

Chapter 3

Meeting Life Challenges

EXERCISE-3.1

1 Marks

1.Explain the concept of stress. Give examples from daily life.

Ans. The pattern of responses an organism makes to stimulus event that disturbs the equilibrium and exceeds a person's ability to cope. Origin in the Latin word 'strictus', meaning tight/narrow and 'stringere' (to tighten). Stress may get manifested in two forms :

(a)Eustress : The level of stress that is good for you and is one of a person's best assets for achieving peak performance and managing minor crises. This is positive, healthy and inspiring.

(b)Distress: Manifestation of stress that causes our body's wear and tear. It is negative, unhealthy and demotivating.

Stressors: Events that cause our body to give the stress response. Whatever causes stress is known as stressor.

Strain: Reaction to external stressors is known as strain. Hans Selye (Father of modern stress research) defined stress as a non-specific response of the body to any demands.

Basic Features of Stress:

1.Different stressors may produce **different patterns of stress reaction.**

2.Stress is embedded in the **ongoing process** that involves individuals interacting ' with their social and cultural environment. Stress is a **dynamic mental/cognitive state.** It is a **disruption in homeostasis/imbalance** that gives rise to resolution of the imbalance/restoration of homeostasis.

Perception of stress is dependent on an individual's **cognitive appraisal of events** and the **resources available** to deal with them.

2.State the symptoms and'sources of stress.

Ans. • Everyone has higher own pattern of stress response. So the warning signs may vary, as may their intensity.

•Some of us know our pattern of stress response and can understand the depth of the • problem by the nature and severity of our own symptoms or changes in behaviour.

•These symptoms of stress can be physical, emotional and behavioural.

A wide range of events and conditions can generate stress; among the most important of these are major stressful life events such as death of a loved one or personal injury, the annoying frequent hassles of everyday life and traumatic events that affect our lives.

(i)Recent Life Events:

- Changes, both big and small, sudden and gradual affect our life from the moment we are born.
- We learn to cope with small, everyday changes but major life events can be stressful because they disturb our routine and cause trouble.
- If several of these life events that are planned (e.g., moving into a new house) or unpredicted (e.g., break-up of a long-term relationship) occur within a short period of time we find it difficult to cope with them and will be more prone to the symptoms of stress.

(ii)Daily Hassles: There are daily hassles from which we have to cope like noisy surroundings, quarrelsome neighbours, electricity and water shortage, traffic jams, and so on.

The more stressed people report as a result of daily hassles, the poorer is the psychological well-being.

(iii)Traumatic Events:

- These include being involved in a variety of extreme events such as fire, train or road accident, robbery, earthquake, tsunami, etc.
- The effects of these events may occur after some lapse of time and sometimes persist as symptoms of anxiety, flashbacks, dreams and intrusive thoughts etc.
- Severe trauma can also strain relationships.

3. Describe the GAS model and illustrate the relevance of this model with the help of an example.

Ans. Hans Selye's GAS Model explains the influence of stress on the body.

- From his studies, he found that there was a similar pattern of bodily responses in animals to a variety of stressors.

- According to **Hans Selye**, stress refers to non-specific bodily reactions. He believed that stresses may be many but responses are only physiological reactions. Selye is known as 'father of modern stress researches'. He did many experiments on animals in extreme climatic conditions as well as he observed chronic patients and concluded that reaction of stress is the same.

- On the basis of his experimental conclusions, he gave a pattern of stress reactions. He called this pattern the **General Adaptation Syndrome** and it involves three stages:

1.Alarm Reaction: The presence of a harmful stimulus or stressor leads to activation of the adrenal-pituitary-cortex system.

This triggers the release of hormones which produces the stress response and prepares the individual for fight or flight.

2.Resistance: If stress is prolonged, the parasympathetic nervous system calls for more cautious use of the body's resources.

During this stage, an individual makes an effort to cope with the threat.

3.Exhaustion: Continued exposure to the same stressor or additional stressors

drains the body of its resources and leads to burn out.

The physiological systems involved in the first two stages become ineffective and susceptibility to stress-related diseases like high blood-pressure increases.

This model is widely criticized because it focuses only on physiological aspects of stress and ignores the psychological dimension of stress.

EXERCISE-3.2

2 Marks

1. Enumerate the different ways of coping with stress.

Ans. Coping is a dynamic, situation-specific reaction to stress. It is a set of concrete responses to stressful situations that are intended to resolve the problem and reduces stress. **Endler and Parker** gave following Coping Strategies:

1.Task-oriented Strategy:

- It is goal management through confrontation with the problem.
- This involves obtaining information about the stressful situation and making best use of resources available.
- It also involves prioritising and acting so as to deal directly with the stressful situation.
- Mostly it is used by optimists.

Task-oriented strategies are particularly effective when the resources in the environment are within the control of the individual.

It is cognitive response to stress.

2.Emotion-Hyper oriented Strategy:

- It is emotion management.
- This strategy involve efforts to maintain hope and to control one's emotions. Individual works on his emotions rather than situations and goals.
- This mainly happens when the stressful event is such that it can not be manipulated in any way eg. loss of spouse or a family member.
- The individual deals with his emotions of anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness etc. and tries to gain hope and happiness again in his life.
- It can also involve venting feelings of anger and frustration or deciding that nothing can be done to change things.
- Emotion oriented strategies are particularly effective when the resources in the environment are beyond the controlled of the individual.

Avoidance-Hyper oriented strategy

- It is avoiding stressful event by indulging in different activities. Individual does not want to accept that he is facing such a stressful situation.
- This involves denying or minimising the seriousness of the situation.
- It also involves conscious suppression of stressful thoughts and their replacement by self protective thoughts.
- Watching T.V., attending parties or going to sleep are example of this type of coping.
- It is basically escapism by using defense mechanisms.

According to **Lazarus and Folkman**, coping responses can be divided into two types of responses:

(a)Problem-Focused:

- It includes taking direct action to solve the problem.

- It is seeking information that will be relevant to the solution for, e.g., developing a study schedule to cope up with the semester demands, and thereby reduce examination pressure.
 - It is basically confronting with the problem using all the available resources.
- (b)Emotion-Focused:** It refers to reduction of the negative emotional reaction to stress, e.g., by distracting oneself from the problem, relaxing or seeking comfort from others.

2.Explain Behavioural effects of stress. (CBSE 2013)

Explain the effect of stress on psychological functioning.

Ans. Physiological Effects: When the human body is placed under physical or psychological stress, it increases the production of certain hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. It causes:

- Changes in heart-rate, blood-pressure levels, metabolism and physical activity.
- Slowing down of digestive system.
- Constriction of blood vessels.

Cognitive Effects: High levels of stress can lead to:

- Mental overload.
- Impairment in the ability to make sound decision.
- Poor concentration.
- Reduced short term memory.

Emotional Effects: Those who suffer from stress are more likely to experience:

- Mood swings.
- Erratic behaviour.
- Maladjustment with family and friends.
- Feeling of anxiety and depression.
- Increased physical and psychological tension.
- Intolerance.
- Impatience.

Behavioural Effects: Stress affects our behaviour in the form of:

- Eating less nutritional food.
- Increasing intake of stimulants such as caffeine or excessive consumption of cigarettes, alcohol and drugs.
- Disrupted sleep pattern.
- Reduced work performance.

3. Describe how life skills can help meet life's challenges.

Ans. Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individual to deal effectively with stressful situations.

Few such skills are as follows:

(i)Assertiveness:

- It helps to communicate, clearly and confidently, our feelings, needs, wants

and thoughts.

- It is ability of an individual to say 'no' to a request which is against his wishes.
- If one is assertive then he or she feels confident high self-esteem and maintains his/her identity. ‘

(ii)Time Management:

- Learning time management determines quality of life.
 - It is setting the priorities, goals and values in life.
- Each day making list of things one wants to accomplish:
- Arranging work schedule.
 - Changing perception of time.
 - Setting aside time in schedule for exercise and leisure activities
 - Learning to plan time.

(iii)Rational Thinking:

- It is challenging the distorted thinking and irrational beliefs.
- Deriving the anxiety provoking thoughts.
- Making positive statements.
- It is learning to ignore negative thoughts and images.

(iv) Improving Relationship: It consists following essential skills: ,

- (a) Listening to what the other person is saying.
- (b) Expressing what one feels and thinks.
- (c) Accepting the other person's opinions and feelings, even if they are different from your own.
- (d) Avoiding jealousy and sulking behaviour.

