

CHAPTER - 4

STRESS - AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

→ Definition of Stress:

Our response to events that disrupt, or threatened to disrupt are physical or psychological functioning.

- * It has a negative impact but all its effects are not undesirable.
- * Stress alarms are necessary for survival and help to function successfully.

Event

Stressful Normal Occurrence

Situation

Stressed at some point

Not Stressful

→ Factors that determine the effect of stress:

- * Resources available
- * Frustration / stress tolerance capacity
- * Nature of stressor
- * Personality factors
- * Past experience with similar stressor

→ Levels of Stress:

- * Biological
- * Environmental
- * Individual
- * Group

→ Reaction to Stress:

* Emotional Reaction -

- Fear
- Sadness
- Anger

* Behavioral Reaction -

- Master the situation
- Reduce stress
- Tolerate stressful situation

→ Kaplan and Sadock :

- * Conjugal - engagement, partner's death
- * Parenting - child's illness, pregnancy
- * Interpersonal - problems with friends, neighbours
- * Occupational - unemployment, retirement
- * Living circumstances - change of residence, immigration
- * Financial - change in financial status, inadequate finance
- * Legal - imprisonment, lawsuit
- * Development - puberty, menopause
- * Physical illness/injury - surgery, accident
- * Natural disasters - flood, nuclear war

→ Characteristic of stressors :

- * They are so intense that they produce a state of overload, one can no longer adapt to that.
- * They evoke incompatible tendencies, tendency to approach and avoid some object or activity.
- * They are uncontrollable, they are beyond one's power to control.

→ Stress overload :

Pressures that are too intense or last too long or troubles that are shouldered alone can cause people to feel stress overload. People experiencing stress overload notice some of the following signs -

- * Anxiety / Panic attacks
- * Feeling constantly pressured, harassed and hurried
- * Irritability / Mood Swings
- * Physical symptoms - stomachache, chest pain, headache.
- * Allergic reactions - Asthma, Eczema
- * Trouble sleeping
- * Substance abuse
- * Over eating
- * Sadness / depression

→ General Adaptation Syndrome [GAS] - By Hans Selye :

It is a general adaptation syndrome which is a 3 stage process that describes the physiological changes that the body goes through when under stress.

* Alarm reaction - The sympathetic nervous system triggers the fight or flight response the heart rate increases, adrenal gland releases corticosterone and boost of adrenaline.

* Assistance - The body begins to prepare itself. It releases lower level of corticosterone and heart rate and blood pressure begins to normalise. The body remains on high alert.

* Exhaustion - Continued exposure to stressor or additional stressor drain the resources of the body. Capacity to resist depletes and susceptibility to illness increases. Severe cases of prolonged stress can result in death.

→ Cognitive Appraisal of stress : [By Richard Lazarus]

It is the personal interpretation of the situation that ultimately influences the extent to which the situation is perceived as stressful the two factors of cognitive appraisal are -

* Primary Appraisal - Evaluation of how the event will affect one personally. [environmental]

* Secondary appraisal - Evaluation of personal resources to deal with stressful situation.

→ Causes of stress :

* External / Situational -

- Stressful life events

- Daily hassles