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Self-Management Skills - II

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, students will be able to:

- Understand meaning and importance of stress management.
- Apply stress management techniques.
- Demonstrate the ability of working independently.
- Describe the types of self-awareness.
- Describe the meaning of self-motivation and self-regulation.

2.1 STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

INTRODUCTION

Stress, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, is 'pressure, tension or worry resulting from problems in one's life' and as per the American Heritage Dictionary it is 'a state of extreme difficulty, pressure, or strain'. On the other hand, we have Dr Hans Selye, popularly known as Father of Stress, for first introducing the concept of stress in a medical context. According to Dr. Hans, "Stress is a normal part of life and adapting to stress is a natural mechanism."

SESSION 1 MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

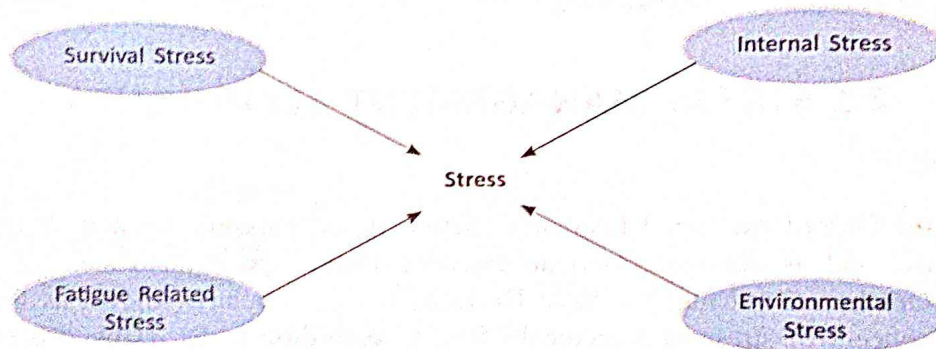
Stress is a charged-up internal condition of our body in response to some repulsive (sometimes delightful too!) external or internal situations. Whichever way you wish to understand, stress is the truth of the day and you can't deny it. Whether it is caused by external forces such as fluctuating climate condition, approaching examinations, parental or peer pressures, price hikes, demanding health conditions, a quarrelsome classmate, strict teacher or by internal forces such as less self-belief, low energy level, lack of enthusiasm, poor self-image, poor self-confidence, and hence, stress has become part of our life.

Stress can be either positive or negative and phrased the good stress (like getting a job promotion) as *eustress* and the negative stress (like anxiety produced by an abusive working situation) as *distress*.

Stresses can be emotional, nutritional, chemical, physiological or hormonal. Irrespective of this, our body responds identically to all these stresses. This is because stress responses are like reflexes—we get the same

response no matter what the stimulus. On the basis of its stimulus, researchers have found the following four factors to be the sources of stress in the modern times.

1. **Survival stress:** It is generated by a do-or-die crisis situation and is a common response to such dangers by human beings and animals alike. This kind of stress puts you in danger of immediate harm—physical or psychic. In response to it the adrenal glands of your body naturally responds with a surge of hormonal secretions like adrenalin and cortisol in your bloodstream which feels like a burst of energy being pumped in and this ignites your instinctive ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ response.
2. **Internal stress:** It is generated by pent-up worries, frustration and apprehension in your inner self and is a common response, mostly by human beings, to such inhibiting feelings. This kind of stress, unlike survival stress, keeps on building up inside your body and hindering your open outlook towards life. It obstructs your overall performance. It could be the result of your self-imposed worries about things over which you hardly have any control.
3. **Environmental stress:** It is generated by the uncomfortable feeling of things/situations in the surroundings such as noise, crowd, extremely hot or cold climate, continuous rain, impending flood, rising price hikes, old and ailing parent, a mischievous classmate, a noisy neighbour, a complaining friend, demanding parents, an overtly strict teacher, a bullying senior etc. Some of these factors may be within your control while others may be beyond your control.
4. **Fatigue and overwork related stress:** It is generated by the fatigue and overwork that you build up over a period of time as a result of your highly demanding study routines, ever increasing ambition, setting up unrealistic goals and exerting yourself much beyond your mental and physical capacity. More often than not, such stress arises from deadlines that are self-imposed or imposed by others or by circumstances.



