



Life Style, Stress and Health

What is a lifestyle?

A lifestyle is the way a person (or a group) lives.

This includes patterns of daily activities, health behavior, social relations, consumption, and leisure time use.

A lifestyle typically also reflects an individual's attitudes, values, or worldview.

1. *Daily activities:*

The things we normally do in daily living including any daily activity we perform for self-care (such as feeding ourselves, bathing, dressing, grooming), work, homemaking, and leisure. Health professionals routinely refer to the ability or inability to perform activities of daily life as a measurement of the functional status of a person.

2. *Health behavior:*

Health behavior is behavior concerned with the maintenance of health and the individual's management of their ill health. If people adopt attitudes and behaviors into their lifestyle, that improve and maintain their health such as taking exercise, watching their diet, and maintaining sound hygiene then this will act as preventative medicine.

3. *Consumption:*

Consumer behavior is the study of how people buy, what they buy when they buy, and why they buy. It attempts to understand the buyer decision-making process, both individually and in groups.

4. *Leisure time use:*

Leisure time or free time, is time spent out of work and essential domestic activity. It is also the period of discretionary time before or after compulsory daily activities such as eating and sleeping, going to work or running a business, attending school and doing homework, household chores, and day-to-day stress.

5. *Individual's attitude:*

Attitude is a theoretical construct that reflects an individual's preferences or aversions toward an item. Attitudes encompass positive, negative, or neutral perspectives of an "attitude object": i.e. a person, behavior, or event. Individuals may also feel "ambivalent" towards a target, indicating that they simultaneously hold both positive and negative bias towards the attitude in question.

ABC model of attitude:

Attitudes develop according to the ABC model (affect, behavioral change, and cognition).

The affective response is a physiological response that reflects an individual's preference for an entity. The behavioral intention is a verbal expression of an individual's intention.

The cognitive response is a cognitive evaluation of the entity to form an attitude.

6. Values:

A personal or cultural value is an absolute or relative ethical value, the assumption of which can be the basis for ethical action. Values can be broadly defined as preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes. As such, values reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what "ought" to be. "Equal rights for all", "Excellence deserves admiration", and "People should be treated with respect and dignity" are representative of values. Values often influence attitudes and behavior.

7. Worldview:

It means a "look onto the world". It refers to the framework through which an individual interprets the world and interacts with it. A worldview describes a consistent (to a varying degree) and integral sense of existence, providing a framework for generating, sustaining, applying knowledge. The 'construction of integrating worldviews begins from fragments of worldviews offered by the different scientific disciplines and the various systems of knowledge and is contributed to by different perspectives existing in the world's diverse cultures.

STRESS

What is stress?

Stress is a feeling of strain and pressure. It's a state of psychological tension or strain.

Symptoms may include a sense of being overwhelmed, feelings of anxiety, overall irritability, insecurity, social withdrawal, nervousness, loss of appetite, depression, panic attacks, and exhaustion.

Sources of Stress

1. Stressor: Any environmental demand that creates a state of tension or threat and requires change or adaptation. Stressors have physical, chemical, and mental responses inside of the body.

- a)** Physical stressors produce mechanical stresses on skin, bones, ligaments, tendons, muscles, and nerves that cause tissue deformation and in extreme cases tissue failure.
- b)** Chemical stresses also produce biomechanical responses linked to metabolism and tissue repair. Physical stressors may induce pain and impair work performance. Chronic pain and impairment necessitating medical attention may result from extreme physical stressors or insufficient recovery time between successive exposures.
- c)** Stressors may also affect mental function and performance.

2. Change: The change in life or life activities may cause stress for some people.

3. Everyday hassles: During daily interaction with your environment (which means: living your life) people can run into all sorts of situations that can cause stress.

- a) **Pressure:** A feeling that one must accelerate, intensify, or alter the direction of one's behavior or meet a higher standard of performance.
- b) **Frustration:** The feeling that occurs when a person is prevented from reaching a goal.
- c) **Conflict:** Simultaneous existence of incompatible demands, opportunities, needs, or goals.

