

## A STUDY OF THE CONCEPT OF STRESS, CAUSES OF STRESS, FACTORS HAVING IMPACT ON STRESS AND WAYS TO MANAGE THE STRESS

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### Abstract:

*Stress is the universal problem of all human beings. Our life is full of stress. Certain amount of stress is healthy and good for better performance, but excess stress can lead towards very serious problems in our life. Therefore, it becomes necessary to understand the concept of stress. It is also important to identify the causes of stress and ways to manage the stress. This paper focuses on the concept of stress, definitions of stress. It also highlights the causes of stress and various ways to manage the stress.*

**Keywords:** *Stress, Stressors*

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### Introduction:

Today's modern world is a world of competition, advancements, and innovations. It is also said that today's world is a world of achievements and success. But the fact is that the achievement or the success is not a cup of tea of every person. It is a fruit of so many factors like hard work, dedication, consistency, honesty, motivation, discipline, self-confidence, academic intelligence, quality education etc. Academic performance and quality education is one of the very important factors to get the success. The fact is that every single student wants to achieve success in his educational life. On an average, to score maximum marks in the examinations becomes the important aim or target of every student. But the pressure to secure maximum marks in the examinations sometimes lead students towards stress. Stress is the reaction of our body for the demands of the changing environment. Stress is a fact and reality that it is a part of our life. One can find stress everywhere, it can be within the family due to too strict behavior of parents toward their children, or misunderstanding within the family members, or due to disputes within the family or with other relatives. One can find stress in the business organization like stress due to pressure to achieve given target, stress due to get the things done through subordinates, stress due to pressure by top management to increase the sales, stress due to tough competition by the competitors, and pressure to satisfy the changing demands of the market etc.

One can find stress at the School or College level like stress due to excessive study, stress to secure maximum marks, stress due to high expectations of parents, stress due to difficult subjects or due to incomplete study before examination etc. It means any educational, social, or economic activity may create stress. One experiences stress when there is an increasing demand placed on him which he thinks that he can't fulfill it. This demand can be of any situation making oneself responsible for it. The demand can be from the senior management at workplace, or the demand can be from a family member where one finds himself with increased responsibility imposed on him or demand to perform the best

ctions to achieve desired goals. The demands require efforts and resources like skills, energy, money, time etc. which one may think that he lacks it. When the people or situation or the events happening around us disturb our normal level of performance and requires more or extra efforts it causes stress.

### Definition of Stress:

In simple words stress can be defined as “stress is a reaction or response to any kind of change.”

“Stress is the term used to describe the physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to events that are appraised as threatening or challenging.”<sup>1</sup>

“Stress can be defined as the pattern of responses individuals make to events that disturb their equilibrium or exceed coping abilities.”

“Stress can be defined as a demand placed on our psychological and physical functioning that threatens an individual’s adaptation to a given situation.”<sup>2</sup>

Stress is physical and emotional strain caused by one’s response to pressure from the outside forces. Stress is physiological and psychological imbalance, and it acts like a signal for our body and mind to get prepared to face any situation. Stress arises due to the demands on a person and that person’s inability to meet those demands. People of all ages are affected by stress and anxiety. There are some common side effects of stress like high blood pressure, tension, lack of concentration, irritability, headache and even at the time of high stress heart attack or brain hemorrhage can be there. Impact of stress on our mind can be positive or negative depending upon how we react to the current situation or problem. Stress is a part of our life and its almost impossible to live without some stress. Limited level of stress is good for better performance. No one would like to live without any stress, because stress brings some excitement and spice in our life. But when the stress level goes beyond our control, it becomes harmful for our health, our relationships with others, our peace of mind and our enjoyment of life. Stress can either force you to act positively and make you excited over something new or if stress has a negative impact on you mind it can make you feel disgusted, rejected, angry, and depressed. Stress can make our life better, or it may destroy it. It all depends upon how we react to the stress. Little bit stress is essential for better performance for better and healthy life. But if one is facing a significant number of stress symptoms, He/she must do something about it. for these constant problems it could trigger off some serious types of physical and mental issues.

### Causes of Stress:

Actual causes of stress are Stressors. Stressors are used to refer variety of external or internal stimuli that evoke stress in us. Stressors are used to refer to any situation, object or event that is likely to produce stress in us. There are two types of stressors. Acute Stressors and Chronic Stressors. Acute Stressors are threatening events that have a relatively short duration and time limit. E.g., Waiting for the results of a important exam. Disputes with the subordinates etc. Chronic Stressors are threatening events of long duration and no readily apparent clear endpoint. E.g., Irritating behavior of Boss, having a mentally or physically retired child etc.

Stressors can be varied widely from person to person. What creates stress in you may not stress out someone else. Events, situations, people also can be the stressors for someone. Children, teens, and adults are all able to experience stress, but they experience differently.

