



Stress Management

INTRODUCTION

- ▶ In the modern society, stress became one of the most important risk factors, being related to multiple aspects of our adaptive functioning with impact on health status, social role, quality of life, life satisfaction and wellbeing.(1) Stress response is closely related to individual reactions towards environmental changes, perceived as threats and demanding appropriate coping response.(2,3) Measuring perceived stress level and assessing the relation with various personal characteristics became very important and useful for medical, public health, and social interventions.

ABOUT STRESS

- ▶ The nature of work is changing at whirlwind speed.
- ▶ Cut throat competition, work pressures, deadlines, and meetings.
- ▶ The societal set up is changing.
- ▶ Stress is the reaction of our body to the demands of the life.
- ▶ There is no definition of stress that everyone agrees on.
- ▶ The factors may vary.
- ▶ A person shows symptoms if he is suffering from stress.
- ▶ A highly subjective phenomenon that it defies definition.

Stress

- ▶ A condition or circumstance (not always adverse), which can disturb the normal physical and mental health of an individual.
- ▶ In medical parlance 'stress' is defined as a perturbation of the body's homeostasis. . This demand on mind-body occurs when it tries to cope with incessant changes in life.
- ▶ Extreme stress conditions, psychologists say, are detrimental to human health but in moderation stress is normal and, in many cases, proves useful.
- ▶ Stress, nonetheless, is synonymous with negative conditions

Causes of stress


- ▶ Today, with the rapid diversification of human activity, we come face to face with numerous causes of stress and the symptoms of stress and depression.
- ▶ Relationship demands
- ▶ Physical as well as mental health problems
- ▶ Pressure at workplaces
- ▶ Traffic snarls
- ▶ Meeting deadlines
- ▶ Growing-up tensions
- ▶ Not having enough work, activities or change in your life
- ▶ Times of uncertainty

THE DYNAMICS OF STRESS

- ▶ "Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances."

—Thomas Jefferson

In a challenging situation the brain prepares the body for defensive action—the fight or flight response by releasing stress hormones, namely, cortisone and adrenaline. These hormones raise the blood pressure and the body prepares to react to the situation. With a concrete defensive action (fight response) the stress hormones in the blood get used up, entailing reduced stress effects and symptoms of anxiety.

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- ▶ When we fail to counter a stress situation (flight response) the hormones and chemicals remain unreleased in the blood stream for a long period of time. It results in stress related physical symptoms such as tense muscles, unfocused anxiety, dizziness and rapid heartbeats. We all encounter various stressors (causes of stress) in everyday life, which can accumulate, if not released. Subsequently, it compels the mind and body to be in an almost constant alarm-state in preparation to fight or flee. This state of accumulated stress can increase the risk of both acute and chronic psychosomatic illnesses and weaken the immune system of the human body.

Symptoms


- ▶ Stress can cause headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, eating disorder, allergies, insomnia, backaches, frequent cold and fatigue to diseases such as hypertension, asthma, diabetes, heart ailments and even cancer.
- ▶ In fact, Sanjay Chugh, a leading Indian psychologist, says that 70 per cent to 90 per cent of adults visit primary care physicians for stress-related problems. Scary enough. But where do we err?

How to deal with stress

- ▶ Learning to understand and manage stress can prevent the counter effects of stress.
- ▶ Methods of coping with stress are aplenty. The most significant or sensible way out is :
- ▶ A change in lifestyle.
- ▶ Relaxation techniques such as [meditation](#), physical exercises, listening to soothing [music](#), deep breathing,
- ▶ Various [natural](#) and alternative methods, personal growth techniques, [visualization](#) and [massage](#) are some of the most effective of the known non-invasive stress busters.
- ▶

STRESS CAN BE POSITIVE

- ▶ The words 'positive' and 'stress' may not often go together. But, there are innumerable instances of athletes rising to the challenge of stress and achieving the unachievable.
- ▶ Scientists stressing themselves out over a point to bring into light the most unthinkable secrets of the phenomenal world.
- ▶ Likewise a painter, a composer or a writer producing the best paintings, the most lilting of tunes or the most appealing piece of writing by pushing themselves to the limit.
- ▶ Psychologists second the opinion that some 'stress' situations can actually boost our inner potential and can be creatively helpful.
- ▶ Sudha Chandran, an Indian danseus, lost both of her legs in an accident. But, the physical and social inadequacies gave her more impetus to carry on with her dance performances with the help of prosthetic legs rather than deter her spirits.

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- ▶ Experts tell us that stress, in moderate doses, are necessary in our life. Stress responses are one of our body's best defense systems against outer and inner dangers.
 - ▶ In a risky situation (in case of accidents or a sudden attack on life et al), body releases stress hormones that instantly make us more alert and our senses become more focused.
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 - ▶ Research suggests that stress can actually increase our performance. Instead of wilting under stress, one can use it as an impetus to achieve success.
 - ▶ Stress can stimulate one's faculties to delve deep into and discover one's true potential. Under stress the brain is emotionally and biochemically stimulated to sharpen its performance.
 - ▶ If handled positively stress can induce people to discover their inherent talents.
 - ▶ Stress is, perhaps, necessary to occasionally clear cobwebs from our thinking. If approached positively, stress can help us evolve as a person by letting go of unwanted thoughts and principle in our life.

EFFECTS OF STRESS

- ▶ Stress is difficult for scientists to define because it is a highly subjective phenomenon that differs for each of us.
- ▶ Things that are distressful for some individuals can be pleasurable for others. We also respond to stress differently. Some people blush, some eat more while others grow pale or eat less.
- ▶ There are numerous physical as well as emotional responses as illustrated by the following list of some common signs and symptoms of stress.

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|---|---|
| 1. Frequent headaches, jaw clenching or pain | 26. Insomnia, nightmares, disturbing dreams |
| 2. Gritting, grinding teeth | 27. Difficulty concentrating, racing thoughts |
| 3. Stuttering or stammering | 28. Trouble learning new information |
| 4. Tremors, trembling of lips, hands | 29. Forgetfulness, disorganization, confusion |
| 5. Neck ache, back pain, muscle spasms | 30. Difficulty in making decisions. |
| 6. Light headedness, faintness, dizziness | 31. Feeling overloaded or overwhelmed. |
| 7. Ringing, buzzing or "popping sounds | 32. Frequent crying spells or suicidal thoughts |
| 8. Frequent blushing, sweating | 33. Feelings of loneliness or worthlessness |
| 9. Cold or sweaty hands, feet | 34. Little interest in appearance, punctuality |
| 10. Dry mouth, problems swallowing | 35. Nervous habits, fidgeting, feet tapping |
| 11. Frequent colds, infections, herpes sores | 36. Increased frustration, irritability, edginess |
| 12. Rashes, itching, hives, "goose bumps" | 37. Overreaction to petty annoyances |
| 13. Unexplained or frequent "allergy" attacks | 38. Increased number of minor accidents |
| 14. Heartburn, stomach pain, nausea | 39. Obsessive or compulsive behavior |
| 15. Excess belching, flatulence | 40. Reduced work efficiency or |
| 16. Constipation, diarrhea | |
| 17. Difficulty breathing, sighing | |
| 18. Sudden attacks of panic | |

Physical or mental stresses may cause physical illness as well as mental or emotional problems. Here are the parts of the body most affected by stress:

The Effects of Stress

Hair:
High stress levels may cause excessive hair loss and some forms of baldness.

Muscles:
Spasmodic pains in the neck and shoulders, musculoskeletal aches, lower back pain, and various minor muscular twitches and nervous tics are more noticeable under stress.

Digestive tract:
Stress can cause or aggravate diseases of the digestive tract including gastritis, stomach and duodenal ulcers, ulcerative colitis, and irritable colon.

Skin:
Some individuals react to stress with outbreaks of skin problems such as eczema.

