

## LESSON 30

### STRESS MANAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING

#### SUMMARY

Stress is by and large manageable. If a scientific approach is followed for managing stress, it can be relieved. Stress management training refers to a package of techniques that are used for helping the individuals cope with stress rather effectively. Wellness refers to the good physical, psychological and social functioning of an individual.

#### Altering Bodily Reactions and Relaxation

Relaxation is just opposite to the state of stress or tension. It is a state in which one is able to think clearly about or reflect on a problem. Just as stress can affect the individual at physiological, affective, cognitive and behavioural levels, relaxation also can influence the individual at all these levels.

Bodily or physiological dimension is the one which responds first to stress. Therefore, to combat stress effectively, one will have to regulate the physiological changes that occur because of stress.

All the muscles in the body reflect stress by being rather rigid or tight. Breathing gets altered. Heart starts beating faster. Similarly, almost all organs and systems present in the body are affected by stress.

#### Techniques for Stress Reduction

Physical exercise, sports, and yoga, etc. are found to be of immense value in preparing a person for relaxation. Other scientific and systematic techniques are –

**Deep Muscle Relaxation** - Experience of relaxation and appreciation of difference between tension and relaxation immensely helps the individual in maximizing the feeling of calmness. It is also called progressive muscle relaxation, because as the individual practices this technique, experience of relaxation increases.

**Biofeedback** - In this procedure, based on skin response (GSR), feedback on brain waves (EEG) and feedback on any other physiological parameter, the individual is made to study the internal reactions to stress and relaxation. By giving the individual, feedback whether he/she is in a state of stress or relaxation, the individual can be made to alter the reaction in favour of relaxation which he/she will have to maintain as much as possible.

#### Cognitive Strategies

The term cognition is closely associated with thinking. Behind every action there is a thought or cognition. So, by altering the cognitive environment, behaviour

can be modified. By making negative or unhealthy thoughts, positive or healthy, both the experience and expression of stress can be minimized.

**Systematic desensitization** - individuals are given training at thought level to cope with stress by not being that emotionally sensitive as he or she had been. All the situations are graded on the intensity of stress that each situation produces. These situations, then, are presented to the individual one by one who imagines the situations and slowly or gradually, he/she counters those provoking situations with the pleasant scenes which bring relaxation.

**Thought stopping** - The individual is actively helped to stop entertaining those negative or useless unnecessary thoughts which prevent effective functioning.

**Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT)** - it is a cognitive technique which helps the individual to think rationally and realistically so that positive emotion comes out of it. The individual is, thus, made to understand the fact that every successful action depends on rational or logical thinking which takes reality into account.

**Self-talk** - is another method which is useful in preparing the individual cognitively for effective management of stress.

## Enhancing Supportiveness of The Environment

As stress causes a lot of feelings of insecurity in an individual, it becomes essential and rather imperative on the part of the environment to be highly supportive so as to make him/her feel secure. If the external environment is also as negative and as discouraging as the internal environment (mainly cognitive or thought environment), the individual will feel stress all the more.

“Stress free” environment will be characterized by certain features like having regard for an individual without any conditions, empathy, careful listening, providing useful tips to overcome stress which occurs mainly because of poor resolution of conflicts, appreciating adaptive behaviour etc. Such a positive environment will not only strengthen the personality make-up of the individuals, but also make the individuals learn certain new skills important for effective living. A person having warm and positive environment is less likely to go in to stress.

## Hobbies, Recreation and Leisure

Hobbies, recreation and leisure provide a highly admirable support to individuals for overcoming stress. They help individuals (who are under stress due to several reasons) relax and gain much wanted relief from stress.

Leisure activities may be active such as participation in sports or in artistic creation or they may be passive like engaging in spectator sports or art etc. They can be solitary pursuits such as reading or quiet contemplative activity. The leisure activities have a recreative function enabling the individuals to renew their energies.

## Time Management

Time management is necessary for effective use of the available time for doing many activities within a short duration of time, thus, increasing the quality of the performance and life. Time acts as pressure when we simultaneously try to do many things without priorities. Time management techniques mainly involve (1) *efficiency in doing things*, (2) *planning*, and (3) *prioritizing*.

Planning would involve preparation, goal setting, scheduling future events and activities like fixing up appointments, setting deadlines, maintaining calendar etc.

**Distribution of work:** Some people have a tendency to do every work by themselves. A manager will be efficient only when he/she distributes the work amongst subordinates and gets it done. The allocation of the work must be done according to each one's capacity, interest and skills.

**Time Budgeting:** Time-budgeting is similar to money budgeting. It is done by considering priorities,

which are determined by personal, familial and professional goals etc. The priorities can be divided as short-term and long-term and accordingly they have to be executed. Time available should be calculated after deducting the time spent for personal necessities.

## Yoga

Yoga is a way of life that promotes physical as well as psychological well-being. Yoga has eight main steps as following:

**Yama:** practicing self-regulation.

- **Yama:** practicing self-regulation.
- **Niyama:** observing behavioural norms.
- **Pranayama:** Pranayama is an exercise meant to regulate breathing.
- **Asanas:** Asanas are the physical aspect of yoga in which postures are checked and modified
- **Pratyahar:** Means withdrawing the senses from the external objects and turn them inward.
- **Dharna:** is focusing of mind on a particular object.
- **Dhyan:** study contemplation or meditation.
- **Samadhi:** Extreme level of Dhyana when one loses sense of time and place.

## Promotive values of Yoga

1. Relief from tension, stress and strain, anxiety, frustration, anger etc. It produces relaxation, positive thinking, self-confidence, self-awareness, development of personality, improvement of memory, reduction of sleep deficit, etc.
2. Patience, endurance, cheerfulness, straightforwardness, discipline and perseverance are also

achieved by practising yoga systematically for a long time.

3. List the different techniques of relaxation.

### **Dhyana (Meditation)**

Dhyana (meditation) is focussing one's attention to a particular state and not letting a thought disturb it. The aim of meditation is to relax the body and mind. Meditation can provide inner peace and reduce stress from the hustle and bustle of daily life. Dhyana brings down intense emotions. Pulse rate, skin conductivity, and muscle tension, become better due to meditation. Therefore, almost all stress related disorders such as high Blood Pressure, migraine etc. can be managed rather effectively through meditation. Meditation gives healthy thinking characterized by clarity, good concentration and intellectual power.

### **Physical Exercise and Nutrition**

If an individual goes without proper physical exercise, he/she loses control over the functioning. Physical exercises to a great extent trim the body and discipline the mind. Adequate and balanced nutrition helps the individual to promote health. The best defence for the demands of stress is a healthy body.

### **Evaluate Yourself**

1. Discuss the main steps of yoga.
2. What are the steps to manage time efficiently?