**Stress Management Strategies**

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Abstract- Stress, may be considered as any physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental unrest and that may be a factor in causing disease. Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the ever increasing demands of life. Physical and chemical factors that can cause stress include trauma, infections, toxins, illnesses, and injuries of any sort. Emotional causes of stress and tension are numerous and varied. While many people associate the term stress with psychological stress, scientists and physicians use this term to denote any force that impairs the stability and balance of bodily functions. That's why stress management is so important.

When we are stressed, our body responds in certain way called the Stress Response.

**STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES**
- Hardiness
- Outlook
- Listening to your body
- Decreasing stress (if possible)
- Unburdening yourself
- Problem solving

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**STRESS MANAGEMENT**

- **Primary:** (Preventive approach)
  - To reduce job stressors

- **Secondary:** (Ameliorative approach)
  - To alter how workers cope with stressful conditions...

- **Tertiary:** (Reactive approach)
  - To treat stressed workers

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**Working Condition**

Mind body disturb

Short-term / Temporal stress response

Stress related illness conditions

Bio-Psycho-Social-Stressors
HARDINESS

Hardiness means becoming physically, mentally, and emotionally stronger so that when a stress or occurs you are “fit” to cope with it. Techniques to increase Hardiness include:
- Get More Physical Exercise – a physically fit body deals with stress more easily.
- Practice Relaxation – regular relaxation helps keep your day-to-day stress level lower. Relaxation can also be used during periods of high stress to take the edge off.
- Develop Good Sleeping and Eating Habits – keeping your body well rested and nourished helps prepare you to deal with stress effectively.
- Reduce Your Use of Alcohol, Nicotine, and Caffeine – frequent use of drugs weakens your physical and mental ability to cope with stress. These drugs also intensify the stress response within your body.
- Find Activities That You Enjoy – people who enjoy life are highly motivated to deal with stress effectively so that they can get back to the things that make them happy.
- Create a Support System – scientific studies over the past 20 years have shown that people who both give and receive love, affection, and support are better equipped to deal with stress. Taking the time to develop close relationships with other people is rewarding in many ways, both short-term, as well as long-term.

CHANGING YOUR OUTLOOK

The ability to cope with stress is partially determined by a person’s outlook or attitude. If someone is always expecting the worst, or feels like they are being controlled by other people, then the continuous challenges of life will undoubtedly cause a lot of stress. Alternatively, people have the ability to develop attitudes about life that make it less stressful and more enjoyable.
- Develop a Sense of Humor About Yourself and Your Problems – humor is an excellent tool to help people see that things might not always be as bad as they seem.
- Develop the Ability to Understand that Being Wrong or Making Mistakes is OK as Long as You Learn from It – many people have been taught that making mistakes means that they are stupid, bad, worthless, etc. This type of thinking leads to unnecessary stress. The ability to see mistakes as learning opportunities decreases stress levels considerably when attempting new and different things.

- Take Responsibility for Your Own Feelings – One of the most significant stressors for many people is the feeling that other people are controlling them. This type of feeling on a regular basis leads to feelings of powerlessness, hopelessness, and continual frustration. It is only when we begin to take responsibility for our own feelings, and develop our capacity to choose how to deal with situations and events, that we can begin to understand the many ways we do have control over our own lives.
- Know Your Own Strength and Abilities – An in-depth awareness of, and belief in, your many strengths and abilities provide a feeling of confidence that you can cope effectively with stressors as they arise.
- Understand and Accept the Fact that You Cannot Control Everything – many people believe that they need to control everyone and everything around them. Since this is impossible

LISTENING TO YOUR BODY

One of the first steps in learning how to deal with stress more effectively, is to learn to recognize as early as possible when you are becoming stressed about something. Your own body is probably the most important indicator that you are becoming stressed. By paying attention to the signals your body sends you, you can often identify the source of the problem sooner and more easily.