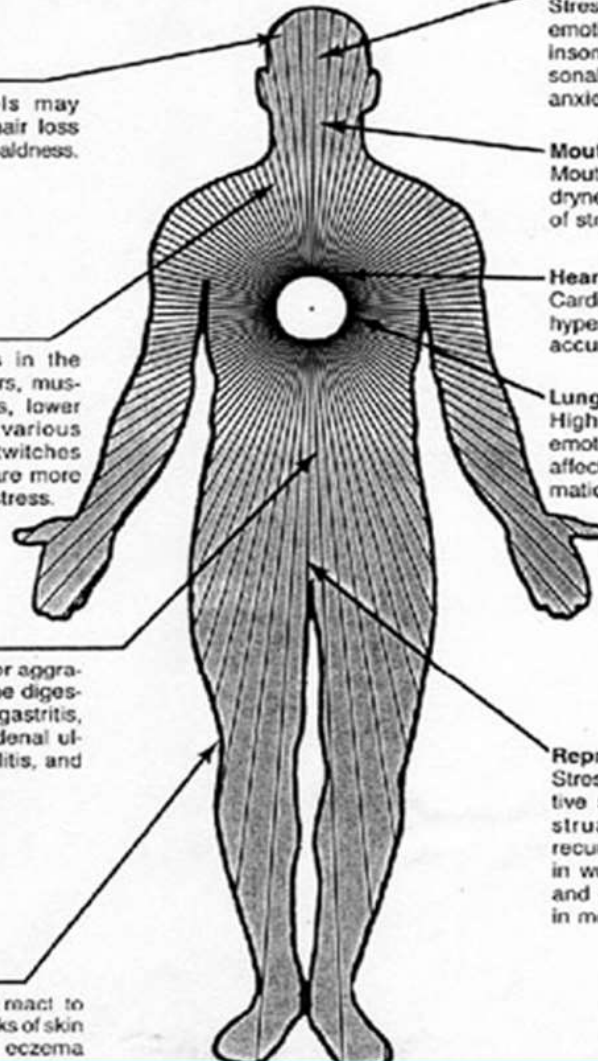
Brain:
Stress triggers mental and emotional problems such as insomnia, headaches, personality changes, irritability, anxiety, and depression.

Mouth:
Mouth ulcers and excessive dryness are often symptoms of stress.

Heart:
Cardiovascular disease and hypertension are linked to accumulated stress.

Lungs:
High levels of mental or emotional stress adversely affect individuals with asthmatic conditions.

Reproductive organs:
Stress affects the reproductive system causing menstrual disorders and recurrent vaginal infections in women and impotence and premature ejaculation in men.

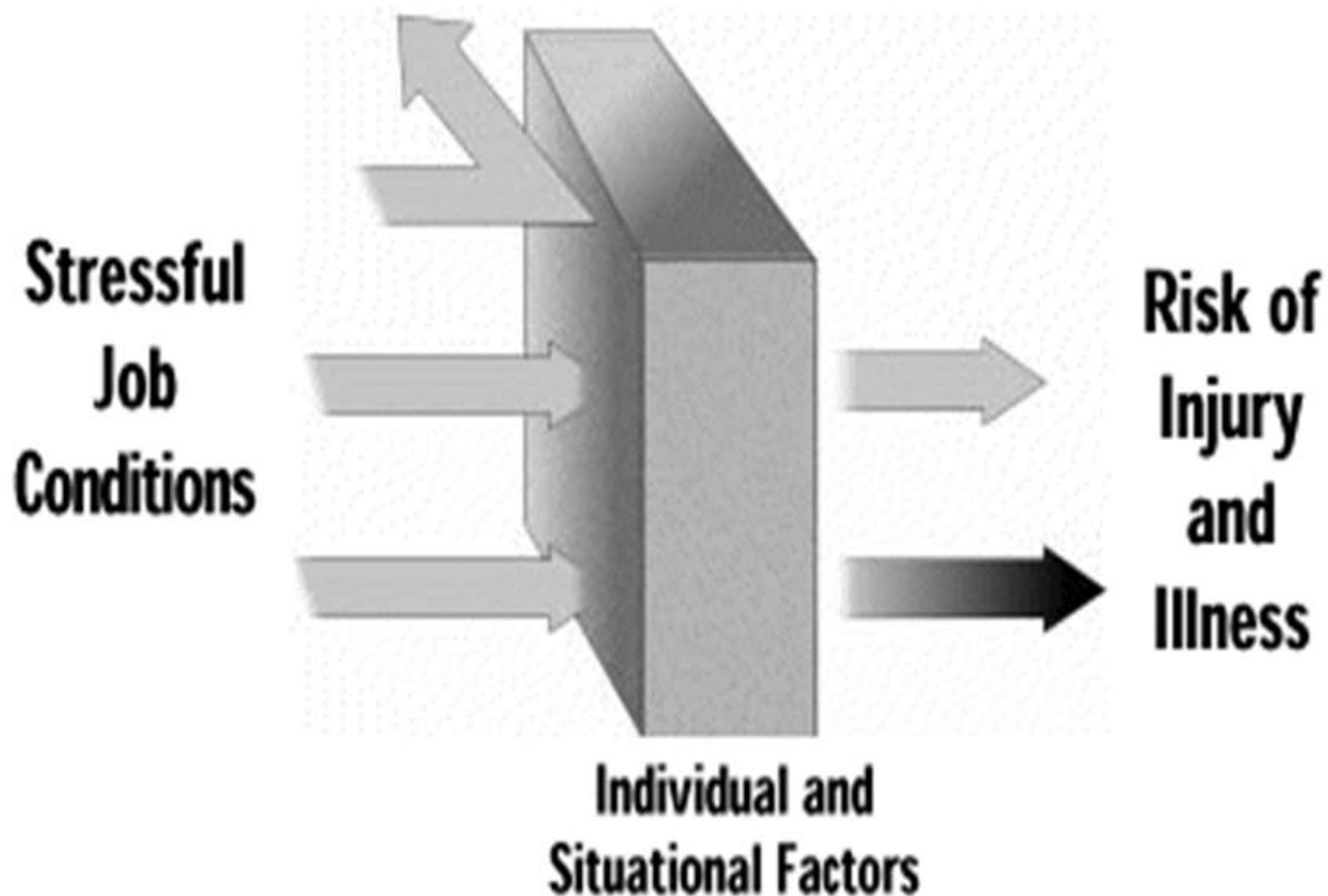


SOURCES OF STRESS

Various sources of stress as identified by Cooper are broadly divided into six categories:

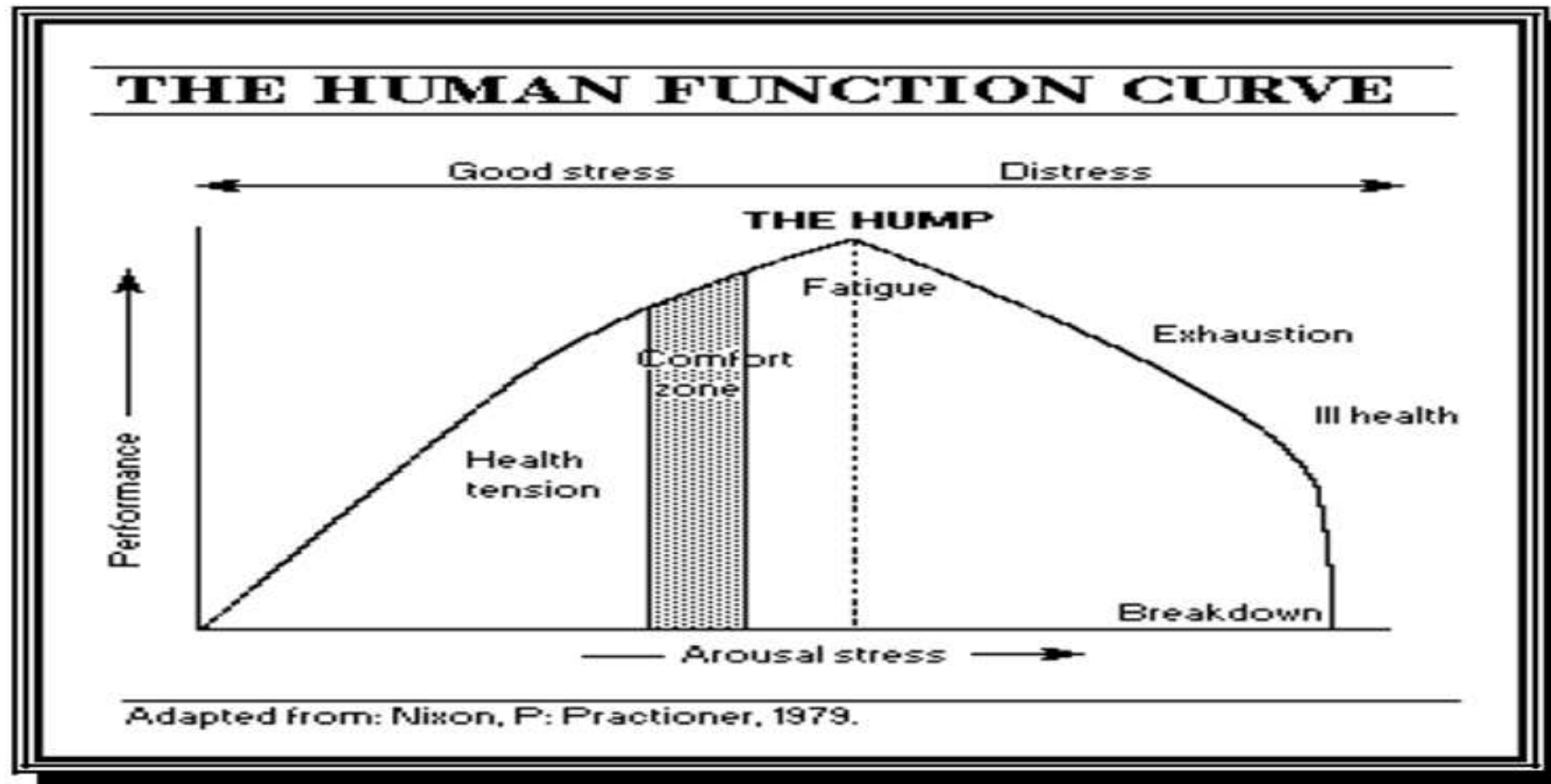
- ▶ The job itself: Working environment, hours worked, workload and keeping up with technology.
- ▶ Role in organization: role conflict, role ambiguity, particularly lack of clarity and responsibility.
- ▶ Relationships at work: interpersonal relationships with peers, superiors and subordinates.
- ▶ Career Development: Job insecurity, redundancy, skill obsolescence.
- ▶ Organization structure and climate.
- ▶ Home-work interference.

NIOSH Model of Job Stress



3.8.2 MODEL NUMBER 2

- Constructive- Eustress, positive, mild.
- Destructive- Distress, negative, unhealthy.



- Source-American Institute of Stress portal-www.stress.org

3.8.3 MODEL NUMBER 3

- **Research by Cary Cooper and Kate Sparks of the Manchester Institute of Science and technology (UMIST)ranked the main causes of stress:**
 1. Time Pressure and deadlines (60%)
 2. Work overload (54%)
 3. Job Insecurity (52%)
 4. Lack of consultation in communication (51%)
 5. Under staffing (46%)

3.8.4 MODEL NUMBER 4

Dr. Sam Batlivala(consultant physician) conducted a research:-

Where main cause of stress was found to be” pressure to work harder” followed by festivals then health of family members and change in responsibilities at work followed by argument with spouse.

3.8.5 MODEL NUMBER 5

Palmeret al's model of stress hazards (HSE)

Co-authored by: Stephen Palmer,

Cary cooper and Kate Thomas

In order to underpin the theory and practice advocated by the HSE (2001) publication, Palmeret al (2001) developed a simple model of stress that could be used to explain the relationship between the main stress-related hazards, the organisational and individual symptoms, and the outcomes discussed in the HSE document. The six hazards are:


Demands: includes exposure to issues such as workload, work patterns and work environment (for example volume and complexity of work, shift work, unrealistic deadlines);

Control: how much say and involvement the person has in the way they do their work (for example control balanced against demands, lack of autonomy, too much supervision);

Support: includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues (for example training for core functions of job; catering for individual differences);

Relationships: includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour (for example bullying and harassment, conflicts);

Role: refers to whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles (for example conflicting



Change: how the organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation (for example staff understanding why change is necessary, little or no communication to staff, redundancy fears)

3.8.6 MODEL NUMBER 6

In the Indian context another study related to the occupational stress relating it to the age of the executives the outcomes were:

