

Understanding Stress and Stress Management for Working Professionals and Students

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Abstract—Stress and depression have emerged as significant mental health concerns among working professionals, particularly within the fast-paced and highly competitive environment of mainstream media. The primary purpose of this study is to examine the onset of stress and depression among media professionals and to understand how job pressure, demanding work schedules, performance expectations, and continuous exposure to advanced technology affect their mental well-being.

The study is motivated by the increasing prevalence of psychological distress observed in this sector, where tight deadlines, long working hours, constant connectivity, and high public accountability are routine occupational demands.

This research aims to analyze the nature and intensity of stress experienced by media professionals, identify contributing lifestyle and occupational factors, and explore the resulting psychological and physical health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and stress-related medical conditions.

Additionally, the study seeks to assess the awareness levels of individuals regarding stress and depression and to examine the coping strategies they adopt to manage these challenges. Emphasis is placed on understanding whether individuals recognize early stress indicators and take proactive steps toward stress management.

By highlighting the relationship between professional demands, lifestyle patterns, and mental health, this study underscores the importance of early identification, awareness, and adoption of effective coping mechanisms. The findings are expected to contribute to mental health education, promote healthier coping strategies, and encourage organizational and individual interventions aimed at improving overall well-being among mainstream media professionals.

Index Terms—Stress, Stress and Immunity, Stress Appraisal, Stress management, Coping mechanism,

Impact of Stress, Stress among students, Stress among working professionals,

I. INTRODUCTION

Primary Reason to Choose This Project Title. Significance of the Study / Motivation to Undertake the Topic

Rationale for carrying out this project on the topic of Onset of Stress & Depression among working professionals of Mainstream Media.

Rationale is to study, analyse and understand the impact of Job Pressure and demands along with high technology exposure on an individual's Mental Health.

The Study of the coping Strategies adopted by these individuals towards the problem and what is their awareness level towards the issue in order to get educated and adopt the correct Coping Methodology.

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF STRESS

STRESS is a very COMMON FACTOR in everyone's lifestyle. Be it Working Professionals, House Wives, Retired persons. or a Student.

Stress is a natural feeling of not being able to cope with specific demands and events.

However, stress can become a chronic condition if a person does not take steps to manage it.

These demands can come from work, relationships, financial pressures, and other situations, but anything that poses a real or perceived challenge or threat to a person's well-being can cause stress.

Stress can be a motivator, and it can even be essential to survival.

The body's fight-or-flight mechanism tells a person when and how to respond to danger.

However, when the body becomes triggered too easily, or there are too many stressors at one time, it can undermine a person's mental and physical health and become harmful.

It impacts each one of us in its own ways, depending on :

1. LIFESTYLE,
2. CIRCUMSTANCES (Environmental Conditions),
3. PROFESSIONAL & PERSONAL LIFESTYLE,
4. EATING HABITS,
5. SLEEPING PATTERN,
6. MENTAL STRENGTH,
7. COPING ABILITIES,
8. SUPPORT SYSTEM – FAMILY, FRIENDS, SOCIETY,
9. CURRENT MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH.

High Stress impacts the Sympathetic and Parasympathetic Nervous system that may result into:

1. Mental disorders, DEPRESSION, ANXIETY
2. Low Self Esteem and
3. Lifestyle Medical Conditions – like GERD, Hypertension etc.

Students are also impacted by stress to a very large extent due to various reasons.

But there can be ways where a person can MANAGE STRESS and the FIRST STEP towards that is whether a person actually understands they are in a stress zone or not, further accept that and start working towards stress management through the coping strategies.

Methods to monitor and 'QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED' to yourself if you are in STRESS ZONE or not :

1. Are you not resting well?
2. Are you feeling sleepy and fatigued during the day?
3. Do you wake up tired and irritated in the morning?
4. Are you inclined to study more because of peer pressure and parent's ambitions?
5. Are you spending very long hours on your studies?
6. Are your eyes itching frequently with high screen time?
7. How many steps do you cover throughout the day?
8. Are you getting disturbed with some thoughts or some events or any person?

9. Do you have a habit to eat or eat more in extreme emotions?

10. Do you eat more simple carbs and less fiber / protein / fat in your meals?

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Session on depression by Psychologist Dr. Michael Yapko.

Dr. Yapko observed and studied technology as the biggest cause behind high stress and anxiety eventually leading to depression.

According to WHO, in 2017, stress and depression was defined as among the leading causes behind human sufferings along with cancer, aids, accidents.

High technology exposure and impaired lifestyle leading to high stress leads to MDD that is Major Depressive Disorders that is a prime Mental Disorder.

People who work in the field of less job stress or students with less academic and peer pressure with very minimal or no technology exposure leads a much healthier life as compared to the contrary.

Various psychologists have defined STRESS as a 'Response to DEMANDS' exceeding resources, with key figures like Hans Selye seeing it as the 'Body's non-specific REACTION', while Richard Lazarus & Susan Folkman emphasized APPRAISAL, defining stress as a transactional process where a person perceives demands as taxing or endangering well-being, not just a neutral event but a subjective evaluation of threat or challenge versus coping ability, involving PRIMARY (threat assessment) and SECONDARY (resource evaluation) APPRAISALS.

III. UNDERSTANDING STRESS

Hans Selye (1907–1982): *Founder of the Stress Theory and Father of the Modern Stress Research* (ref: National Library of Medicine)

There is a well established and proven relationship between STRESS & DISEASE.

Yet, this is not yet fully recognised.

In Science, Stress means the interaction between a force and the resistance to counter that force.

Hans Selye first incorporated this term into the Medical lexicon to describe the "nonspecific response of the body to any demand".

Selye disavowed the study of specific disease signs and symptoms, unlike others before him. He instead focused on universal patient reaction to the illness. His concept of stress has impacted scientific and lay communities alike, in the fields as endocrinology, complementary medicine, animal breeding and social psychology. The physiological or psychological response to internal or external stressors. Stress involves changes affecting nearly every system of the body, influencing how people feel and behave. For example, it may be manifested by palpitations, sweating, dry mouth, shortness of breath, fidgeting, accelerated speech, augmentation of negative emotions (if already being experienced), and longer duration of stress fatigue.