4. Some other examples of everyday hassles are:

- a) To feel alone
- b) Fear of rejection
- c) worry about the meaning of life
- d) Not enough money for basic maintenance or clothing
- e) Worry about owing money
- f) Side effects of medication.
- g) Too little time for all obligations
- h) Not having slept enough
- i) Dissatisfaction with work
- j) Not liking your colleagues
- k) Traffic
- l) Problems with your child

Causes of stress

From the studies conducted by Holmes and Rahe, it seems that the following are the biggest causes of present-day stress levels in modern societies:

- 1. Financial Problems** – You and your family will not be able to do what you want to due to lack of money. Debts are piling up. Credit Card payments, pending mortgage installments, rising costs of education, mounting expenditure on health concerns. Financial matters top the list of stressors.
- 2. Workplace Stress** – Stress at the workplace is another of the main causes of stress. You may be worried about your next promotion. You might be facing the negative or bullying behavior of your boss. You might not be reaching your well-deserved career goals; you might be worried due to office politics.

- 3. Personal Relationships** – Studies of children, attitude of relatives, arguments with spouse or children, change of place due to requirements of your job, illness of a family member, moving in of parents or moving out of elder children are all main causes of stress.
- 4. Health** – Heart diseases, hypertension, problems with eyesight, and sugar afflict many people becoming a major cause of life stress for them. Maintaining good health, reducing weight, increasing weight, and being able to lead a healthy lifestyle: all of these and a few more are the main causes of stress due to health concerns.
- 5. Irritants** - Besides the ones that are mentioned earlier there are those annoyances and irritations that you encounter in your daily lives which go on to become the biggest causes of stress for you.

Problems in commuting to the workplace, balance of work and family life, workload, visit to the doctor, not enough sleep, no time to relax, no time to discuss some nagging problems – who is not aware of these stresses and strains of our lives? You fight with them every day.

- 6. Personal problems** – It includes various elements:

- a) Your health may be affected if you have a chronic illness such as heart disease, diabetes, or arthritis.
- b) Emotional problems, such as unexpressed anger, depression, grief, guilt, or low self-esteem.
- c) Your relationships, such as feeling a lack of friendships or support in your life, can impact your well-being.
- d) Major life changes, such as dealing with the death of a parent or spouse, losing your job, getting married, or moving to a new city.
- e) Stress in your family, such as having a child, teen, or other family member who is under stress
- f) Conflicts with your beliefs and values.

- 7. Social and job issues that can cause stress include:**

- a) Your surroundings. Living in an area where overcrowding, crime, pollution, or noise is a problem can create chronic stress.
- b) Your social situation. Being poor, feeling lonely, or facing discrimination based on your race, gender, or age.
- c) Your job. Being unhappy with your work or finding it too demanding can lead to chronic stress. It's important to learn to manage job stress.

- d) Unemployment. Losing your job or not being able to find work can also contribute to your stress level.

Levels of stress

1. Eustress or positive stress occurs when your level of stress is high enough to motivate you to move into action to get things accomplished.
2. Distress or negative stress occurs when your level of stress is either too high or too low and your body and/or mind begin to respond negatively to the stressors.

Coping with stress

Direct coping:

1. Confrontation: Acknowledging a stressful situation directly and attempting to find a solution to the problem or to attain a difficult goal.
2. Compromise: deciding on a more realistic solution or goal when an ideal solution or goal is not practical.
3. Withdrawal: Avoiding a situation when other forms of coping are not practical.

Defensive coping:

Defense mechanisms:

1. Denial: Refusal to acknowledge a painful or threatening reality.
2. Repression: Excluding uncomfortable thoughts, feelings, and desires from consciousness.
3. Projection: Attributing one's repressed motives, feelings, or wishes to others.
4. Identification: Taking on the characteristics of someone else to avoid feeling incompetent.
5. Regression: Reverting to childlike behavior and defenses.
6. Intellectualization: Thinking abstractly about stressful problems as a way of detaching oneself from them.
7. Reaction formation: Expression of exaggerated ideas and emotions that are the opposite of one's repressed beliefs or feelings.
8. Displacement: Shifting repressed motives and emotions from an original object to a substitute object.
9. Sublimation: Redirection repressed motives and feelings into more socially acceptable channels.

Stages of Stress

1. Alarm stage:

As you begin to experience a stressful event or perceive something to be stressful psychological changes occur in your body. This experience or perception disrupts your body's normal balance and immediately your body begins to respond to the stressor(s) as effectively as possible.

1. Cardiac - increased heart rate
2. Respiratory - increased respiration
3. Skin - decreased temperature
4. Hormonal - increased stimulation of adrenal genes which produces an adrenal rush.

2. Resistance stage:

During this stage, your body tries to cope or adapt to the stressors by beginning a process of repairing any damage the stressor has caused. Your friends, family or co-workers may notice changes in you before you do so it is important to examine their feedback to make sure you do not reach overload.

- a) Behavior indicators include lack of enthusiasm for family, school, work or life in general, withdrawal, change in eating habits, insomnia, hypersomnia, anger, and fatigue.
- b) Cognitive Indicators include poor problem-solving, confusion, nightmares, and hyper-vigilance.
- c) Emotional indicators include: tearfulness, fear, anxiety, panic, guilt, agitation, depression, and being overwhelmed.

3. Exhaustion stage:

During this stage the stressor is not being managed effectively and the body and mind are not able to repair the damage.

Examples: Digestive disorders, withdrawal, headaches, tension, insomnia, loss of temper.

Effects of stress

1. **Memory Loss:** Stress may lead to more incidences of forgetfulness, such as misplacing items, missing appointments, and losing track of conversations.
2. **Moodiness:** When a typically even-tempered person becomes short with colleagues with little provocation, it can be a warning sign that something else is going on. Rapid swings

from very good to very bad moods are also concerning, as they indicate that stress is negatively affecting brain chemistry.

3. **Sweating the Small Stuff:** For some, stress takes the form of worry over every little thing, from a red light at a busy intersection to the wrong ink color on your meeting printouts. If you find yourself always moving from one insignificant worry to the next, it's probably time to look at the bigger picture and determine what's bothering you.
4. **Undiagnosed Illness:** It certainly seems plausible that ongoing stress can result in physical ailments like stomachaches and headaches that medical tests can't explain.
5. **Carbohydrate Cravings:** Stress is closely linked to the adrenal system, leading us to desire products made with refined sugar and salt. Ironically, sugar prompts the adrenal glands to release more stress hormones, keeping us trapped in a vicious cycle. And, of course, the more carbs you eat, the heavier you get and the worse you feel.

HEALTH

What is health?

Health is the level of functional or metabolic efficiency of a living being. In humans, it is the general condition of a person's mind and body, usually meaning to be free from illness, injury or pain.

1. Physical health deals with the body's ability to function. Physical health has many components including exercise, nutrition, sleep, drugs, and weight management.
2. Mental health deals with how we think, feel, and cope with daily life. Mental health encompasses learning, stress management, and mental illnesses or disorders.

Choices that make up a lifestyle

The lifestyle choices we make impact the quality of our lives, of the environment, and of the world we create for future generations.

1. **Habits** – Everything a person does on a habitual or regular basis helps make up their unique lifestyle. From diet and the pursuit of a good lifestyle family fitness to bad habits like smoking, they're all part of the picture.
2. **Career** – The career or employment opportunities a person pursues also help define lifestyle.
3. **Financial means** – While this isn't necessarily the most important facet of a lifestyle, it does help define how an individual might live.
4. **Emotional well-being** – Lifestyle is also a state of mind. When personal peace and satisfaction are a part of everyday living, wealth won't necessarily matter in the creation of a healthy, happy lifestyle.
5. **Environment** - There are two types of environment for a lifestyle: nature and social.

1. Natural environment is the conditions in which a person, animal, or plant lives or operates.
 2. The social environment is different. Social Environment includes an individual's living and working conditions, social relations, income level, educational background, community, and religious beliefs if they have any.
- 6. Technology** - Our lifestyle controls our use of technology, while technology influences our lifestyles that are present in the environment e.g television, mobiles, computer, laptop, Wi-Fi, etc. Technology has also made it easier for other factors to affect our lifestyles, such as the media.
- 7. Diet Choices** – These choices are made according to the resources and finances available as well as the locality in which people live.

Healthy lifestyle

It is personal health maintenance. It is any activity of an individual, family, or community, intending to improve or restore health or treat or prevent disease.

- 1. Nutrition and healthy eating:** Healthy eating is not about strict nutrition philosophies, staying unrealistically thin, or depriving yourself of the foods you love. Rather, it's about feeling great, having more energy, stabilizing your mood, and keeping yourself as healthy as possible— all of which can be achieved by learning some nutrition basics and using them in a way that works for you.
- 2. Physical Fitness:** Physical fitness comprises two related concepts: general fitness (a state of health and well-being), and specific fitness (a task-oriented definition based on the ability to perform specific aspects of sports or occupations). Physical fitness is generally achieved through correct nutrition, exercise, hygiene, and rest.

What are health behaviors?

Kasl and Cobb (1966) defined three types of health-related behaviors. They suggested that;

1. Health behavior is a behavior aimed at preventing disease (e.g. eating a healthy diet).
 2. Illness behavior is a behavior aimed at seeking a remedy (e.g. going to the doctor).
 3. A sick role behavior is an activity aimed at getting well (e.g. taking prescribed medication or resting).
- 3. Stress management:** Stress management refers to a wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's levels of stress, especially chronic stress, usually to improve everyday functioning. Many practical stress management techniques are available, some for use by health practitioners and others for self-help, which may

help an individual to reduce stress, provide positive feelings of being in control of one's life, and promote general well-being.

4. **Positive attitude:** Do your best to look at life as if "the glass is half full." You must believe in yourself, have good support systems, and think positively ("I think I can, I think I can...") to succeed.
5. **Regular exercise:** A healthy life necessitates periodic physical activity to prevent any type of disease exercise is important. Exercises serve multiple purposes including strengthening muscles and the cardiovascular system, honing athletic skills, weight loss or maintenance, as well as for enjoyment.
6. **Understand Each other's Family Patterns:** Find out how conflicts are managed in your family. Try to have healthy conversation and social interaction with family members.

Unhealthy lifestyle

It is a lifestyle being lived that is a threat to the person living it whether it is long-term or short-term. For example, someone who has bad lungs smokes.

1. **Too much junk food:** Junk food is a derisive slang term for food that is of little nutritional value and often high in fat, sugar, salt, and calories. It can cause obesity, which may increase the chances of an individual being a victim of high blood pressure and other heart ailments.
2. **Bad eating habits:** The surge in the consumption of high-fat foods like burgers, chips, fizzy drinks, and fries has already been condemned and treated as one of the main causes of bad eating habits.
3. **Physical inactivity:** Teenagers spend most of their time in front of the television, playing computer games or on mobiles with their friends and lack of interest in extra-curricular activities after school or college and lack of exercise are some of the key elements of physical inactivity.
4. **Smoking:** Smoking is a practice in which a substance, most commonly tobacco, is burned and the smoke is tasted or inhaled. This is primarily practiced as a route of administration for recreational drug use, as combustion releases the active substances in drugs such as nicotine, and makes them available for absorption through the lungs. It can also be done as a part of rituals, to induce trances and spiritual enlightenment.
5. **Too much Stress:** Stress is arguably the most insidious condition. It can lead to high blood pressure, heart attacks, and other related diseases are caused by stress. It is analogous to a train going 200 miles per hour suddenly experiencing the brakes failure and causing a major collision. That collision results in the breakdown of the body and the nervous system. Its impact reverberates for years to come.