The Stress Responses listed below will be useful to remind you of the changes that occur in your body when it prepares to face something challenging. Be sure to pay attention to secondary symptoms of the stress response as well – sore shoulders from muscle tension, fatigue, etc.

DECREASING STRESS

while stress is inevitable, there are actions that can be taken that will reduce the levels of stress in our lives.
- Learn How to Say No – a significant contributing factor to the stress level in many
- people’s lives is the tendency to take on responsibilities and tasks that they don’t want or can’t do. Learning how to say “no” can be one of the healthiest things people can do for themselves.
- Don’t Take Work Home with You – learning how to separate work and/or school from home life can be a difficult skill to master. It is important for people to be able to take a break from responsibilities so they can devote their undivided attention to the environment and situation in which they are currently involved.
- Try to Limit the Number of Changes With Which You are Coping at any Given Time – some people decide to improve their lives and try to make a

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number of changes at once. Frequently the result is that people become so anxious and tense trying to handle so many changes at once, that nothing actually gets changed. This result can lead to feelings of failure and, therefore, actually increase stress. Be realistic about decisions, and make choices that are likely to result in a success.

- Anticipate Changes Before They Occur – because change is frequently frightening for people, many people avoid preparing themselves for things they know they will have to deal with eventually. Avoiding denial and/or procrastination allows people to prepare in a thoughtful and deliberate way for change.

- Learn Time Management and Organizational Skills – one of the simplest ways to reduce stress is to learn strategies and techniques to manage your time, and to organize yourself, your files, and your belongings.

- Become More Assertive – assertive behavior is much less stressful than passive or aggressive behavior.

UNBURDENING YOURSELF

When we worry about things excessively, think negatively, and set unrealistic expectations for ourselves or others, we are burdening ourselves with extra stress. Therefore, if we change those thoughts and beliefs, we increase our ability to manage our stress effectively.

- Reduce Self-imposed Demands – Many people use terms like “should,” or “ought to” throughout the day. Instead of helping them do the things that need to be done, these kinds of statements make people feel guilty and pressured. Simply changing the “should” to “will” or “will not” removes the judgmental tone that tends to wear people down.

- Control Your Negative Thinking – Learn to recognize when your thinking is unrealistic and filled with thoughts that are based on personal beliefs and attitudes rather than an objective analysis of the situation. Once you recognize this type of pattern, you can then change your thinking into healthy and reality-based thought patterns.

- Limit the Time You Spend Worrying – although worrying is a natural tendency we all have, it does nothing to solve a problem, and it is very easy to fall into the trap of worrying excessively about things. One way to control this tendency is to set aside a limited amount of time during the day to worry. When your mind starts to head in this direction at other times of the day, you can remind yourself that you have a specific time set aside to indulge yourself in this activity.

- Set Realistic Expectations for Yourself – when we set unrealistic expectations for ourselves and others, (e.g., “I have to be liked by everyone,”, “if people don’t do everything I want them to do it means they don’t really care about me”), we impose pressure on ourselves. Also, this type of thinking makes us extremely vulnerable to low self-esteem. Who can always do their best or be liked by everyone? Realistic expectations help us feel better about ourselves and reduce stress we create in our own mind.

- Stop Procrastinating – quite often when we procrastinate about doing something, we end up spending more energy than we would if we just dealt with it right away. Many people also feel worse about themselves when they continuously put things off. Instead of motivating them, this makes it even less likely that they will do the thing they have been avoiding. Whenever possible, do it today rather than putting it off.

Develop Problem-Solving Skills

Many of the stresses we face cannot (or should not) be avoided. Therefore, it is important to know how to be proactive and deal with stressful situations directly.

PROBLEM-SOLVING TECHNIQUES

- Set clear goals

- Collect all the information needed to form a plan of action

- Divide large tasks into smaller ones

- Develop a schedule to complete tasks

- Acknowledge your progress after each task is completed

- Evaluate the effectiveness of your strategy and make any revisions to your plan as required

References: