

3.1 Understanding the relationship between Stress And Mental Health



Understanding Stress

- Stress is a feeling of tension or worry that's a natural response to challenges or threats. It can be physical or emotional.
- Stress is a physical sensation and a feeling of being overwhelmed
- Your mental and physical reactions to a stressor serve a purpose.

Understanding Stress

Types of Stress (based on duration)

- Acute Stress
- Episodic Stress
- Chronic Stress

Acute Stress (short term, immediate stress)

- Short-term and temporary stress response to specific situations or demands.
- Typically triggered by immediate stressors
- Involves activation of the body's "fight-or-flight" response
- Can be manageable and may provide a burst of energy and focus to tackle challenges.
- Resolves once the stressor is removed or the situation is resolved.
- Rapid heartbeat, sweating, emotional fluctuations, etc.
- Eg. Nervousness before an exam, preparing for an imp. Client presentation, experiencing a sudden argument at work

Episodic Stress (frequent short term stress)

- A pattern of repeated episodes of acute stress experienced by individuals.
- Common in people who are prone to worry excessively, have a pessimistic outlook, or take on too many responsibilities.
- Often characterized by a sense of constant crisis, dealing with one problem after another.
- Individuals may exhibit symptoms of persistent tension, irritability, anxiety, and physical health issues related to stress.
- Muscle tension, hyper tension, increased irritability & anger, migraines
- Eg. Journalists working on tight deadlines daily, employees juggling multiple projects, students rushing to complete assignments

Chronic Stress (long term, on-going stress)

- Long-term and persistent stress that persists over an extended period.
- Arises from ongoing life circumstances or chronic stressors such as work pressures, financial problems, relationship issues, or health conditions.
- Can have profound effects on physical, emotional, and mental health if left unmanaged.
- Weight gain, insomnia, panic attacks, chronic headaches, emotional exhaustion.
- Eg. An employee stuck in a chronic workplace with no career growth, struggling with financial debt for years, managing a terminally ill family member

Eustress & Distress

❖ Eustress

- moderate or normal psychological stress that leads to a positive response
- Ex - travel that is stressful but ultimately rewarding
- work that is challenging but fulfilling
- major life changes such as moving house or getting married

❖ Distress

- Distress is what many individuals know as “bad” stress. Distress often causes people to feel overwhelmed and anxious
- Ex – financial stress, media overload, bullying, death of a loved one, etc

Common Workplace Stressors

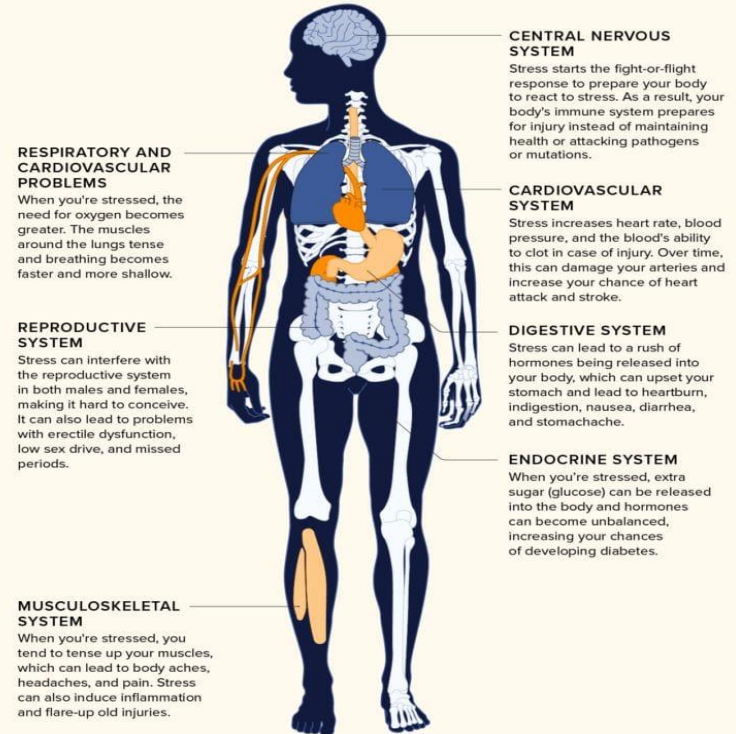
❖ Triggers

- Workload pressure
- Long working hours & unrealistic deadlines
- Micromanagement & lack of autonomy
- Poor workplace relationships & conflicts
- Job insecurity & career concerns

Impact of Stress on Mental & Physical Health

- ❖ Cognitive effects: Decision-making, concentration, memory loss
- ❖ Emotional effects: Anxiety, irritability, depression
- ❖ Behavioral effects: Procrastination, withdrawal, unhealthy coping mechanisms
- ❖ Physical symptoms: Headaches, fatigue, insomnia, high blood pressure

How Stress Affects The Body



Workplace Burnout

❖ What is burnout?

extreme tiredness or mental or physical illness
caused by working too hard or trying to do too much

❖ Signs of burnout:

Emotional exhaustion, detachment, reduced productivity

Workplace Burnout

❖ Types of Burnout:

Overload burnout: This happens when you work harder and harder, becoming frantic in your pursuit of success. If you experience this, you may be willing to risk your health and personal life to feel successful.

Under-challenged burnout: This happens when you feel underappreciated and bored. Maybe your job doesn't provide learning opportunities or room for professional growth.

Neglect burnout: This happens when you feel helpless. If things aren't going right, you may believe you're incompetent or unable to keep up with your responsibilities. Such burnout can be closely connected to imposter syndrome, a psychological pattern in which you doubt your abilities, talents, or accomplishments.

Habitual burnout: The most serious phase of burnout, habitual burnout happens when your physical and mental fatigue is chronic. You feel sad and your behavior changes.

Workplace Burnout

❖ Stages of Burnout:

5. **Denial.** Bitterness and cynicism creep in, and you begin to cut yourself off from others, becoming impatient, intolerant, and angry. Your performance suffers, and you feel physical discomfort.
6. **Withdrawal.** Dealing with others feels like a burden. You get angry if someone criticizes you, and you may feel disoriented or helpless. You may try to self-medicate with alcohol or illegal substances.
7. **Behavioral changes.** Apathy sets in and nothing matters. You avoid additional responsibilities.
8. **Depersonalization.** You lose your sense of identity, seeing yourself only as the vessel through which work and responsibilities are completed. Your life feels meaningless, and you begin to neglect your health.
9. **Feeling empty.** Exhaustion, anxiety, and panic set in.
10. **Despair.** You may have feelings of self-hatred or depression coupled with suicidal thoughts.
11. **Total burnout.** This last phase of mental and emotional collapse requires immediate care.

Workplace Burnout

❖ Stages of Burnout:

1. **An urgent need to prove yourself** -you want to do well,point of perfectionism for fear of not fulfilling demands.
2. **Working harder.** You feel the need to do everything yourself and complete tasks as soon as possible.
3. **Neglecting your needs.** You neglect your social life and look down on others who pursue one. You begin to make small mistakes.
4. **More interpersonal conflicts.** You have conflicts with co-workers, friends, or your partner. You don't sleep well, have other physical complaints, or become forgetful.
5. **Revision of values.** You see things differently and begin to seem insensitive to others around you. Friends and family become secondary to your goals.

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