Adapted from the *APA Dictionary of Psychology*

GAS by Hans Selye

GAS - GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME

Hans Selye observed that there is immense physiological response from animals and humans when they get in contact with the stressors. In the result of this study, he defined GAS as the body's response after a prolonged contact with the stressors. In order to reach the conclusion with empirical evidence, he subjected animals to a variety of stressors such as insulin injections, high temperature and X-rays. Selye also observed patients with various prolonged illnesses and injuries.

Identification of GAS was noticed as a pattern of bodily response across different stressors.

Hans Selye had researched and defined 3 STAGES OF GAS.

ALARM REACTION | RESISTANCE | EXHAUSTATION

1. ALARM REACTION STAGE

ALARM REACTION STAGE is triggered by getting in contact with the stressor.

Stressors can be of various types - exams, interviews, events, travelling, driving, noise, pollution, earthquake, tsunami, frustration, interpersonal conflicts, internal conflicts etc.

ADRENAL-PITUITARY-CORTEX system is activated. Followed by releasing the *HORMONES* that produces *STRESS-RESPONSE*.

2. RESISTANCE STAGE

The RESISTANCE STAGE is activated when *Stress is Prolonged*.

When the body goes through prolonged stress, it starts signalling for more cautious usage of the body resources, through *PARASYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM*, while the body is attempting to cope with the threat. This happens through confrontation.

3. EXHAUSTION STAGE

After prolonged stress, when the body is still under arousal mode and dealing with the same or additional stressors, EXHAUSTION STAGE is achieved.

This happens when the body drains all its resources and the alarm reaction stage as well as resistance stage physiological systems are almost ineffective.

The Exhaustion Stage increases susceptibility to stress-related diseases, i.e., lifestyle medical conditions - hypertension, high bp, fatty liver, diabetes, obesity, infections and chronic illness as AIDS and Cancer due to low immunity as a result of prolonged stress.

UNDERSTANDING STRESS & ANXIETY

There's a fine line between stress and anxiety. Both are emotional responses, but stress is typically caused by an external trigger. The trigger can be short-term, such as a work deadline or a fight with a loved one or long-term, such as being unable to work, discrimination, or chronic illness. People under stress experience mental and physical symptoms, such as irritability, anger, fatigue, muscle pain, digestive troubles, and difficulty sleeping.

Anxiety, on the other hand, is defined by persistent, excessive worries that don't go away even in the absence of a stressor. Anxiety leads to a nearly identical set of symptoms as stress: insomnia, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, muscle tension, and irritability.

Both mild stress and mild anxiety respond well to similar coping mechanisms. Physical activity, a nutritious and varied diet, and good sleep hygiene are a good starting point, but there are other coping mechanisms available.

If your stress or anxiety does not respond to these management techniques, or if you feel that either stress or anxiety are affecting your day-to-day functioning or mood, consider talking to a mental health professional

who can help you understand what you are experiencing and provide you additional coping tools. For example, a psychologist can help determine whether you may have an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders differ from short-term feelings of anxiety in their severity and in how long they last: The anxiety typically persists for months and negatively affects mood and functioning. Some anxiety disorders, such as agoraphobia (the fear of public or open spaces), may cause the person to avoid enjoyable activities or make it difficult to keep a job.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand whether Job Stress enhances your performance or deteriorates it in the long run.
2. To understand if performance pressure, studies, job stress and very high technology exposure impacts an individuals' Mental Health due to an individuals' unawareness towards Mental Health, Cardiac Health and the relation between these two.
3. To assess the level of Stress Management among Students and Working professionals.
4. To examine the relationship between Lifestyle and Stress Management among Students and Working professionals
5. To explore the impact of lifestyle such as activity, sleep quality, screen time, food habits, on the Stress Management / Coping Strategies among Students and Working professionals.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Null Hypothesis: Academic Pressure, Peer Pressure among Students, Poor Lifestyle, Job Stress and High Technology Exposure is directly connected with the Mental Health of an individual leading to Anxiety, Stress and Depression and Cardiac Health Disorders.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method planned would cover up the rapport building, interviews, data collection through survey, observation, analysis and interpretation of the data. The Process involved is Qualitative.

QUALITATIVE Process

Interviews and workshops for rapport building
Survey through questionnaire
Case Study as the derivatives from the survey
Observation of the data

The research methodology includes the following steps:

Building rapport with the people. Methods can be conducting some free workshops in order to generate awareness and methods of teaching. People should first be made aware before they are involved in the survey.

FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH WORK

1. Awareness about the subject
2. Analysis and understanding of the problem
3. Importance of Healthy Mind and Body in the quest to achieve your professional goals.
4. Awareness of the relation between Cardiac Strength / Cardiac Health and Depression / Stress
5. Awareness of Hormonal Balancing in context with Mental Health of an individual with a focus on Stress and Depression and how to avoid and reverse lifestyle medical conditions / NCD (Non Communicable Diseases) with coping strategies.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM OF THE SUBJECT ON WHICH THE PROJECT IS PROPOSED

1. Unawareness of the understanding of the subject
2. Acceptance of the problem
3. Lack of Coping Strategies
4. Impact of High Stress and onset of Depression as the Cardiovascular Diseases
5. Understanding the connection between the subject and health.
6. Fostering the understanding of the coping mechanism for smart management of the subject.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The Present study will be restricted to - Age and field.
2. Study would be restricted to working professionals and students.

BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF STRESS IN OUR DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

THERE ARE VARIOUS TYPES CAUSING STRESS.

The further elaboration is about the various types causing stress, what are the coping mechanisms and what are the advantages of coping with those stressors.

TYPE - 1: VERY HIGH STUDY HOURS & PARENT'S / PEER PRESSURE STRESSFUL STUDY & MAKING MORE EFFORTS THAN YOUR CAPACITY.

Parents should understand that academic success is not the only deciding factor for a successful person.

Therefore there shouldn't be unnecessary stress for students in order to achieve extraordinary results that are not their forte or not in their capacity.

COPING STRATEGY:

1. Parents should understand their child's capacity and recognise their interest areas.
2. Just because their peers are very inclined towards academics and earning good marks, doesn't mean they should pressurize their child towards unnecessary high stressful study patterns.
3. Talk to your child and interact with them, try to find out their areas of interest and understand their capacities.