Hence, having stress in your life is not an issue these days. However, how you manage your stress is more important. Living a healthy lifestyle is one way to reduce stress levels. When you are living healthy, you automatically cope with stress better. Unfortunately, often we cannot simply remove the cause of our stress; but we can change the way we deal with it.

SESSION 2 STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES – PHYSICAL EXERCISE, YOGA, MEDITATION

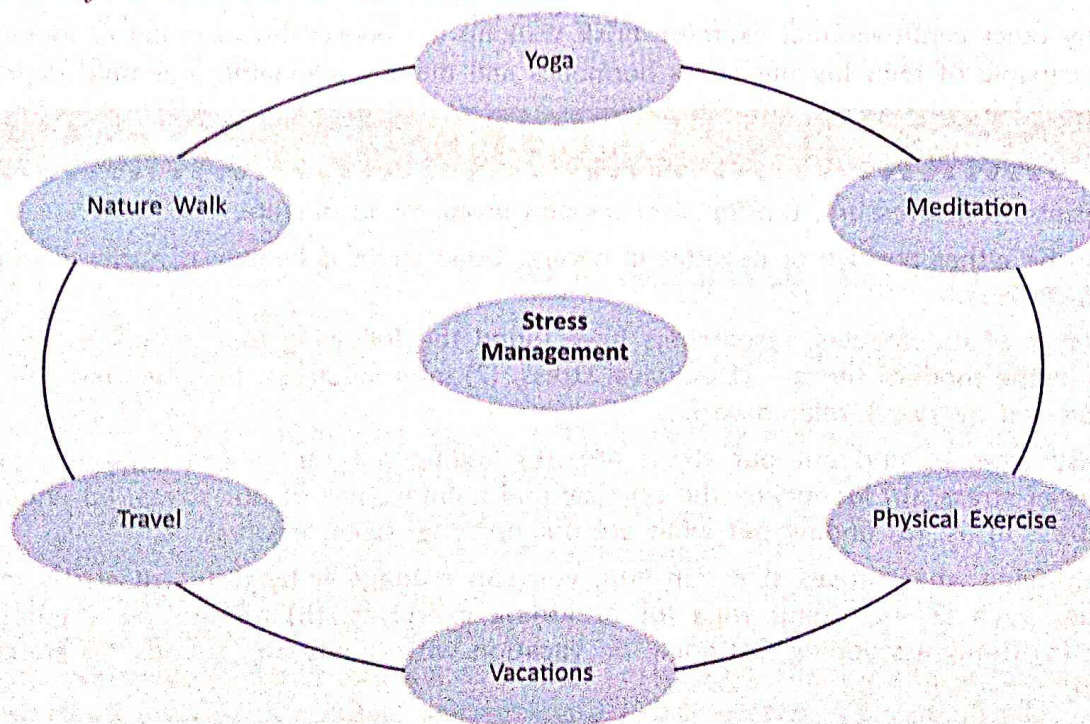
Stress is a very powerful force that involves awareness, attention and energy. It can be managed to empower you. But if you let stress control you, the resulting distress can be harmful not only to your body, mind, and spirit but also to your self-esteem and confidence level. Each individual has his/her own symptoms of stress. So it is important to first understand what causes stress in you and what symptoms does your body show. Below are given some easy ways to find out our stress.

1. **Finding out your ‘alarm response’ or signs and symptoms of stress:** Our body produces a physical ‘alarm response’ that pumps adrenalin through our body, tensing our muscles and speeding up our heart. This alarm response, in most cases, doesn’t do us any good. You can learn to respond calmly, and deal actively and positively with your stress, whether it is caused by external or internal factors.

2. **Identifying your physical and mental signs of stress:** It is important to identify the different signs of stress, for it could be the first step in learning how to deal with your own stress or stress signs of someone you work with such as your boss, colleague or a family member. Sometimes, you are so used to living with stress that you don't know how to identify it.
3. **Finding out what causes stress in you:** Personality type plays a major role in reaction to stress. For example, overambitious people, who set unrealistic goals for themselves, are often seen to be more prone to stress-related physical problems while those who are realistically ambitious about their goals know how to balance their aspirations.
4. **Find out what are your personal signs of stress:** It is quite possible that a sign may tip you off that you are under stress. You may start sweating, shivering, twitching or, in the worst case, start biting your nails when the situation gets out of your control. Understanding your personal signs of stress level is as important as feeling the pulse of the other person's stress level for you cannot insulate yourself from stress in the company of a stressed person, or in a stressful surrounding.

After identifying what causes stress in you, you can manage it by following stress management techniques:

1. **Yoga for breathing exercises:** Allowing yourself inhalation of a breath of full oxygen (also known as belly breathing), thus bringing in a good supply of it to your brain, is also an effective way of dealing with stress. When tense over undesirable situations and stressed over discomforting feelings, belly or abdominal breathing can be very soothing because it slows you down and relaxes your muscles.
2. **Meditation:** Meditation helps us in enhancing our mindfulness. Regular meditation can bring abundance of peace to your mind and calm and bring composure to your body. People who are successful in their chosen field have managed and overcome their day-to-day stress by meditating.
3. **Physical exercise:** One common sign of getting stressed is that your muscles contract, which further adds to your discomfort with headache, back pain, muscle pull and high blood pressure. Relaxing your muscles by deep breathing, lying down with closed eyes or sitting with a firm head support is almost always a better idea to deal with stress.



SESSION 3 ENJOYING, GOING TO VACATIONS AND HOLIDAYS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

By now, you know that stress is a normal thing to happen to you. However, you should not allow it to obstruct your performance and this can be done by living life in the moment, enjoying with family and friends whenever possible, 'thought-stopping' or not thinking too much, going on vacations and holidays whenever time and resources permit. Researchers say that a good vacation helps us to reconnect with ourselves, operating as a vehicle for self-discovery and helping us get back to feeling our best. In fact, people who take regular time to relax are less likely to experience burnout thereby becoming more creative and productive than their overworked, under-rested counterparts.

All these are some good stress management technique that help in dealing with stress that comes from your 'fear of the unknown'. Besides, also practice feeding yourself on 'good stress'. While all stress must be managed, it is a mistake to think of all stresses to be bad. Some stresses can be very good or 'eustress'. Good stress may apparently, like all stresses, seem too much to handle emotionally or physically, but it does not drain you of energy. Its very nature energizes you, helping you handle more than you thought possible.

SESSION 4 TAKING NATURE WALKS

Taking time out for nature walks too helps in reducing your stress level. Working hard to fulfill your dreams are important but equally important is meeting your physical and mental needs. Many of us stretch ourselves much beyond our physical and mental capacity, giving way to stress. Try to break your working hours into parts with brief breaks in between. Taking time out for nature walks, say of five to ten minutes, after every two hours of continuous work, is also a good idea as it helps you to break monotony and focus on your work better.

Taking a walk in a park could actually shift your brain into a calmer state, according to recent research. A recent study found that walking through green spaces can put the brain into a meditative state. Definitely a good reason to take a walk in the park: Spending time in nature has been linked to stress reduction.

Besides, like any other cardiovascular exercise, brisk walking too boosts the secretion of endorphins in our body, which is capable of reducing our stress hormones and thereby alleviating our mild depression.

SUMMARY

- Stress results from pressure, tension, worries and problems in our life.
- Stress can be either positive or negative in nature. Good stress is known as *eustress* and bad stress results in *distress*.
- On the basis of its stimulus, researchers have found the following *four* factors to be the sources of stress in the modern times – (1) survival stress, (2) internal stress, (3) environmental stress, and (4) fatigue and overwork related stress.
- Some easy ways to find out our stress are: (a) finding out our 'alarm response' or signs and symptoms of stress, (b) identifying the physical and mental signs of our stress, (c) finding out what causes stress in us, (d) finding out what are our personal signs of stress.
- After identifying what causes stress in you, you can manage it by different stress management techniques such as: (a) doing yoga for breathing exercises, (b) meditating, (c) doing physical exercise, (d) thought-stopping, (e) going on vacation with family and friends, (f) going for nature walks, etc.



SELF ASSESSMENT

A. Multiple choice questions.

- Which of the following stress enhances your productivity in terms of output?
(a) Distress (b) Eustress (c) Both (a) and (b)
- Which of the following helps in uncluttering your mind?
(a) Eavesdropping (b) Thought-stopping (c) Both (a) and (b)

B. Answer the following questions.

- What is stress?
- Explain briefly survival stress.

C. Activity.

For a week, observe any one person of your choice on his/her 'stress management techniques'. Share your observations in the class.

2.2 ABILITY TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY

SESSION 1 IMPORTANCE OF ABILITY TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY

One of the abilities that we require the most is our ability to work independently. Working independently actually means:

- Being self-aware, self-monitoring and self-regulating.
- Knowing what you need to do and when.
- Taking initiative rather than waiting for someone else to give us instruction what to do.
- Doing what is asked to the best of our ability without any external or internal fear.
- Learning to work at a decent pace so that our work is completed on time.
- Taking ownership of our mistakes and not looking for excuses or 'blame-game'.
- Not letting our self-doubt or negative emotions hamper our present or future actions.

The followings are the seven necessary skills that we need to hone in order to work independently:

- Organisational skills:** It is an essential requirement to know what to do, when and where to start and when to finish everything on time.
- Multitasking ability:** It is your ability to work on more than one thing at a time and complete each of them with required proficiency.
- Discipline:** It is most important skill to keep you and your actions in track for the successful completion of the task at hand.
- Communication skills:** It helps you connect with yourself as well as with others for the support and cooperation required to finish the work at hand.
- Negotiating skills:** It is your ability to see the bigger picture. It calls for foresightedness and willingness to accommodate others' ideas for the benefit of all.
- Flexibility or adaptability:** It is your quality to adapt your working style (without compromising with the quality of work) to suit other people working with you.
- Ability to deal with rejection and not to take it personally:** This calls for a 'never-say-die' attitude and open-mindedness to face failure and yet not get disheartened and start afresh.

SESSION 2 TYPES OF SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness refers to your knowledge and understanding of yourself – your emotions, beliefs, values, biases, knowledge base, abilities, motivations, interests, etc.

Your self-awareness includes recognition of your own personality, your strengths and weaknesses, your likes and dislikes. It makes you conscious of your own moods, emotions and drives. As we move ahead in the 21st century, in the knowledge-based economy, the need to upgrade our knowledge and skills to keep pace with the 'permanent white waters' becomes all the more important. However, the starting point should be the knowledge of oneself as a unique individual and how one relates to this new economy. When you are self-aware you almost always know how you are going to respond to certain good or bad situations. Developing self-awareness can help you in recognising when you are stressed or under pressure. This knowledge also capacitates you to have effective communication and productive interpersonal relations.

There are 4 kinds of self-awareness as given below:

1. **Self-awareness of your strengths:** Take time to discover your strengths. Discover your strengths by paying attention to the kind of work you do or want to do, what kind of work do you feel energised to work on, what do others comment on the quality of your work, what types of projects are you naturally drawn toward.
2. **Self-awareness of your weaknesses:** Discovering your weaknesses builds your humility. As you discover that you cannot do everything, you either learn them yourself or be humble enough to ask for someone else's support.
3. **Self-awareness of your dark side:** Your dark side includes your character flaws and your hidden weaknesses. Don't hide them rather try to overcome them with the help of friends and family.
4. **Self-awareness of your emotional triggers:** These are your trigger points. Sometimes known to you, at other times not known to you. The best way to deal with them is to keep your calm and composure in the worst of the situations. Remember that knowing your emotional triggers helps you develop a strategy for remaining calm in those situations.

SESSION 3 SELF-MOTIVATION AND SELF-REGULATION

Self-motivation refers to your ability to identify effective methods of getting yourself to move from thought to action. Every human being is different. Some individuals are highly self-motivated while others require the imposition of external deadlines or some type of reward or penalty in order to move from thought to action. Identifying your specific needs in this area is the first step.

A common barrier to action is often the perception that a task is too large or too complex to accomplish. If that is an issue for you, then a useful practice is to break down the job into several smaller, more 'doable' tasks each of which you can envision accomplishing in a set time period.

