



Notes

COPING WITH STRESS

Sneha's class 12 examinations were scheduled on 4th of April. She went to her home town to attend her cousin's wedding on 28th February. On returning back her friend told her that the examinations have been preponed to 15th of March. At first she was very worried but she realized that worrying will only lead to a waste of time. Without wasting time she worked so hard that she passed the exams with the top grades in the class.

Have you ever come across a situation where you performed well under stress? Many of us might have undergone various situations in life where we were surprised to perform much better than what we expected. It can be anything extending from passing a difficult examination with good grades, winning a tough competition, cracking competitive examination or accomplishing targets in the job. However, this is not true for everyone. A lot of people find it difficult to deal with stressful situations on a day today basis. For example, although in the above example Sneha could perform better in the examination but she might find it difficult to deal with some other life situation.

There are many other examples from our daily life where different situations like managing home and office, completing an important assignment, competing in the examination, dealing with a strict boss in the office, facing traffic, dealing with people in the family/ neighbourhood and many other situations become a source of stress. Stress can hamper an individual's normal functioning. It is generally seen that something which is stressful for one person might act as a motivator for the other person. The difference in the effects of stress depends upon the nature and kind of situation as well as upon a person's ability to look up at the stress provoking situations in a positive or negative manner. In this lesson we shall learn about the nature of stress and the various ways to deal with stress.

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**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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After studying this lesson, learner :

- describes the meaning and nature of stress;
- recognizes the physical, mental, emotional and behavioural signs and symptoms of stress;
- analyses the various factors leading to stress;
- elucidates the effects of stress on physical and mental health; and
- Applies the ways and strategies to cope with stress.

22.1 MEANING AND NATURE OF STRESS

Hans Seyle has defined stress as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change”. Stress is an indispensable part of human life. It makes life challenging and interesting.

Stress can be understood with an example of elasticity. It happens that the magnitude of the external force or stress makes proportional amount of deformation or strain in a malleable metal. The malleable metal as a result of its property resumes its property after having been compressed. In the same manner stress can be defined as a psychological pain where small amounts of stress is necessary to improve performance, whereas, negative stress can hamper one’s day to day functioning. The experience of stress depends upon an individual’s ability to perceive the situation as challenging or threatening depending upon the resources available to deal with the situation. Stress can be caused by a number of reasons which can be internal or external to an individual. Such stimulus or an event that causes stress in an individual is known as a stressor. Let us know about these stressors.

22.1.1 Daily Hassles Stress

This kind of stress results from too many minor sources of stress. It can range from making meals to reaching the office on time, dealing with traffic; attending guests at home, shopping and so on. These daily hassles take a toll on an individual’s mental and physical health and affects the psychological well being.

22.1.2 Major Life Events Stress

Apart from the daily hassles there are major life events that cause stress to the individuals. Such stresses can be related to the death of a loved one, divorce, and transfer from one place to another, losing a job etc. Major life events exert adverse effects on the health of an individual.

22.1.3 Job Stress

The stress related to the working environment adversely affects the physical and mental wellbeing of an individual. Job stress can be related to the work pressure, salary structure, and relationship with colleagues, working conditions, relationship with boss, leave policy and many more.

22.1.4 Catastrophic Events

This refers to those situations that are beyond the control of a person. Such stressors might include devastation after wars, earthquakes, tsunamis etc. causing individuals to lose and would have devastating effects on individuals.

These are some of the different stressors that disrupt the physical and mental well being of an individual.

Everyone experiences stress at one or the other point in life. As life goes on we try to adjust ourselves.

However, stress need not be negative always. There are basically two types of stress:-

i) Positive stress

Just like Sneha who passed her examination with good grades despite less time for preparation, it happens that sometimes stress leads to unexpected outcomes. This occurs when we take charge of the stressful situation and take it as a challenge. This further motivates us to counter the situation effectively. It is also known as **Eustress**.

ii) Negative stress or Distress

Rahul has joined a new job; however, he is finding it difficult to manage with the work pressure. Workload is hampering his performance at work. He also remains irritated with people around him.



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This kind of stress is also known as **Negative stress or Distress**. This occurs when we lose our strength to work on stressful situations or face the challenge. Such stress adversely affects the physical and mental wellbeing of an individual.

**ACTIVITY**

Think about a stressful situation in your life where you enjoyed working over the task. Write about your experience of dealing with the situation in 250 words.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 22.1**

1. Briefly discuss the different types of stressors.
2. Positive aspect of stress is called _____ and the negative aspect of stress is called _____.
3. What are catastrophic life events and how can they create stress among individuals?

22.2 EFFECTS OF STRESS ON AN INDIVIDUAL**22.2.1 Physiological Reactions**

Priyanka had severe toothache. Her dentist advised her for tooth extraction. On the previous day of surgery she reported of having severe headache. The medical examination revealed no signs of physical cause behind headache.

Stress can cause many physiological reactions such as

- Dryness of throat or mouth
- Low energy level
- Indigestion
- Rapid pounding of heart
- Lack of sleep
- Tense muscles frequent cold

These responses may result from the weakened immune system due to continuous exposure to stress.

22.2.2 Cognitive Reactions

Piyush has to appear for his final board examination of class 12. However, as the date of examinations is approaching he is not able to concentrate on his studies, he seems unable to remember what he has learnt.

Stress can also lead to some of the cognitive symptoms.

- Poor concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Confusion
- Poor judgement
- Negativity in thoughts
- Racing thoughts

22.2.3 Behavioural Reactions

Shreyas's parents compares him with his elder brother and puts pressure on him to be as good as his elder brother is in sports and studies. He often complains with his friends of being under pressure always to match up with his brother's standards. Recently he has started being abusive to his brother.

Many of the stressors in the environment affect the way the person behaves

- Procrastination
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Substance abuse
- Crying
- Hitting
- Suicidal talk or behaviour
- Anti-social behaviour



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- Avoidance behaviour

After completing her studies Kirti has been applying for jobs continuously. She has always been a competent student throughout her life and everyone praises her for her behaviour with others too. However, she is not able to get an appropriate job for her. Her parents are observing that she has started getting angry over small little things. She also remains very nervous and anxious whenever she gets an interview call.

22.2.4 Affective Reactions

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Irritability
- Frustration
- Nervousness
- Hopelessness

22.3 FACTORS LEADING TO STRESS

Ruhi is a confident and intelligent girl and has been a top scorer in her class. However, to everyone's surprise she is finding it really difficult to face class 10 Board examination. Her teacher found that she is feeling stressed because her mother is hospitalized and she has to take care of her younger sister and manage things at home.

There are various factors in the life of a person that can lead to stress. These factors can be categorized into **internal and external** pressures or situation that mount upon an individual and results in stress.

22.3.1 External factors

- Catastrophic events** like earthquake, tsunami, cyclone, war etc.,
- Prevailing situations** around an individual like poor health of family members, financial problems, unhealthy family environment, divorce, death of a loved one etc.

- iii) **Environment of an individual** like background noise, pollution, overcrowding, job related factors such as workload or work underload, relationship with colleagues and boss, unhealthy relationship with the neighbours etc.
- iv) **Culture stress:** this may refer to the culture shock that one may experience as a result of adapting to new cultures, for example, when a person from rural background has to make an adjustment in the



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22.3.2 Internal factors

i) **Personality factors of an individual**

Arnab is a renowned chef and runs his own restaurant. Still he is not able to retain his employees for a long time. His team members often complain that in order to present a perfect dish he himself comes under so much stress that he starts yelling and insulting his employees for small little things. People who are highly motivated, competitive and perfectionists are more prone to stress.

ii) **Locus of control**

Priya and Rashmi appeared for competitive examination after class 12. Although both of them were unable to clear the exam in the first attempt, Priya believed that since the paper was quite tough and out of syllabus, she got stressed and lost all her hopes. On the other hand Rashmi realized that she needs to put in extra effort and change her strategy towards preparation. As a result she qualified the examination in the next chance.