There can be several signs of stress in children like feeling of nervousness, fast heartbeats, nail biting, headaches, and stomach aches etc. Children can experience stress with sweating, nightmare, having fights and crying. There can be so many causes of stress among children like continuous fights between parents, divorce of parents, change in school,

losing a good friend, death of beloved one etc.

Teenagers also can experience stress with several issues like lack of concentration in studies, forgetfulness, tired, reluctant to do any work, isolation etc. the outbursts of their stress may be in the form of anger out of control, depression, arrogance etc. Similarly, there are various symptoms of stress in adults like sleeplessness, higher heart bits, anxiety, hair loss etc. When the stressful situation ends, the hormonal changes would go back to normal. If we get anxious over daily events or relationships, then the stress on us will never go away. It become habit to take stress. Long term acute stress can cause many problems in our body. We may experience some or all these effects of stress like ulcers, obesity, heart disease, cancer, depression, anorexia, diabetes, gum disease, hyperthyroidism, sexual abuse etc.

### Factors having impact on Stress:

There are many factors which has direct impact on our stress level. Following are some of the factors related to stress.

1. **Perception of Stress:** Our perception of stress considerably influences our response towards stress. Some people take criticism of their work as a personal attack and become highly distressed. Then they loose concentration on the work and waste time for defending themselves. There are some other people who take criticism as scope for the improvement, and they try to improve their performance. Both types of people will experience the different levels of stress in themselves.
2. **Personal Temperament:** Our own personal temperament has also impact on our experience of stress. People having inner doubts, low self confidence and more suspicious find themselves in very problematic situations as compared to others. Hence the stress level becomes high of such people.
3. **Age and Gender:** Experience of stress is also considerably influenced by one's age and gender. In general women and young individuals, especially those appearing for exams are more likely to report higher levels of stress than others.
4. **Attitude towards situation:** Personality traits has influence on our stress levels. People having positive attitude in all situations face less problem of stress as compared to negative people.

### Management of Stress:

Therefor it is very important to manage our stress, in fact it is the need of time. Managing stress is related with taking charge directly and controlling our emotions and responses to stressors. It is important to recognize whether we are under stress or out of the stress. Many times, even if we are under the influence of a stressful situation and our body reacts to it internally as well as externally, we fail to realize that we are reacting under stress. This also happens when the causes of stress are there long enough for us to get habituated to them. The body constantly tries to tell us through symptoms such as rapid palpitation, dizzy spells, tight muscles, or various bodies' aches that something is wrong. It is important to remain attentive to such symptoms and to learn to cope with the situations. We cope better with stressful situation when we encounter them voluntarily. In cases of relocation, promotion or layoff, adventurous sports or having a baby, we tend to respond positively under stress. But, when we are compelled into such situations against our will or knowledge often, we wilt at the face of unknown and imagined threats. For instance, stress may mount when one is coerced into undertaking some work against one's will. Following are the various ways to manage our stress.

**A. Assertiveness:** Assertiveness is the preferred way to manage stress whenever there is a reasonable possibility of success. It is the expression of one's rights and feelings in a direct way without violating the rights of others. Such an approach consists of direct attempts at modifying the stressful situation itself. For example: (a) Returning a defective product to a store. (b) Speaking up in response to an unreasonable request. Assertiveness is a rational and

constructive way of handling stress, which in turn tends to alleviate the stress involved.

- B. Withdrawal:** It means removing oneself mentally, physically, and emotionally from any activity, any organization, or from any person. Sometimes withdrawal may be an appropriate response to stress, especially when we are not able to solve the issue, or a stressful situation cannot be successfully modified through assertiveness or compromise. Withdrawal is neither good nor bad in itself; much depends on how it is used. If someone habitually withdraws from stressful situation, then that person may drift into constructed lifestyle that prevents adequate adjustments or personal growth.
- C. Compromise:** It is another adaptive response to stress and occurs when an adjustment is made by modifying opposing ideas or behaviors. The three most important types of compromise are: ( a ) Conformity ( b ) Negotiation ( c ) Substitution. **Conformity** as response to stressful situations involves a change in our behavior due to other's direct influence. It occurs in situations where individuals change their behavior in order to adhere to widely accepted standards or beliefs or often termed as social norms. It is also defined as behaving in ways that are viewed as acceptable or appropriate in our group or society. Pressure to conform is very hard to resist and often we conform even when we are not willing to conform. **Negotiation** is a more active and promising way to achieve compromise in many stressful situations. Negotiations mean that we make mutual concessions with another person.
- D. Substitution:** It means that we seek alternative goals with another person. For example: if you do not get admission to a course of your choice you can decide to do an alternative course. Compromise itself is neither good nor bad. More depends on the relation between the satisfaction achieved and the price paid for the reduction of stress. Habitual compromise may bring more frustration and conflict.
- E. Developing greater stress tolerance:** Stress tolerance can be defined as the amount of stress you can handle or how long you can put up with a demanding task without acting in an Irrational or disorganized way. Many successful people who experience stress have learned to tolerate greater amounts of stress. Greater tolerance comes with greater experience and skill. We can increase our tolerance by selecting reasonable goals and adjusting our expectations to match the realities of the immediate situation and by increasing our ability to function well despite anxiety.
- F. Altering our everyday habits:** To reduce stress, we need to alter our everyday habits including changing our pace of life. You might be bringing a lot of stress on yourself by rushing around and trying to accomplish too much in too little time. A fast pace of life makes one walk, talk, conduct your business and do almost everything faster. This causes considerable physical and mental stress. It has been observed that individuals who feel time pressure, experience blood pressure that is much higher than individuals who do not put themselves under pressure. Some Important steps that can help us to change our habits and slowdown the paces of life are as: (1) Get up early to avoid rushing. (11) Listen to music. (111) Take time for breakfast. (iv) Make a list of things to do, put the most important things first. (v) Allow enough time to drive to school or work without rushing. (vi) Walk at an unhurried pace. (vii) Share meal each day with another people. (viii) Avoid excessive use of alcohol, drugs, caffeine, etc. (i) Take time to walk, relax, ride bicycles, etc. (x) Unplug phone. (xi) Have a contingency plan if things go wrong. (xii) Set regular time for study or certain essential work. (xii) Jot down things you have not done today but would like to do it tomorrow.
- G. Learning to control distressing thoughts:** We often experience and bring distressing thoughts to our minds. Imagine writing an exam paper. The first two questions, from the question paper which you have just glanced, are

found to be difficult, now you may mutter to yourself: " If the rest of the paper is this hard. I am going to flunk. We often indulge in such negative self - talk which often generates stress in us. You can overcome your negative thoughts. When you become aware of your negative thoughts, you will realize that negative thoughts are unrealistic and make you draw wrong inferences. Negative talks like, I will never make it. How did I get into this mess? Why should I only have trouble? Etc. You should formulate thoughts that are incompatible with your distressful thoughts for e.g. I can do it, just take one step at a time, I will keep doing my best to see how things turn out. Replace your distressing thoughts with humorous thoughts like learn to joke, laugh, recall funny events, etc.

- H. Acquiring problem solving skills:** Many individuals experience stress because they lack problem solving skills. These skills come through guidance, experience, and learning.
- I. Seeking social support:** Having access to friends and support groups may help to alleviate stress in many ways like close relationship provide the opportunity to share painful feelings which if kept to ourselves become more burdensome. Friends provide emotional support through their expressions of concern and affection. Assurance of our friends may boost up our self - esteem throughout the low periods of our lives. Friends and support groups may provide information and advice that may help us to reach more effective solutions to our problems. Friends can enhance positive experiences in our lives.
- J. Using Stress for Personal Growth:** Stress can enhance personal growth and can be valuable means of self - understanding. We don't fully know that what we can do until we must do it. Each time we successfully get through a stressful situation, like a difficult course at a school or having problem in personal life, we gain in self - control. Each experience of disappointment and failure are sometimes blessings in disguise. Sometimes a minor failure today can save us from a bigger let down in future life. We can make stress work for us. Remember that stress is not synonymous with " distress " or ' stressed out ". Too little stress can make us feel bored and lazy. Increased levels of stress can make us tense, make us commit more mistakes and get sick easily. To get most out of life, each of us needs to determine, our optimal level of handling stress. If properly managed, stress can give zest to life. A stressful situation can challenge us to try harder, evoking our best response and bring personal growth.
- K. Humor:** Adopting a humorous attitude towards life's stressful situations can take the edge off everyday stressors. Not being too serious towards each situation will maintain the stability of mind and improve the quality of thinking. Sense of humor allows us to perceive and appreciate the incongruities of life and provides moments of delight. Our emotions had direct impact on our body. The positive emotions will help to release the stress from mind. Laughter lowers blood pressure and reduces hypertension. It provides good cardiac conditioning especially for those who are unable to perform physical exercise.
- L. Massage:** Massage is helpful in reducing the stress of mind. It improves the circulation of blood and increased blood flow brings fresh oxygen to body tissues. Increased oxygen flow eliminates waste products from inside the body, and enhances recovery from various diseases.

**Conclusion:** Stress exists from the change in an individual's thinking and their attitude towards life. Now, individuals have changed in their perceptions and the way they interpret this life. Stress is believed to be caused by the various problems that exist such as problems at school, financial problems, family problems and problems in their surroundings. If it is not managed well, stress can ignite psychological disturbances.

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