In the recent years, **self-regulation** or systematic efforts to direct thoughts, feelings, and actions towards the attainment of one's goals has assumed great importance in the psychological and educational literatures. Your self-regulation allows you to keep a tab on your own emotions resulting as your response to a specific event and attune your actions accordingly to accomplish your set goal.

Your self-regulation also enables you to develop your own idea about 'what is appropriate behaviour' and 'what is inappropriate behaviour' in a given social condition. With developed self-regulation you think

before you act and most of the times you know how to control your negative impulses over not-so-pleasant situations and let go your emotions when you weigh the situation and find it apt and conducive to receive and reciprocate your emotions for actualising your set goals.

In fact, goal setting is an integral component of self-regulation. Effective goal setting requires you to set a long-term goal, break it into short-term, attainable sub-goals, monitor progress and assess capabilities, adjust the strategies and goal as needed, and set a new goal when the present one is attained.

Your knowledge about self-awareness, self-motivation and self-regulation will help you identify your skill set, interests, career path, and key motivators. You can also take personality assessment to gain insight into yourself, your strengths, weaknesses and motivators. These personality tests help you with insights into how to grow personally and professionally.

One of the abilities that we require the most is our ability to work independently. Working independently requires 7 necessary skills: (1) organisational skills, (2) multitasking ability, (3) discipline, (4) communication skills, (5) negotiating skills, (6) flexibility or adaptability, and (7) ability to deal with rejection and not to take it personally.

SUMMARY

- Self-awareness refers to your knowledge and understanding of yourself – your emotions, beliefs, values, biases, knowledge base, abilities, motivations, interests, etc.
- There are 4 kinds of self-awareness: (a) self-awareness of your strengths, (b) self-awareness of your weaknesses, (c) self-awareness of your dark side, (d) self-awareness of your emotional triggers.
- Self-motivation refers to your ability to identify effective methods of getting yourself to move from thought to action.
- Self-regulation refers to systematic efforts to direct one's thoughts, feelings, and actions towards the attainment of one's goals.
- Your knowledge about self-awareness, self-motivation and self-regulation will help you identify your skill set, interests, career path, and key motivators.



SELF ASSESSMENT

A. Multiple choice questions.

1. General feeling of self-awareness enhances your:
(a) self-confidence (b) self-monitoring (c) self-regulation
2. Which of the following shows your ability to participate as a member of a team?
(a) Oratory skills (b) Interpersonal skills (c) Communication skills

B. Answer the following questions.

1. What is self-awareness?
2. Why is self-regulation important in your life?

C. Activity.

With the help of chart paper, glue stick and colourful sketch pens, make an elaborative chart indicating the 7 skills that any person require to work independently.

EXERCISES

A. Multiple choice questions.

1. Internal stress is a result of:
(a) pent-up worries (b) rat race (c) laziness
2. Which of the following do you have least control over?
(a) Survival stress (b) Internal stress (c) Environmental stress
3. Your ability to identify effective methods of getting yourself to move from thought to action is your:
(a) self-regulation (b) self-motivation (c) self-dedication
4. Which of the following is a systematic effort to direct thoughts, feelings, and actions towards the attainment of one's goals?
(a) Self-regulation (b) Self-motivation (c) Self-dedication

B. Short answer questions (I).

1. Define environmental stress.
2. Explain survival stress with two examples.
3. Give five ways that you can use to manage your stress.
4. What is self-motivation?
5. What is self-awareness?

C. Short answer questions (II).

1. How does stress impact your work and life?
2. How does meditation help in reducing stress?
3. What is self-awareness? Why is it important?
4. Briefly explain how going on vacations with family and friends reduces stress.
5. Why is self-regulation important in your life?

D. Long answer questions.

1. Discuss a few ways to identify the causes of stress.
2. Briefly explain the stress management techniques.
3. Explain how taking time out for nature walks helps in reducing your stress level.
4. What is self-motivation? How does self-motivation help in achieving one's goals in life?
5. Give five ways you regulate your actions and behaviour in your day-to-day life.

E. Practical work.

1. Observe yourself for 2 weeks and write in 100 words what kind of stress you normally get. What are its symptoms and how do you overcome it?
2. Make an elaborate chart indicating different sources of stress in the modern times.
3. For a week, observe any one person of your choice on his/her 'ability to work independently'. Share your observations in the class.