silent stress.

### **Stress Management**

*"Each problem has hidden in it an opportunity so powerful that it literally dwarfs the problem. The greatest success stories were created by people who recognized a problem and turned it into an opportunity. (3)*

Any problem of whatever magnitude would not let us get a solution unless and until we acknowledge and accept that a problem exists. First of all, we have to accept there is a problem. Although tell-tale signs of stress are visible to our near and dear ones, they too fail to overlook the deviance. It's only when the problems becomes acute or the person suffers a nervous breakdown, that we wake up. Then, too, our efforts are half-hearted and not in a clear direction. The patient is taken to a GP (General Practitioner), whereas one ought to approach a psychiatrist. The family lives in a make believe world that everything would be ok. In our country going to a clinical psychiatrist is not only a taboo, but also a stigma. The irritability, insomnia, outbursts, anger, lack of focus and concentration are all visible, but the care givers fail to take them seriously. By the time it changes, a lot of delay has been caused. This perception needs to be changed.

Initially, managing stress is not at all difficult. If one follows a disciplined lifestyle, this wouldn't happen. Life has this wonderful quality, at any stage one can take decision to take on life. Once someone decides to fight, the solution is not far behind. *Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one. (4)*

**Life style modification:** Once it has been established that stress is taking its toll, lifestyle changes are a must. There is an age old maxim

that tells us to, follow nature. The closer we are to nature, the more we are at ease and at peace with ourselves. An early morning walk pumps fresh air in our lungs, which in turn rejuvenates us and leads us towards a positive outlook. *Letting go helps us to live in a more peaceful state of mind and helps restore our balance. It allows others to be responsible for themselves and for us to take our hands off situations that do not belong to us. This frees us from unnecessary stress.(5)*

**Get more active physically:** The moment we start working physically, not only does the mind get rest, it also starts secreting endorphins which develop a happy feeling in us. It also improves the quality of our sleep, which in turn repairs our tired mind.

**Music:** Music is the mantra of the soul and one of the easiest ways to attain mental and psychological equilibrium. Light instrumental music takes us to feet tapping, classical music relaxes us and devotional music makes us completely surrender to His Divine Will. In earlier times, women in the kitchen would sing *bhajans* while cooking, this in turn added positive energy to the food cooked and consumed. This tradition is still prevalent in South India.

**Practice Gratitude:** If we count our blessings, we are the richest and the most blessed person on this planet. The moment we start practicing gratitude, our thought process as well as our perception changes. We learn to accept life in all its shades. At times life could be bad, still it is much better than the worse.

**Prayers:** All over the world, psychotherapists have realised the power of prayers. The sooner we incorporate prayers in life, the sooner the realisation that life is beautiful dawns on us. The connection with the Supreme Power takes away our worries, anxieties, fears and apprehensions. Thus, we can start afresh.

**Meditation, Pranayaam and Breathing Exercises:** In prayers we speak to God, whereas

in meditation we listen to him. So, as long as we listen to the Almighty, we remain rooted to the ground. Meditation changes the way our mind works. The best part is that it is free and can be done anywhere and anytime. Although mornings are the best time to meditate, there is no hard and fast rule for this. Whenever and wherever one gets time, this can be performed. If one finds meditation and *pranayam* difficult, one can simply take recourse to breathing techniques, especially deep breathing or abdominal breathing. This certainly makes both sides of the brain work. Subsequently, with both sides working, one can be both, emotional as well as logical. *Reduce the stress levels in your life through relaxation techniques like meditation, deep breathing, and exercise. You'll look and feel way better for it.*

### Conclusion

*If you don't think your anxiety, depression, sadness and stress impact your physical health, think again. All of these emotions trigger chemical reactions in your body, which can lead to inflammation and a weakened immune system. Learn how to cope, sweet friend. There will always be dark days.(6)*

*We should realise that stress is a part and parcel of life. While stress can help us scale heights, it can also lead us towards depression. To overcome stress, we need to know how to handle it. Reach out to the person who knows you best and this person is none other than you. You are the best person who knows and understands you. Be clear and be confident. Don't let anybody tell you any different, because you are special and awesome. This is the best advice that you can give yourself. Happiness or stress is a choice that we make, others just contribute to it.*

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