(v) Self-care: Healthy mind in healthy body.

- Learning right pattern of breathing i.e., relaxed, slow, stomach-centered breathing from diaphragm.
- Avoiding environmental stress like pollutions, because it affects our mood.

(vi)Overcoming Unhelpful Habits: Perfectionism, avoidance, procrastination and our strategies which provides short-term gain but makes the individual vulnerable to stress.

Perfectionists want to get everything just as they want which is not always possible. Avoidance is ignoring the issue and refusal to face it or accept it. Procrastination means putting off what we know we need to do, i.e., postponing the things like 'I will do it later' just to avoid confrontation due to the fear of failure.

4. Describe briefly four factors which facilitate development of positive health. (CBSE 2013)

Or

Discuss the factors that lead to positive health and well-being.

Ans. Factors facilitating positive health and well-being are:

1.Diet: Diet can affect health independently or may enhance or modify the effects of stress in combination with other factors:

(a) How much nutrition one needs depends on one's activity level, genetic structure, climate and health history. In fact, there is no one diet, which is ideal for everyone, in all situations.

(b) Stress is supposed to affect diet and weight in many ways. People, who are under stress or in a negative mood are often seen eating more. They seek 'comfort foods' or foods that make them feel better.

(c) Stress may increase consumption of less healthy foods. Such people gain weight and lose stamina to fight stress.

(d) Obesity and weight gain is a problem for a section of the society. A much larger section of the society, which is below the poverty line, suffer from malnutrition.

(e) In the condition of poverty, women are the one who are most malnourished. Studies have shown that in India diets of female children and women are inadequate due to discriminatory practices.

2. Exercise:

- Exercise is directly related to promoting positive health.
- Two kinds of physical exercises essential for good health are 'stretching exercises' such as yogic asanas and 'aerobic exercises' such as jogging, swimming and cycling.
- Stretching exercises have a calming effect.
- Aerobic exercises increase the arousal level of the body.
- Yogic asanas provide systematic stretching to all the muscles and joints of the body and massages the glands and other body organs.
- Regular exercise reduces stress because it improves efficiency of vital body organs and improves immune system.
- Positive health and well-being come through a positive attitude of the mind.
- Positive health is the state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being. It is not merely the absence of disease.
- Positive health comprises high quality of personal relationships, a sense of purpose in life, self regard, mastery of life skills and resilience to stress, trauma and change.

3. Positive Attitude:

Positive health and well-being can be realized by:

- Perceiving the reality fairly accurately.
- Tolerating and understanding different points of view.
- Having a sense of purpose in life.
- Having a sense of responsibility, accepting blame for failures and taking credit for success.
- Being open to new ideas, activities, or ways of doing things.
- Having a good sense of humour, to be able to laugh at oneself and absurdities of life helps to see things in their proper perspective.

4. Positive Thinking:

- Positive thinking leads to a belief that adversity can be handled successfully

whereas negative thinking and pessimism anticipate disaster.

- Optimism, which is the inclination to expect favourable life outcomes is directly linked to psychological and physical well-being.
- Optimists use more problem-focused coping and seek advice and help from others. This optimism function helps the individual to cope up stress effectively.

EXERCISE-3.3

4 Marks

1.How does stress affect the immune system?

Ans. Stress can cause illness by impairing the workings of the immune system. The immune system guards the body against attackers, both from within and outside.

The white blood cells (leucocytes) within the immune system identify and destroy foreign bodies (antigens) such as viruses. It also leads to the production of antibodies. There are several kinds of white blood cells or leucocytes within the immune system, including T cells, B cells and natural killer cells. T cells destroy invaders, and T-helper cells increase immunological activity. It is these T-helper cells that are attacked by the Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV), the virus causing Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). B cells produce antibodies. Natural killer cells are involved in the fight against both viruses and tumours.

2. Give an example of a life event which is likely to be stressful. Suggest reasons why it is likely to cause different degrees of stress to the person experiencing it.

Ans. • Loosing a long-term job is a life event which is likely to be a cause of stress to an individual.