Experience of stress also depends upon the degree to which people believe that they have control over the situations around them. People who have an internal locus of control take charge of the events and situations happening around them and believe in a sense of control. However, those with external locus of control believe that such events and situations are beyond their control. Such individuals are likely to feel more stress as compared to the ones with internal locus of control.

iii) **Attitude**

After losing his job Arpit never lost hope and kept working on finding better jobs. After waiting for six months he got a job in a very good organization. Individuals with an optimistic attitude believe that good things will happen to them as compared to those with pessimists' feelings. This is mainly because

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optimism is related with dedication and determination which help to adapt with stressors more effectively as compared to pessimists.

iv) Poor health

Think of a situation in your life where your health became a reason for your stress. If an individual is not in a good mental or physical health then it also leads to the experience of stress of an individual.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 22.2**

1. Match the following

(a) Physiological response to stress	(i) impaired decision making
(b) Cognitive response to stress	(ii) crying
(c) Affective response to stress	(iii) irritability and anxiety
(d) Behavioural response to stress	(iv) trembling and tense muscles
2. How can noise acts as a stressor to an individual?
3.
 - a) Highly motivated people are more prone to stress. True/False
 - b) People with internal locus of control are likely to experience more stress as compared to people with external locus of control. True/False
4. How can poor health of family member create stress?
5. Discuss how the attitude of an individual contributes to the experience of stress.

22.3 EFFECTS OF STRESS ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL

Up till now you may be able to understand the effects of stress on an individual. However, stress can have far reaching effects on individuals at physical and mental levels. In this section we will discuss the effects of stress on the physical and mental level of an individual.

Hans Selye proposed a three stage model of stress to explain the physiological changes that take place in the body as a result of stress. It was popularly known as **General Adaptation Syndrome(GAS)**.

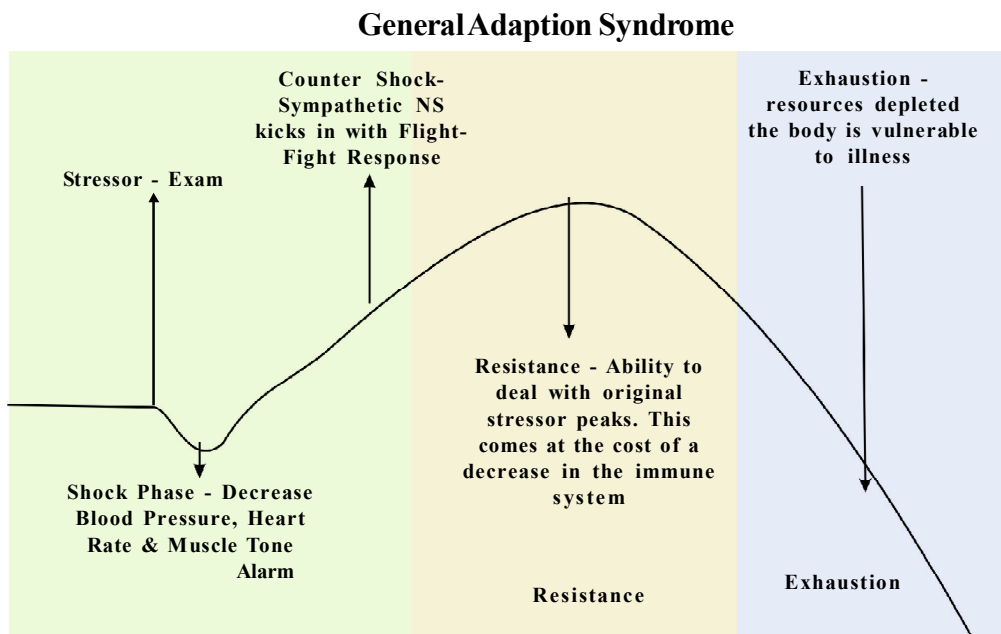


Figure 22.1 General Adaption Syndrome

On looking at the figure you will find that there are three stages of the physiological response to stress.