ADVANTAGES:

1. Improved performance as now the student is working / studying within their capacity and not trying to achieve something that's not in their reach.
2. Reduced Stress and increased state of happiness.
3. More connectivity with the study and patterns.
4. Positive interactions with parents as they don't put extra pressure on them to achieve extraordinary things.
5. Avoiding lifestyle medical conditions such as hypertension, indigestion, insomnia due to less stress.

TYPE - 2 : SLEEP QUALITY | SOUND SLEEP | And why is it important?

Sleeping Pattern and Quality of sleep is an important attribute towards understanding and managing stress. The quality of sleep can be assessed when one wakes up in the morning. We must label our emotions and how we feel after waking up. If it is irritation, tiring or fatigue etc, then the sleep is not sound. But if one feels refreshed, joyful and energetic, the quality of sleep is sound.

COPING STRATEGY: How to earn a Sound Sleep?

1. Regular workout - Morning (cardio and strength) | Evening (yoga or walk to relax)
2. Early and light dinner (latest by 8 PM) (light on simple carbs : rice / roti and avoid

any processed food like maida, fried, packaged food.)

3. Avoid Any Gadgets / Mobile / screen 30 min before bed time
4. Avoid heavy water intake post 9 PM
5. Before bedtime: 15 min before: Warm shower / soak foot in warm water / hot milk with turmeric / meditation - any of these.
6. Avoid any conflicts or phone calls 1 hour before bedtime
7. There should be a 2-3 hours gap between dinner and bedtime (ideal time: Dinner – 7 PM | Bedtime - 10 PM)
8. Read books before bedtime
9. Work on the calmness and interiors of your bedroom - less lit up, cosy bed, light fragrance.
10. Last but not the least - keep a POSITIVE FRAME OF MIND - train your mind and thoughts to be RESILIENT and manage any stress or conflicts in a positive way.

ADVANTAGES:

1. Healthy body metabolic rate
2. Mind detox with good sleep quality.
3. More efficiency in study due to relaxed mind
4. Reduce fatigue and tiredness
7. Hormonal balancing / progress in GROWTH HORMONES.

TYPE - 3: STRESS & NUTRITION FOCUS: HIGH CARBS INTAKE

Understand the importance of Carbs and how to control the portion and timing of the intake.

A brief description about Carbs before we get into it. Simple Carbs = Roti / rice/breads etc

Impact : quick digestion | immediate energy and immediate blood sugar hike | fat accumulation if portion and timing is wrong

Complex Carbs = Veggies / Fruits

Impact : Takes time to digest, release energy over the time | Doesn't impact blood sugar | aids in fat and weight loss

COPING STRATEGY: How to manage and time Carbs intake ?

1. Portion Control : Simple Carbs should be 1/4th of your meal plate in order to eat a balanced food.
2. Time Control : If meal is post 7 PM - There should be limited or NO Simple carbs to avoid blood sugar hike and fat accumulation.

3. Combination : Carbs are important to help other Macronutrient (Protein / Fat) get absorbed in the system. So the Protein intake post workout should be supported with a portion of Carbs - both simple and complex.

4. When to say NO to Carbs : Avoid eating in extreme emotions - stress, anxiety, anger, happiness etc. As we eat more carbs in such situations and vice versa.

5. Regular Detox : Adopt weekly fruits and salad - fibre detox to flush out the toxins and free radicals as well as improve digestion with regular simple carbs intake. This will further reduce the curb to have more simple carbs.

6. Hydration : Many times we confuse thirst with hunger. Having 3-4L water / day / throughout will reduce the craving for simple carbs.

7. Workout : 30 min X 5 days a week. Include strength workouts and cardio to gain muscle mass and loose body fat. This will help eat a balanced food and reduce Carbs craving.

8. Sedentary Hours : Manage and reduce your sedentary time. Adopt a 30:3 ratio method. Low sedentary time = less carbs intake.

ADVANTAGES

1. Reduce fatigue / high energy / feeling lighter
2. Body fat loss / Weight loss
3. Improved digestion
4. Healthy body metabolic rate
5. Reverse medical symptoms like - high BP, High Cholesterol, fatty Liver, Diabetes, GERD etc.
6. Manage Extreme negative emotions : Stress, anxiety, anger, depression
7. Manage appetite. Reduces appetite and reduce unnecessary fat accumulation

TYPE - 4: STRESS AFFECTING IMMUNITY & POSITIVE THINKING

Cut Off Stress caused by NEGATIVE Emotions that could be very harmful and reduce efficiency of a student.

Negative Emotions

= Poor immunity

= High Stress

= Poor Body Metabolic Rate

How to manage NEGATIVE EMOTIONS through POSITIVE THINKING and gain healthy IMMUNE SYSTEM.

How to reduce the NEGATIVITY BIAS?

HOW TO OVERCOME NEGATIVITY WITH POSITIVE EMOTIONS & in turn MANAGE STRESS?

COPING STRATEGY: LEARN TO BE RESILIENT

1. List the pointers of the actions / events / people / situations that fills you up with positivity and follow the list when you feel low or negative.

2. Train your mind to balance negative emotions and focus on the actions or events that give you positive emotions.

3. Write a Journal about the events - about the negative events happened in the past - how will you manage the same events with positivity if happened in present.

4. Do not shy away from Negativity. Rather gain more positivity to overpower the Negatives.

5. Train your mind for empathy. Once you start thinking from other people's perspective, you become Resilient and in turn become Positive.

ADVANTAGES:

1. Healthy cardiac Vagal tone resulting in boost up in study.

2. Healthy HR - Heart rate

3. Better interpretation of a situation resulting in positive emotions.

4. Improved Decision making skill developed with positive emotions.

5. Healthy Metabolic Rate with low stress levels.

6. Improved Immunity as positive thinking creates. Genetic expression on our Immunity.

TYPE - 5: STRESS DUE TO INACTIVITY / SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE

SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE = LOW METABOLIC RATE = WEIGHT GAIN = FAT ACCUMULATION = HORMONAL IMBALANCE = HIGH METABOLIC STRESS

Reasons for sedentary lifestyle = lifestyle, fatigue, depression, poor eating habits, poor sleep quality, high screen time, very high study hours.

Ways to Avoid and manage stress due to a sedentary lifestyle.

How do we get into the Stress Zone when we spend SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE?

COPING STRATEGY: HOW TO REDUCE SEDENTARY PHASE FROM OUR LIFESTYLE?

1. Do a good workout - 30 min - preferably morning – practice BREATHING Workouts and focus on Deep

Breathing Practice before and during reading / writing Questions.

2. **ACTIVITY:** Activity is different from a workout. A good workout doesn't mean you can stay sedentary and inactive during the day. Walking while reading. Talking or remembering any subject works very well to reduce sedentary time.
3. Follow a 30: 3 ratio. 30 minutes sitting: 3 min standing or walking.
4. Get rid of any junk snacking. It leads to lethargy and in turn a sedentary pattern.
5. Reduce Screen time. If its part of your study, take frequent breaks after every 30 min.
6. Do outdoor training or activity - breathe fresh air and work on your endurance. Releasing toxins in the form of sweat reduces mental and physical fatigue and keeps you active.

- ADVANTAGES**
1. Healthy metabolic rate, low body fat and healthy weight.
 2. Reduce fatigue - mental and physical
 3. Reverse depression
 4. Healthy hormonal balance
 5. Flush out toxins (in form of sweat when we workout or we are active)
 6. Avoids Fat accumulation in the body. Fat accumulation in joints is caused by inactivity.
 7. Reduce appetite and avoid binge eating.

TYPE - 6: STRESS DUE TO LACK OF TIME MANAGEMENT

Stress is caused when we are not able to balance studies / Life and our health. When we are not able to manage time effectively and efficiently.

COPING STRATEGY: HOW TO BALANCE LIFE AND STUDIES WITH TIME MANAGEMENT.

1. Get **DISCIPLINED**. What is to be done, has to be done.
2. Start your day early. You will have 1-2 hours extra in your pocket before you start school.
3. Prepare your **TO-DO-LIST** (daily or weekly) – Do not miss out the tasks. – preparing a to-do list is a smart trick where you allocate the time for each task to be done.
4. Train your mind where you **PLAN** / frame up your entire day. Define your long term goals. Make short term goals to achieve long term goals.
5. Study Schedule : Make a study schedule / time table – and keep frequent relaxation breaks with music /

walking/ breathing practice / yoga in that time table too. Don't make it very stringent and difficult.

6. **Sleeping Pattern:** Focus on a sound sleep . Do not delay your bed time and hit the bed maximum by 10 PM.
7. Most important – stay away from social gossips and negative people, negative events – as it will drain away your energy and efficiency.

ADVANTAGES:

1. Efficiency at study and personal life.
2. Manage Stress and Anxiety that is caused when we do not balance our life.
3. Positive mind frame.
4. Improved performance in class and exams.

TYPE - 7: STRESS DUE TO SOCIETAL PRESSURE

Stress is caused by :

1. Concerns of Appearance & Body Imaging
2. The pressure of fitting in with peers (friends, social circle)
3. Dealing with bullies or societal conflicts - cultural bias (a particular way of dealing a situation, outlook towards girls, more pressure on boys to perform better)

COPING STRATEGY:

1. Build a strong network support - friends, family, professionals and communication with trusted adults.
2. Regular Physical Activity that makes you stronger and happier. This would focus on empowering your mental as well as physical strength.
3. Engage in positive **SELF TALKS**. Self-Introspections - talk to yourself. Me Time.
4. Avoid Negative energies around you. Prepare a Positive Circle. Those who Empowers your thoughts & help you progress.

ADVANTAGES :

1. Improved self Esteem
2. Performance Enhancement
3. Reduced Social Anxiety.
4. Improved Social Development.

STRESS - IT'S IMPACT ON STUDENTS

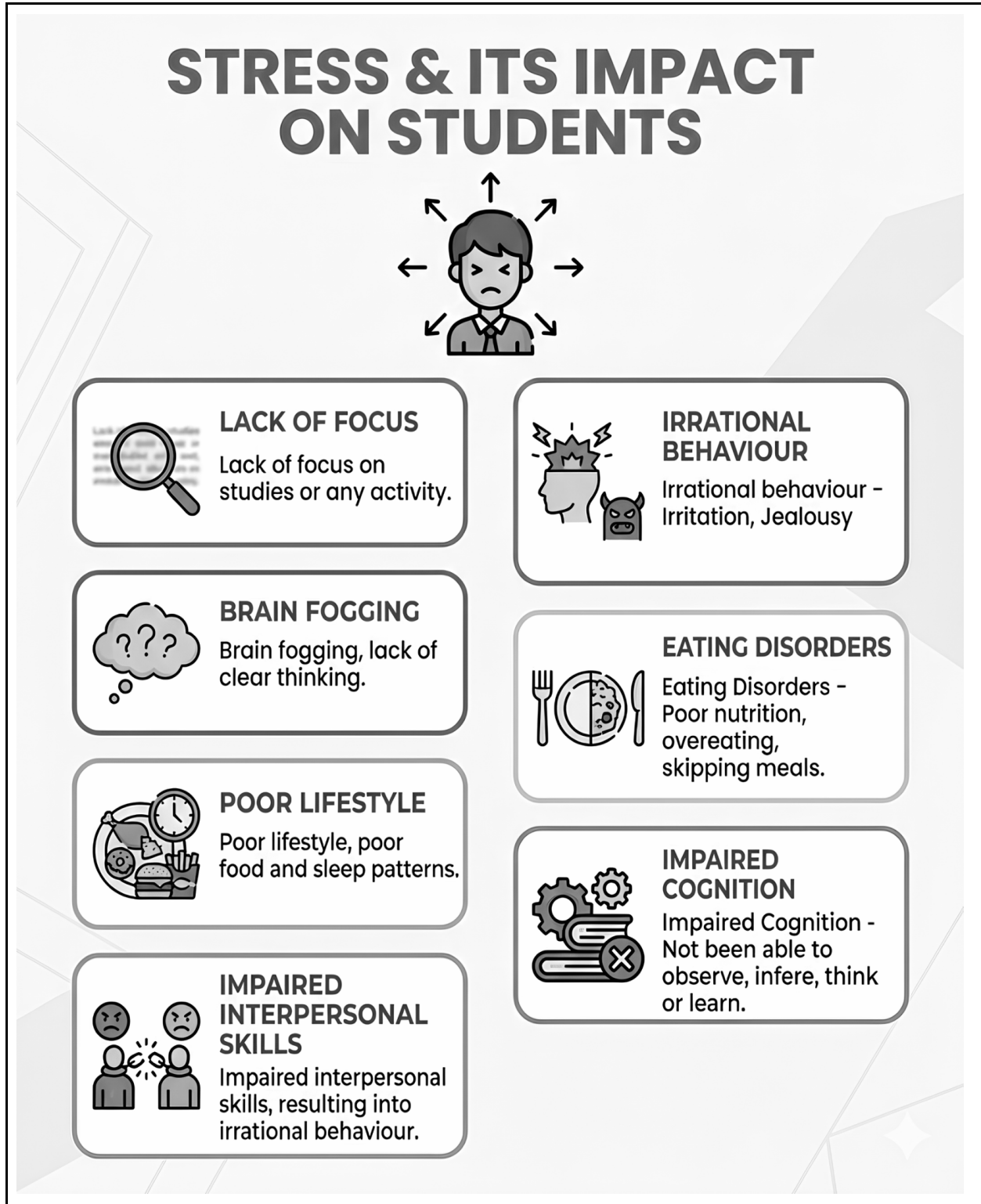
COGNITION | BEHAVIOUR | PHYSICAL | PSYCHOLOGICAL

Stress when becomes **DISTRESS**, can be alarming for the growth and development of students

STRESS when works in our favour for the **OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE**

becomes **EUSTRESS**.

When Arousal increases too much, it starts impacting our performance and coping mechanism - it becomes DISTRESS.





1. Lack of focus on studies or any activity. A common problem faced by students today. It means being unable to concentrate on studies or any task for a long time. Many students feel distracted even while sitting with their books, and their minds often wander to other thoughts.


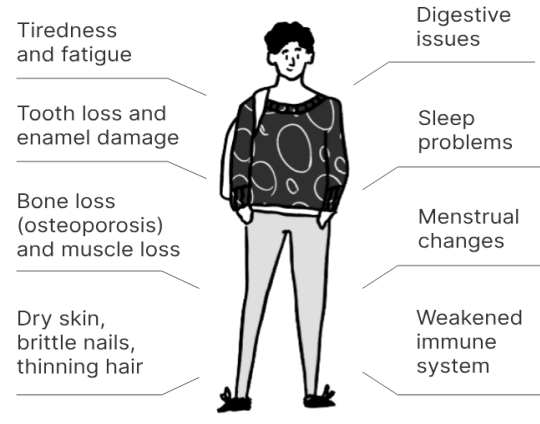

2. Brain Fogging - Lack of clear thinking
A distracted student with cloudy thoughts. Leading to confusion, overthinking, and difficulty in making decisions or understanding concepts properly.

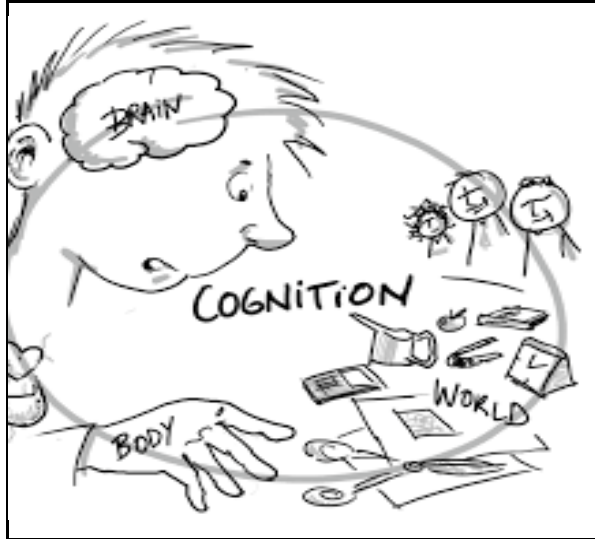
3. Many students feel mentally disturbed even while studying, which affects their learning ability.



4. Irrational behaviour - Irritation, Jealousy
Actions and reactions that are not based on clear thinking or logic. Among students, irritation and jealousy are common forms of such behaviour.

Small issues often lead to anger, impatience, or negative thoughts toward others.

<p>5. Poor Lifestyle - poor sleep pattern Unhealthy sleep patterns among students. Many students sleep late at night due to excessive use of mobile phones, social media, online games, or last-minute studying. As a result, they do not get enough rest.</p>	 <p>The illustration depicts a person sleeping late at night (top left) and waking up late in the morning (top right). In the center, the text reads "GOOD SLEEP BAD SLEEP" with "Lorem ipsum" below it. At the bottom, a person is shown sleeping peacefully (bottom left) and another person is shown waking up with a headache and dizziness (bottom right).</p>
<p>Physical effects of eating disorders</p>  <p>The diagram shows a person standing with lines pointing to various physical effects of eating disorders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tiredness and fatigue Tooth loss and enamel damage Bone loss (osteoporosis) and muscle loss Dry skin, brittle nails, thinning hair Digestive issues Sleep problems Menstrual changes Weakened immune system 	<p>6. Eating Disorder - poor nutrition- over eating or skipping meals Eating disorders related to poor nutrition are becoming common among students. Overeating and skipping meals are unhealthy habits that disturb the body's normal functioning.</p>
<p>7. Impaired interpersonal skills resulting into irrational behaviour Students may find it difficult to express their feelings, listen to others, or handle disagreements calmly. This often results in irrational behaviour. Poor communication, lack of empathy, and misunderstanding can lead to <i>irritation, anger, jealousy, and impulsive reactions</i>. Students may overreact to small issues, get into conflicts, or withdraw socially. Stress, low self-confidence, and poor emotional control are common causes of impaired interpersonal skills.</p>	 <p>The illustration shows two stylized human figures. The figure on the left is speaking, with a speech bubble containing an 'X' mark. The figure on the right is looking confused, with a large question mark above their head.</p>



8. Impaired cognition - not able to observe, inference, think or learn clearly.

Impaired cognition refers to a condition in which a person is not able to observe, infer, think, or learn clearly. Among students, this problem affects understanding, memory, and decision-making abilities.

Students may find it difficult to concentrate, grasp concepts & knowledge, or remember what they have studied.

EUSTRESS, DISTRESS & PERFORMANCE-AROUSAL GRAPH

Before we understand EUSTRESS, DISTRESS and the Performance Arousal Graph, we must understand the types of stress.

There are various types of stress in an individual's life:

1. Physical and Environmental Stress -

Physical Stress can be caused by our poor lifestyle, i.e., poor nutrition, poor sleep pattern and lack of activity or high sedentary time. Environmental stress can be caused by Air, Noise, Crowd of things around us. Some Environmental Stressors can be catastrophic in nature like earthquake, flood, any pandemic etc.

2. Social Stress -

Stress caused by the people around us, society and peers. Through interpersonal interactions. Through Conflicts. Through Irrational behaviour of self or others.

3. Psychological Stress

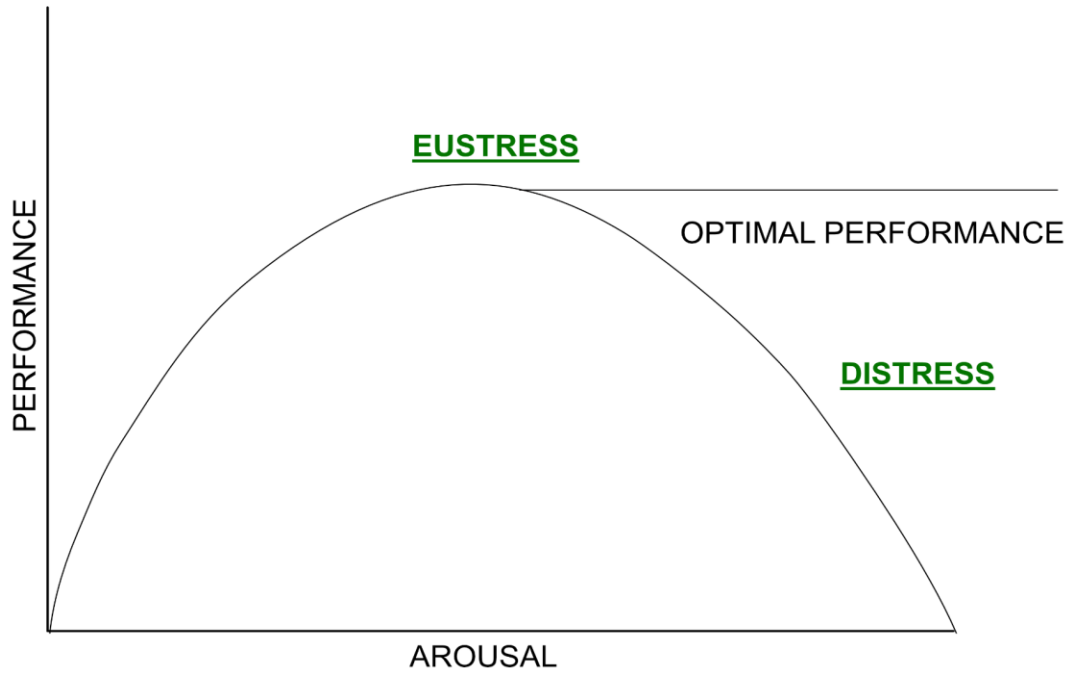
The stress caused as a result of our own THOUGHTS and FEELINGS resulting in DISTRESS. The causes can be Conflicts, Frustrations, Internal Pressures and Social Pressures. *Frustration* - caused by interpersonal hurt, social disagreements or discrimination, low grades in school, no incentives at the workplace, loss of job etc. Frustration occurs when there is a blocking of needs by someone or some event that hinders us to

achieve the goals we set. *Conflicts* - Between two or more than two options. Conflict on what to choose and what to leave. One may feel stress through conflict on deciding whether to choose CBSE or Cambridge board in India. *Internal Pressure* - When you set high goals for yourself and wish to perfectly achieve them, there are internal pressures causing stress. *Social Pressure* - Stress caused by people through excessive demands from us.

EUSTRESS is the level of STRESS that keeps us going and performs till our optimal level, through arousal. Arousal is our response to any stressor - like exam, meeting, driving etc, when we prepare ourselves and get ready, make plans to handle the stressor. Once Arousal exceeds with high demands, the performance gets affected and starts declining. This is caused by DISTRESS which also results in lifestyle medical conditions.

PERFORMANCE, AROUSAL GRAPH showing how STRESS is resulting into OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE with continuous AROUSAL

With prolonged AROUSAL, EUSTRESS becomes DISTRESS causing psychological as well as lifestyle medical conditions and weakening the immune system. Which I will elaborate in further sections of psychoneuroimmunology.



PERFORMANCE AROUSAL GRAPH

STRESS AND IMMUNITY – PSYCHONEUROIMMUNOLOGY

Prolonged or unresolved or unhealthy stress, i.e., Distress impacts our immunity by attacking the functioning of White Blood Cells in our body.

WHITE BLOOD CELLS – LEUCOCYTES

Identifies and destroys foreign bodies, i.e., ANTIGENS (viruses) There are several types of WBCs in our body. Let's talk about them.

WHITE BLOOD CELLS - LEUCOCYTES		
T CELLS & T-HELPER CELLS	B CELLS	NATURAL KILLER CELLS (NKC)
T-Cells destroys the invaders	B Cells produces Antibodies to fight against viruses and antigens	Natural Killer Cells are involved in the fight against both viruses and tumors - CYTOTOXICITY
T-helper Cells increase immunological activities in our body.		Natural Killer Cells are of major importance in the defence against various Infections and Cancer.
When Stress is unhealthy and prolonged, T-helper cells are attacked by HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Viruses), it causes AIDS (Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome)		When Unhealthy or prolonged Stress affects NKC, our body is prone to cancer and infections

COPING MECHANISM OF STRESS / STRESS MANAGEMENT

Coping is a procedure which is dynamic, environment, situation & person specific. A person’s experience, resilience, beliefs, environmental conditions, societal and socio-economic conditions affects the coping strategies. A person’s Thoughts, Feelings and Cognitive abilities play a pivotal role in their secondary appraisal or resource formation or coping abilities. The smart coping abilities make a person stress-resilient with strong immunity. On the other hand the poor strategies results into poor functioning of White Blood Cells - T-helper cells, B Cells and Natural Killer Cells, further affecting the immunity of the person.

NOTE: Primary Appraisal - When an individual gets in connection with the stressor. For example, exams, job interviews etc, and perceives and understands them as per its own intensity, duration, complexity and predictability.

Secondary Appraisal - The formation of coping strategies with the physical (money, medical, healthcare etc), personal (skills, coping style) and social resources (support networks, information system, professional help)

(1) HARDINESS - STRESS IMMUNED PERSONALITY - IMMUNIZATION TOWARDS UNHEALTHY STRESS

"You can't beat the person who never gives up" (Babe Ruth) STUDY BY SUZANE C. KOBASA IN LATE 1970s

A study on why some people stay healthy despite high stress. They develop immunity towards unhealthy stress by adopting constructive attitudes, building their lives positively. This positive and constructive attitude builds an aura of resilience around them where they become capable of handling any unhealthy stress and challenges with a positive attitude.

Kobasa had named them as Hardiness Personality who are Stress-Resilient Personality and who become unaffected with high, unhealthy or prolonged stress. She defined Hardiness with 3 Cs of Hardiness - Commitment, Control and Challenge.

Hardiness is not inherited by everyone. One can learn the art and skill of rational thinking, problem solving, decision making and critical thinking in order to be able to handle the challenges and demands effectively.

3Cs OF HARDINESS

COMMITMENT	CONTROL	CHALLENGE
When an individual has developed a purpose in their responsibilities and tasks at work, in daily life, family, social life, professional life etc.	When an individual develops a sense of control and direction towards their commitment and has a controlled feeling in their life.	An individual develops an insight of handling life challenges as NORMAL and positive rather than getting disturbed by them thinking of them as threats.

(2) TASK, EMOTIONS & AVOIDANCE ORIENTED STRATEGIES BY ENDLER & PARKER.

Task Oriented Strategy

Obtaining and organising information about the stressful situations, defining some alternative course of action and defining priorities in life. For example, Designing an effective time Management in order to effectively manage the stressors.

Emotions Oriented Strategy

Stressors, be it environmental, physical, social or psychological, cause negative emotional reactions, like anger, jealousy, hopelessness etc., to them. This Strategy involves controlling and managing one’s emotions and staying hopeful and resilient. For example, Venting the negative feeling and anger in a particular situation as an emotional vent-out with a counsellor or expert, telling yourself that this too shall pass, I can handle this, etc.

Avoidance Oriented Strategy

When an individual forms the strategy to minimise the seriousness of a situation and in order to do that they learn to suppress the thoughts or feelings caused by the stressors.

For example, listening to music, going out for nature walks, running, swimming or talking to a friend or counsellor.

CONTRIBUTION THAT THIS PROJECT WOULD MAKE

The following contributions this project would make on individual as well as group level :

1. Highlight the meaning and connection of Eustress and Distress.

2. Understanding of Performance Arousal
3. Foster understanding the various coping mechanism of stress
4. Awareness about the CMD - Common Mental Disorder and its hidden relationship with NCD - Non Communicable Diseases.
5. To foster understanding the connection between Stress and Immunity

IV. CASE STUDIES

1. Ritesh (name changed), 50 years old working professional, was obese and carrying Lifestyle Medical Conditions like Obesity and Borderline Type II Diabetes, when he approached me. He told me that there is immense pressure on him to take care of his family, his parents with medical illness and at the same time office work is very demanding. He has to be on his toes all the time, as he has a field job. This causes a high level of stress, anxiety and emotional imbalance.

He said, I am the sole bread earner of this family. How can I take a rest and say no to the demands at the workplace? If I say no, I might not get an incentive or promotion.

He said I leave for work at 8am and come back at 8pm. There is no time to focus on the workouts and balanced nutrition. This all is causing psychological and metabolic stress resulting in lifestyle medical conditions.

However after he was advised a few coping mechanisms and going through regular counselling sessions, now he is able to handle stress and balance work and life.

2. Sneha (name changed), a 18-year-old school student, had trouble sleeping at night. She would suddenly wake up and start checking her notebooks and revising the subjects. She is an average student and gets respectable marks in academics. However her lifestyle is highly impaired, where there are screen time distractions. Reason being she has to complete her homework through her laptop or mobile as it is being sent online. As she starts studying, she gets distracted with social media and gaming.

Now this was causing her lack of focus on her lifestyle due to impaired time management. She started facing Compulsive Disorder and Eating Disorders which emerged due to high stress levels. Her nutritional

intake was disturbed with increased sedentary time due to high screen usage.

However after her counselling, when she was screened for borderline ADHD, she was advised Lifestyle Alternative Therapy with Time Management, she is able to cope with the prolonged stress finally.

3. Udita (name changed), a 40-year-old Working Professional, She has immense peer pressure being a female additionally goes through the professional demands, being a lawyer. She has a baby who is 5 years old and her nurturing was also demanding for Udita. She chose to be a lawyer in order to fulfil her self-actualisation to be able to help the society with her learnings and experiences. But she wasn't able to help her own health as the job demanded a lot of emotional and physical burnout. She is a person who doesn't have a habit of saying NO when things reach out of her boundaries. And that has been causing her DISTRESS lately.

As a result of EMOTIONAL BURNOUT & HIGH STRESS, Udita gained excessive weight as she was not able to focus on her nutrition and had an almost sedentary lifestyle. Her Cholesterol level went high and she was on borderline type 2 diabetes along with hypertension.

When she approached me, she told me, I cannot do workouts as I don't have energy and time for that. But yes, I can focus on my meals. I understood her circumstances and put her on a controlled, yet nourishing diet. Her last meal of the day was done before 8pm. Along with that, I advise her to watch her sedentary life. I advised her to watch her daily steps and start improving day by day. When she began, it was hardly 1000 steps / day and later she reached around 5000 steps / day within 6 months.