- A person's response to stress largely depends on how the events are appraised or interpreted.
- This was explained by Lazarus in his Cognitive theory of stress.
- According to this theory, stress depends on his primary or secondary appraisal. A new or changing event is positive, negative or neutral.
- A negative event, such as loosing a long-term job, can be appraisal for its harm, instead a challenge.
- If it is appraised as a threat, which may result in future damage, it will result in high levels of stress.
- If it appraised as a challenge, then the individual, who lost the job, will have more confident expectations of the ability to cope with the stressful event, overcome it.
- If appraised as a harm, assessment of the damage, which has already been caused by the event, will result in high stress.
- Through secondary appraisal, one's coping abilities and resources are analysed as to whether they are sufficient in meeting the harm, threat or challenge.

3. Given what you know about coping strategies, what suggestions would you give to your friends to avoid stress in their everyday lives?

Ans. High school students these days avoid extremely stressful lives, with increasing completion, expectations and demands. Therefore, I would suggest 'task-oriented strategy' as explained by **Endler and Parker**, to be an effective means in coping with stress.

Task-oriented coping involves:

1. Obtaining information about a stressful situation.
2. Deciding our priorities.
3. Dealing directly with the stressful situation.

Such an approach helps during exams and project deadlines.

I would also suggest the adoption of positive attitude and thinking which promotes health and well-being.

A positive attitude where the individual has a fairly accurate perception of reality; ability to take credit for success and blame for failure; acceptance and tolerance for other's view points.

Positive thinking interns of being optimistic. Optimism points towards the inclination to expect favourable life outcomes. An optimist will always use problem-focused coping and try and find the source of stress. Relaxation Techniques, Exercise, Balanced Diet all contribute significantly to stress reduction.

4. Reflect on the environmental factors that have (a) a positive impact on the being and (b) a negative effect.

Ans. Until recently, catastrophic events were not studied systematically, because of their infrequent and unpredictable occurrence. However, because the survivors of these devastating events often experience the severe psychological aftermath termed 'post-traumatic stress disorder'.

Whether large-scale natural disasters produce lasting psychological effects, however, remains a source of controversy. Some research shows evidence of long-term psychological effects, whereas other studies show that the psychological impact of natural disasters is minimal.

In certain respects, the psychological trauma that results from human-produced disasters can be more dramatic and long term in its scope than natural disasters. Several factors seem to contribute to this phenomenon. One important factor seems to be control. Human-produced disasters are usually the result of human error; but we expect that adequate precautions will be taken to prevent human error. Thus, when disaster strikes, our expectations are violated, leading to a loss of control. In contrast, we do not expect to have control over hurricanes,

earthquakes, or other types of natural disasters and accept them as fate.

A second factor has to do with the consequences associated with each type of disaster.

Natural disasters, while large in scope, tend to be clearly marked and limited in time. In contrast, human-produced disasters—such as the contamination of ground water with toxic chemicals—can, potentially exert their effects for many years. For example, exposure to toxic chemicals can increase people's risk of developing cancer or produce genetic damage. Moreover, the psychological trauma combined with the uncertainty regarding when or if these consequences will appear can produce chronic stress-related problems.

5. We know that certain life-style factors can cause stress and may lead to diseases like cancer and coronary heart disease, yet we are unable to change our behaviour. Explain 1 why?

Ans. Life-style is the overall pattern of decisions and behaviours that determine a person's health and quality of life. An individual, when stressed, is more likely to expose himself/herself to pathogens—agents causing physical illness. Stressed individuals have poor nutritional habits, disturbed sleeping patterns, tendency to engage in health-risking behaviours such as intake of stimulants such as caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes, drugs like tranquilizers such health impairing behaviours develop gradually and provide pleasant experiences temporarily, but have detrimental long-term consequences.

As they are addictive, and pleasurable, individuals using these psychoactive substances are unable to give them up.

- Such type of life-style ultimately cause serious health hazards like cancer, diabetes and coronary heart diseases.

- Knowing that faulty lifestyle causes various physical and psychological hazards. Still people continue, because the consequences and side effects are not likely to occur immediately. Their effects get manifested after several years. So people ignore them. Because they are aware with the side effects. They develop anxiety because of inconsistency in their attitude and behaviour but because this lifestyle becomes a part of their habit pattern. So they find it very difficult to change and continue such hazardous lifestyle and ultimately it causes a stage of burn out.