Let us take up the case of a learner whose term end examinations are approaching and the learner is not prepared. So there will be three stages of reaction to stress due to lack of preparation.

Stage 1

Alarm:- This means that the stressor which is 'term end examination' will ring an alarm in the body or come as a shock to the learner. During this phase the blood pressure, heart rate and muscle tone of the learner may be affected. This is a natural reaction to stress provoking situations and prepares the learner to either flee or fight the situation. Can you think how this happens? Let us go back to lesson number 2 and try to understand the role of ANS in alarm reaction. During the alarm reaction the sympathetic branch of the ANS is activated and releases adrenaline and produces cortisol to prepare the body for action (flee or fight).

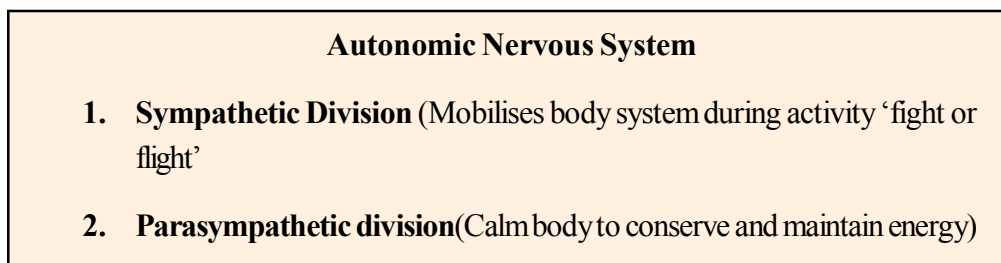


Figure 22.2

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Stage 2

Resistance: After fight or flight responses the body begins to repair itself with the help of parasympathetic system and tries to maintain homeostasis.

Stage 3

Exhaustion stage: If the stressor continues to be present even after the resistance stage then this leads to exhaustion stage. The continuous effort of the body's ability to deal with stress provoking situation depletes its ability to fight stress. This is regarded as dangerous to one's health as it weakens the immune system and the organism becomes more vulnerable to stress induced illness.

Think about the last time during a stressed situation you caught cough, cold or a disturbed stomach

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 22.3**

1. Prolonged stress adversely affects the immune system of the body. True/False
2. Parasympathetic division is related to the fight or flight response to stress. True/False
3. Sympathetic division conserves and maintains energy. True/False

22.4 STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH STRESS

In the previous sections we discussed the various factors that are responsible for stress. We also talked about the various stress provoking factors and their effect on the physical and psychological wellbeing of an individual.

However, most of the people in the world try to find out solutions to their problems. Nobody wants to be under stress and go through its after effects. Do you ever realize that when you are under stress you try to relieve yourself by talking to others? We try a lot of coping strategies to deal with stress. Let us discuss a few of the coping strategies with examples.

22.4.1 Problem Focused Coping

Ramesh had to sit in the final board examination and he realized that he was not able to do well in one of his courses and he was feeling stressed. However, he decided to find

out and make use of the available resources like video lectures, internet resources, books and extra help from the tutor to prepare for the course. To everyone's surprise he was able to score the highest marks in that course after such a preparation.

This kind of coping strategy which Ramesh used in the above example is known as **Problem Focused Coping** strategy in which an individual tries to work on the problem to find a solution and get relieved.



ACTIVITY

Create a scenario where you find that your friend is not able to continue with her studies because of financial constraints. Develop a problem focused coping strategy that can be helpful in such a situation.

22.4.2 Emotion Focused Coping

Pratigya spent a lot of time preparing to get selected for the women's hockey team. However, she was not selected. After the result was declared she decided to go out for a vacation and spend some time at her grandmother's place in Shimla.

Do you think it is possible for anyone to be the winner every time? It might be for some but not for all. In such situations when as individuals we find that the situations or circumstances are not under our control we tend to take breaks from the situations. This is what Pratigya did in the above example. This kind of coping strategy is known as **Emotion Focused** coping.

Sometimes in emotion focused coping people may delay the process of resolving the issue at hand.

For example, people may delay the root canal treatment because of the pain associated with it.

This kind of emotion focused coping is not beneficial for anyone to deal with the stress provoking situations.

22.4.3 Cognitive Response to Stress

Mohan was diagnosed with Asthma at a very young age. He was under stress realizing that asthma might refrain him from doing a lot of things that he used to do. However, he decided to seek information about the disease through different resources like case



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studies, clinical reports, doctors and through available online resources. This provided him with rich information about the dos and don'ts of the disease. He now feels less stressed as he knows how to effectively live with it.

Do you sometimes look for information to deal with the problem which you are facing?

If we try to gather information about our problems then it generally gives us a clear picture of the problem and also tells us the strategies that helps in effective dealing. This is also known as information seeking approach of stress reduction. If you are facing any problem at a given moment try to help yourself by gathering information about it. The problems may range from daily hassles to examination stress to major issues in life but gaining knowledge helps to empower the individual in effective dealing.

22.4.4 Social Support

Geeta hails from an economically backward family. She always wanted to financially support her family. She did a cutting and tailoring course from distance learning. Now she wants to open her own boutique. She realized that she lacks funds for the purpose and is under stress. Her tutor told her that she can approach various government organizations to financially support her in setting up her boutique. She also sought help from her relatives in finding a proper place for her boutique.

Do you also share your problems with your family, friends or with anyone whom you trust will be supportive? The coping strategy which is discussed in the above example is known as seeking **Social Support**. This is another coping strategy where an individual tries to seek help from the immediate environment to deal with stressful situations.

22.5 TECHNIQUES OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

Have you ever noticed that when under stress lots of negative thoughts starts coming in our mind? For example, what will happen if I fail in the examination, what will happen if I lose my job etc. In such situations when negative thoughts start pouring in our mind it is good to use cognitive strategies to alter the stress provoking thoughts.

There are various ways in which this alteration of thoughts can be done and **Thought Stopping** is one among them.

22.5.1 Thought Stopping

means that whenever unnecessary thoughts creeps in mind just **strongly** say say ‘**STOP**’. This helps in getting the thought out of the mind of an individual. However, this technique has to be practiced repeatedly to keep the stress provoking thought away from the mind of the individual.

Another cognitive technique to alter the stress provoking thought is to modify the stress provoking thought and rate it on a 100 point scale with. Let us do one exercise to understand this technique. In the below given example there are two different thoughts for the same situation. The situation is ‘**I am late for the interview**’

The thoughts can be;-

- 1. I will not be allowed to sit for the interview. I will lose the opportunity to get this job and my one year will be wasted on what I will do.**

Rate your thoughts on a 1-100 point scale for this thought.

I will not be allowed to face the interview. So what I will try to convince them is that due to unexpected traffic jams, the roads were closed and I could not reach on time. I may or may not be allowed to appear for the interview. However, feeling sad about it will not be the solution. This is not the end of my life. I will work even harder and will have better opportunities.

Rate your thought on a 1-100 point scale. Considering the above example, what do you think is relaxing? Apparently the second. There are times when we are faced with a lot of negative situations in our lives but how we think about the situation changes the way we feel about it.

22.5.2 Time Management

There are 24 hours in a day for everyone. Some individuals are able to effectively manage their time. The history tells examples of great leaders who could succeed in their lives because they knew how to effectively manage and utilize these 24 hours in a day. It happens with many of us when under stress we feel that time is running too fast.

The biggest hurdle to time management is procrastination. It happens when we delay important assignments and waste on less important things. You might have come across a situation where you know that submitting an assignment is more important than going out with friends, however, you still chose to go out with friends and that results in



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feeling helpless when you know that not submitting might end up you with losing grades in examination. We may procrastinate for a number of reasons like keep on thinking and planning and never execute the plan to finish the task, or we may procrastinate because we feel that we might not be able to perform the task and thus we do not make an effort, or we procrastinate because we think that we will do it perfectly. There can be endless reasons for procrastination but it results in stress when we are required to face the situation that we have been delaying. Effective time management requires planning and prioritizing. Let us understand how?

- i) **Planning:** It is very important to plan ahead for what is to be done. Make a list of activities to be done for the day. Every single day and each moment in the day counts. It is important to set short term goals of the day to achieve the big targets in life. Those who are successful in life, plan and manage their time effectively
- ii) **Prioritizing:** It is very important to prioritize what is to be done first while planning for the activities. Prioritizing is the key to successful time management. You must differentiate between the tasks that demand the urgent attention over all others. Sometimes we spend our time on things that are not very important and realize that even after spending time working on tasks we are still not able to achieve targets.

22.5.3 Physical Exercise and Nutrition

The lifestyle of a person has an important role to play in the overall wellbeing of an individual. When we are under stress we often resort to unhealthy eating habits and refrain ourselves from keeping up a healthy lifestyle. However, physical exercise on a regular basis and healthy eating habits boosts self confidence and also brings in discipline in life. Physical exercise has been associated with bringing in positivity in individuals. It has proven to be beneficial in reducing stress. Physical activity helps in releasing endorphins from the brain which are the feel good neurotransmitters of the brain. Endorphin release has been associated with producing a positive feeling in the body. Physical exercise does not always mean going for a rigorous exercise every day. Walking, jogging, skipping can also work well for the individual. Physical exercise combined with yoga and meditation is an age old technique in the Indian tradition that reduces stress and is effective in calming mind of the individuals. Apart from physical exercise, healthy nutrition also contributes to reducing stress in an individual. When under stress the body needs more energy, oxygen, circulation, and therefore more metabolic

cofactors are needed (e.g. vitamins and minerals). When under stress individuals often resorts to unhealthy foods like sugary and fatty foods. Stress makes us eat an imbalanced amount of food sometimes less sometimes more. This disturbs the nutritional intake that is required by an individual. So it is very important that a good diet must be taken during difficult times.

However, stress is detrimental to adopting any kind of healthy behaviours. Nevertheless as already discussed in cognitive strategy that if one has clarity about the crux of the problem the problem can be halved. So a healthy lifestyle must be adopted to reduce stress.



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Skills to cope with stress

Take time out for yourself:- If you think that the daily hassles have taken a toll on you then you must find leisure time for yourself. It can be anything that you like doing, for example, going for a walk, going out with friends, spending time doing nothing at home etc.

Physical exercise:- As already discussed in the previous section any kind of physical exercise is positively related to the wellbeing of an individual. Spending at least 20 minutes a day can act as a stress buster for the individuals.

Watching movies: Watching comedy series or movies helps in relieving stress of an individual as when you watch such movies you just enjoy and do not give stress to your brain for thinking over anything else. Such movies relieve stress. Funny content also makes you laugh which relieves stress and loosens your brain allowing you to think without stress blocking the way of your thoughts. Laughing is good medicine for preventing stress, so funny movies are a good choice.

Social support: A problem shared is a problem halved. Sharing problems with people who really care helps in relieving stress. It helps in ventilating emotions. Also if sometimes because of stress we are not able to find out solutions to our problems then others can suggest better ways to deal with the situations.

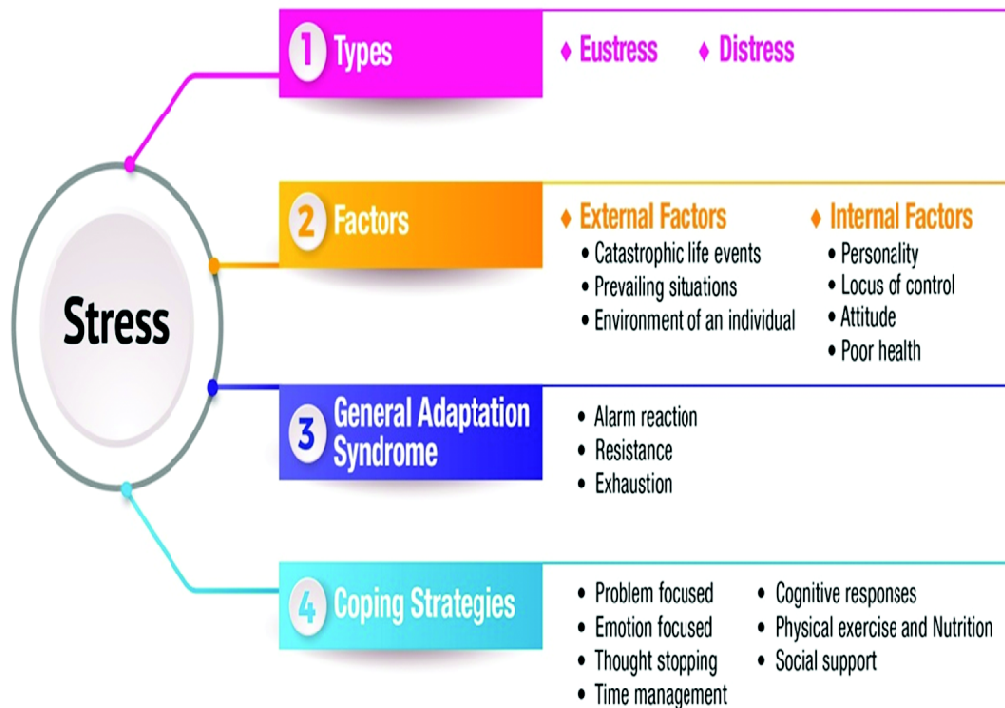
Learn to say 'NO': It is not possible for anyone to do everything all at once. It is good to set priorities and say NO to some activities if you think that you are not ready for a task.



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WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. What do you understand by stress and its types?
2. How stress affects the physiological and psychological wellbeing of an individual?
3. What are the different strategies that are helpful in coping with stress?
4. What is the role of physical exercise and nutrition in enhancing the wellbeing of an individual?
5. Discuss in detail about the role of cognitive strategy in dealing with stress.
6. What are the different factors leading to stress?
7. Describe General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) and how does it impacts the individual.
8. Effective time management helps in planning and prioritizing of work, how does it helps the individual in dealing with stress?

9. Outline the different general skills to cope up with stress.
10. Attitude plays an important role in our life, how does an optimistic attitude and pessimistic attitude impacts the individual.



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

22.1

1. **Daily hassles stress:**-This kind of stress results from too many minor sources of stress. It can range from making meals to reaching office on time etc.
2. **Major life events stress:** Death of a loved one, divorce, transfer from one place to another, losing a job etc.
3. **Job stress:**-The stress related to the working environment more.
4. **Catastrophic events:** Devastation after wars, earthquakes ,tsunamis etc. This refers to those stressors that are beyond the control of a person. Such stressors might include devastation after wars, earthquakes ,tsunamis etc. These might land up individuals losing all the assets they have. Therefore, these have devastating effects on the psychological wellbeing of individuals.
5. **Eustress, Distress**

22.2

1. a iv
b i
c iii,
d ii
2. Environment of an individual like background noise can create stress among individuals. It disrupts, distracts, or detracts from regular functioning.
3. (a) T
(b) F
4. Caregiving to a family member often results in stress, affecting caregiver's physical and psychological wellbeing.



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5. Individuals with an optimistic attitude believe that good things will happen to them as compared to those with pessimist's feelings. This is mainly because is optimism is related with dedication and determination which help to adapt with stressors more effectively as compared to pessimists.

22.3

1. T
2. F
3. F