I advised her to get her body composition scanned. Where her body fat was very high and skeletal muscle mass low. Gradually it started improving with the food focus and reduced sedentary time.

Currently Udita is in her comfortable weight zone, her body fat - visceral fat as her focus shifted on managing stress by taking care of her health, prime focus on her lifestyle and at the same time, time management by drawing a line and start saying NO when the task is out of her reach and doesn't fall within her boundaries.

**STRESS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP
ACTIVITIES - ROLE PLAY**

For working professionals & students

1. TO REDUCE SCREEN TIME

High Screen time is one pivotal cause behind increased stress as it impacts our development through impaired hormones and is a deterrent to time management too.

We miss out on the important tasks due to screen addiction.

Also, when we have high screen time, it results in high sedentary time (as we become inactive for that time period), impaired time management and inviting lifestyle medical conditions.

Also, when we use a screen at night, our body perceives the screen light signalling as the day light and in turn impacts our hormonal balancing.

ROLE PLAY

Your friend, whenever you call him / her or visit them, is engrossed in her mobile or TV. When you ask her to go out and play or walk, she refuses. When you ask for group study she would never turn up.

You noticed that this has started impacting her health and academic performance.

She had gained weight in the last 2 months.

She was eating more and eating unhealthy food due to high screen time.

Also there was a health report where it reflected that she had developed Fatty Liver Symptoms and it also started reflecting that on her skin.

Both of you study in the same school. And you have a school counsellor in there whom you can ask for counselling or advice.

As a friend what should be your approach towards this situation? How would you advise them to reduce their Screen Time and focus on healthy habits?

Characters in this play can be -

You

Your friend

Parents - yours and your friends'

School Counsellor

Any common friend or relative or others

2. TO EAT HEALTHY & BALANCED FOOD ON TIME & IN THE RIGHT PORTION SIZE

Healthy Food

Balanced Nutrition

Eating on Time

Eating in THE RIGHT PORTION SIZE.

When we don't eat healthy and nutrition-balanced food (malnutrition), when we do not eat in the right portion at the right time, it impacts our metabolism and results in metabolic stress. Further resulting into DISTRESS, impacting our day to day INTERPERSONAL INTERACTIONS (irrational behavioural methods) and PERFORMANCE along with our HEALTH.

ROLE PLAY

You are a Child Psychologist. When your client (a child - 12 years old) visited your clinic, you noticed that she was not able to concentrate on the session & she was not able to perform the simple task which she was given for the assessment that she had completed with ease in the previous sessions (BRAIN FOGGING).

She looked irritated during the counselling sessions and you noticed her hairs are getting thinner and her skin also looks duller now.

Now is the time for Clinical Formulation.

You did an inquiry with the parents and found that the child has had abrupt and indisciplined eating habits since the last 2-3 months. She had been eating junk meals these days (as both the parents are working). Also sometimes the child is overeating and sometimes skipping meals too.

You found that the child is eating at irregular times and sometimes eating late at night too.

Most of her food consists of - burgers, pastas, noodles, ice-creams and cookies.

Most of the time, the child is alone at home and cooks maggi when there is nothing cooked in the kitchen or orders junk food.

As a counsellor, what would be your therapeutic intervention and POA (plan of action), in order to help the child?

Would you also like to involve the child's school teacher in this process?

Characters in this play can be -

Counsellor

Child
Any friend of the child
Parent/s
School Teacher/s

3. TO REDUCE SEDENTARY TIME

Staying inactive for a long time increases sedentary time.

Resulting into HIGH STRESS and HIGH CHOLESTEROL inviting lifestyle medical conditions - like - Type II Diabetes, Fatty Liver, Obesity, Hypertension, High BP etc.

ROLE PLAY

You noticed that your friend is getting duller day by day. He / She / they has stopped interacting and meeting with other friends or relatives. However, their academic performance is good as always.

When you investigated, you found that they had been staying sedentary most of the time. At home, they are either sitting on their study table or sofa or sleeping on bed all the time.

At the same time, you found that they have gained weight immensely and their doctor visit has increased as they are on borderline Type II Diabetes now.

You noticed that they hardly play any sport or do any activity. And sometimes overeat and unhealthy too due to staying inactive and sedentary most of the time. What would be your reaction and action in this situation? How would you try to help your friend?

How would you advise them to start any activity, reduce screen time, focus more on studies while staying active?

Characters in this play can be -

You
Friend
Your parents
Friend's parents
Any common friend / relative / others

4. TO MANAGE BEHAVIOUR & INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

HIGH STRESS = IRRATIONAL BEHAVIOUR = INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS

When a person is in distress, it's highly likely to impact their behaviour and interpersonal interactions through irrational behaviour and vice versa.

ROLE PLAY

A parent observed her child arguing with his friend with anger and using some abusive/unwanted language and showcasing irrational behaviour.

When the parent inquired, she found that her child's friend had taken unnecessary advantage of her child's politeness and was spreading wrong things about her in the school.

This had hurt the child, resulting in her irrational behaviour.

The friend of her child is also bullying her and there is no one the child was able to report to.

At home, the child couldn't say anything as her friend had a very good rapport with the child's parents. So she thought they would not believe her (RED FLAG - DISBELIEF)

As a parent, how do you resolve this situation? Who else will you involve in the process? And display what advice you will give to the child / children. What are the changes you will bring in your approach?

Characters in this play can be -

Parent
Child
Friend

V. CONCLUSION

In Search of REAL HAPPINESS & RESILIENT LIFE - analyse your stress levels, prevalence of it and understand YOUR COPING STRATEGIES.

My effort is to research and understand the impact of known or unknown / hidden stress on an individual's performance at work. The awareness about the subject would put a focus on the correct coping strategies towards stress that can be detrimental if remains unidentified or unaccepted and untreated. Stress Management offers a range of methods to help you deal with stress. Stress Management helps to lead a balanced, healthier life. Stress is the physical, mental and emotional response to a different event which is a common part of everyone's life. Distress can be

caused by unrealistic expectations of us or others. In order to manage stress one must set realistic goals and expectations but one must not be too harsh and try to stay consistent. The focus should be on consistency and progress and not on perfection as to master distress it needs practice and patience.

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