
UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND WAYS TO COPE



SPEAKER:

The speaker for the topic “**Understanding stress and ways to cope**” is **Professor Neena Kohli** ma’am. Professor Neena Kohli ma’am is associated with the Department of Psychology at the prestigious University of Allahabad. She has over 16 publications to her credit.

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Stress is a word derived from the Latin word **stringere**, meaning to draw tight. In physics, stress is the force acting on the unit area of a material.

Stress was generally considered as being synonymous with distress and dictionaries defined it as “physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension”. But people have misconceptions about stress.

Psychologists describe stress as tension experienced on an individual over a period of time that spoils the aptitude of the singular to accomplish his part.



What is Stress?

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand.

There are three types of stress:

- Acute stress
- Episodic acute stress
- Chronic stress

Stress can be stimuli, response, and transaction.

The actual definition of stress – Circumstance transaction leads the person to perceive a discrepancy between psychological and physical elements of situations.

Nowadays, stress is a common problem in modern life. Stress is a basic thing of everyday life and there is no way to escape it.

Sources of stress

- Money
 - Work
 - Family responsibilities
 - Health Concerns
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Common psychological and emotional signs of stress are: fatigue, poor problem solving, rapid heart rate, difficulty in sleeping, elevated blood pressure, persistent thoughts about one or more stressors.

Physical and Psychological stress: Stress can be both physical and psychological. Heat, temperature, crowding, pollution can cause physical stress. The emotional burden which you carry, of various kinds, can be considered as psychological stress.

Positive stress: There are a few myths related to stress, one of them is “Stress is undesirable.”, but stress is not always undesirable. There is a concept called Eustress, positive stress. Positive stress is when you get excited about something good that is happening in your life.

Characteristics of stress:

- Life transitions
 - Ambiguity
 - Undesirability
 - Low controllability
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Certain theories to cope up with Stress:

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), developed by Hans Selye, describes the pattern of reactions the body goes through when stress is triggered.

There are three stages:

Alarm – This stage prepares you to face the stress. This occurs when we first perceive something as stressful, and then the body initiates the fight-or-flight response

Resistance – If the absorbed stress continues, the body will activate at a higher metabolic level in an effort to reduce the persistent stress. The body cannot maintain this level indefinitely and its resources will eventually deplete.

Exhaustion – This is the state where a person cannot face stress anymore. This can lead to a variety of health issues and illnesses, including heart disease, digestive problems, depression, and diabetes.

How do u cope with stress?

- Coping of stress can be of two types:
 1. **Problem-focused coping** – It is a kind of coping aimed at resolving a stressful situation or event. Here, we look to reduce the demand of the situation.
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Ex: When anxious about an upcoming exam, the use of **problem-focused coping** strategies might involve checking with the teacher about material one is unsure of, or increasing the time spent studying, or even deciding not to take the exam.

2. **Emotional focused coping** - It is a type of stress management that attempts to reduce negative **emotional** responses (anxiety, fear, sadness, and anger) associated with stress.

Ex: In the above example, using emotionally focused strategies, involves trying to reduce the tension by doing meditation and praying for guidance and strength.

- **Few other ways to cope up with stress are: Avoiding**

- Just moving away from the situation. **Asking Help** -

Asking help to come out of the situation

Distract - Diverting your mind from the situation and looking into the problem later, with a fresh mind.

Engage in direct action - Facing the situation at the instant and trying to solve the problem.

Resign acceptance - Accepting the fact that what happens, happens and ignoring the cause.



- **Examples** for how people control their stress:
 - Meditation
 - Manage emotions
 - Yoga
 - Physical exercise
 - Progressive muscular relaxation
 - Watch movies
- There are many ways, different from person to person, to cope up with stress

If the intensity of the stress is high:

Ex: high physical stress

→ Yoga, meditation are the best possible ways to get relief

Ex: high mental stress

→ Counseling and consulting a psychiatrist followed by proper medication

- After recovering from the stress, the patient may feel good and doesn't experience any stress symptoms.

Balancing Emotions:

Joy and happiness are our primary emotions.

We must understand the emotions, which gives us immense happiness, joy, and positive feelings.

For instance: If we encounter a negative situation, we would want to decrease the negative feelings and increase positive feelings.

When we encounter stress, try to overcome it, or else it grows up to a huge burden.

A moderate amount of stress is perfect and it helps you to cope with the situation.

Conclusion:

Stress is there to stay and everyone faces stress at some or many situations of life. To conclude there is no hard and fast rule to cope up stress, everyone is different and so is their way to cope up stress, therefore one should devise their own ways for managing stress.

Ways of managing stress in your own way can be as simple as talking to your friends and family members, listening to music, going for a walk or exercising or consulting a psychologist. The thing which we have to make sure is not to bottle up our emotions and stress within ourselves, we cannot stay agitated and hostile every time one should go out and ask for help as much as possible. Be optimistic and try to look at the positive sides of a situation, there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

"How we perceive a situation and how we react to it is the basis of our stress. If you focus on the negative of any situation, you can expect high stress levels. However if you try to see the good in the situation, your stress levels will greatly diminish"

- Catherine Pulsifer
