

## STRESS MANAGEMENT

### 28.1 Introduction

Uptill now we had studied all about what is stress and what are the health problems related with stress. Stress is by and large manageable. If a scientific approach is followed for managing the stress, definitely the individual who suffers from the stress can be relieved of it. This lesson deals with the strategies which one can adopt for effective management of stress. Stress management training refers to a package of techniques that have been used for helping the individuals cope with stress rather effectively.

### 28.2 Objectives

After reading this lesson you should be able to :

- enumerate the relaxation procedures;
- explain the cognitive strategies one could use for stress management;
- explain the sources of supportiveness from the environment and the methods of enhancing the support system;
- describe how effectively hobbies, recreation and leisure time activities can control stress and;
- list the hobbies, recreation and leisure time activities which could reduce the stress.

### 28.3 Altering Bodily Reaction and Relaxation

Relaxation is just opposite to the state of stress or tension. Relaxation is a state where one is able to think clearly about or reflect on a

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problem. Just as how stress can affect the individual on physiological, affective, cognitive and behavioural planes, relaxation also can influence the individual at all these levels. Among the various dimensions which an individual has in one's personality, bodily or physiological dimension is the one which first responds to stress. Therefore to combat stress effectively, one will have to regulate the physiological changes that occur because of stress.

Generally when the individual is in a state of stress, he or she experiences stress from head to toe. That is due to the several changes that takes place in the body. All the muscles in the body reflect stress by being rather rigid or tight. Breathing gets altered. Heart starts beating faster. Similiarly almost all organs and systems present in the body are affected by stress.

#### **28.4 Techniques for Stress Reduction**

Physical exercises, sports, yoga, etc. are found to be of immense value in preparing the individual for relaxation. Apart from these well known methods, there are some more techniques which are scientific and systematic in nature. One such procedure is deep muscle relaxation. It is assumed here in this technique that mental relaxation follows muscular relaxation.

##### **Deep Muscle Relaxation**

The individual is taught to experience both tension and relaxation in each and every group of muscles in the body. Experience of relaxation and appreciation of difference between tension and relaxation, immensely help 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 becomes progressively more and more.

##### **Bio Feed Back**

Another procedure which is generally adopted for inducing relaxation through altering bodily reactions is, bio feed back. In this procedure based on skin response (GSR) feed back) on brain waves (EEG) feed back) or any other physiological parameter, the individual will be made to study the internal reactions to stress and relaxation. By giving the individual, feed back 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. Visual or auditory feed back is given. In the visual feed back, when the individual experiences stress red light will be on. The individual then will have to relax and the state of relaxation will be indicated by green light. Hence the goal is always to keep the green light on when the individual undergoes treatment for management of stress through bio-feedback. Once the individual masters the art of relaxation throught bio feed back, he/she can easily generalize the same state of relaxation to any other situation. Thus one can gain perfect control over all situations.

In the case of auditory feed back "bleep" sound will come whenever the individual can successfully put off the bleep sound. As the very sound may at times prevent the individual from relaxation, visual feed back is preferred more than the auditory feed back.

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### **Intext Questions 28.1**

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Fill in the blanks with appropriate word.

1. Relaxation is marked by \_\_\_\_\_ flexibility in the muscles and rationality in \_\_\_\_\_ patterns.
  2. Muscles react to stress by being \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are two scientific methods of relaxation.
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### **Try it yourself**

1. Analyze the ways which you follow for experiencing relaxation. Then note the changes that take place in your body and behaviour.
2. Visit any well equipped psychological clinic and see for yourself the mechanism of bio feed back.
3. Try to learn the procedure of deep muscle relaxation from a qualified and practicing psychologist who advocates the procedure to his/her clients.

### **28.5 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. Healthy thoughts lead the individuals to adaptive behaviour whereas unhealthy thoughts result in maladaptive behaviour. Experience of too much of stress and later on coming out with abnormal expression of stress are regarded as maladaptive. The experience and expression of stress are also guided or influenced by a set of thoughts which are generally unhealthy. So by making those negative or unhealthy thoughts, positive or healthy, both the experience and expression of stress can be minimized. Then the individuals regain normality and show adaptive behaviour. Let us examine some of these strategies—

#### **(i) Systematic Desensitization**

Maladaptive behaviour in the form of strong expression of stress is characterized by emotional hypersensitivity. So the individuals will have to be desensitized systematically against the situations that cause stress or anxiety. Before the situation could have any impact on the individuals, the very thought of the situation will cause stress in the individual who therefore, will have to get rid of the stress through imagination. So

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the individuals are at first given training at thought level to cope with stress by not being that emotionally sensitive as he has been. One by one, all the situations which are graded on the intensity of stress that each situation produces, are presented to the individual who imagines the situations and slowly or gradually he/she counters those provoking situations with the pleasant scenes which brings relaxation. Thus the individual learns to relax against all stress producing situations through systematic desensitization.

### **(ii) Thought Stopping**

Another cognitive technique which is used for stress management is thought stopping. The individual is actively helped to stop entertaining those negative or useless unnecessary thoughts which prevent effective action. Strongly saying "Stop" the thought gets out of the individual's brain for a minute. It has to be practice repeatedly. Slowly and steadily the individual starts showing remarkable improvement in successfully keeping the thought away from him/her. Finally this results in successful termination of stress that mainly occurs due to interference of unnecessary thoughts.

### **(iii) Rational Emotive Therapy (RET)**

Rational emotive therapy (RET) is yet another cognitive technique which helps the individual to think rationally, 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 very much takes reality into account. Self talk is another method which is useful in preparing the individual cognitively for effective management of stress for example a person who is poor in memory can have a self talk saying that "My memory has become better, now a days I am able to recall better". etc.

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## **Intext Questions 28.2**

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Fill up the blanks with appropriate words :

1. The term "cognition" is associated with \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. Two cognitive strategies for management of stress are \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. The method that emphasizes the importance of realistic thinking is \_\_\_\_\_.
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### **Try it yourself**

1. Make a hierarchy of situations that produce stress in you and through imagination counter the resulting stress with relaxation systematically.
  2. Try "Thought stopping" procedure on you or on somebody if any particular thought is found to disrupt or interfere with action.
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## **28.6 Enhancing Supportiveness of the Environment**

Every human being is a Social animal. For effective living all the human beings must grow in an environment which is supportive and highly encouraging. As stress causes a lot of feelings of insecurity in an individual, it becomes essential and rather imperative on the part of the environment which the individual 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.

How are we to enhance supportiveness of the external environment ? First, a proper analysis of the environment will have to be made and place the individual in a relatively stress free environment which will nurture him/her on healthy lines. "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 will it make the individuals learn certain new skills important for effective living. It is applicable for home and office environment too. A person having warm and positive environment is less likely to go in a stress.

### **Try it yourself**

1. Analyze your environment and find how people are supporting you. Find the positive and the negative points.

## **28.7 Hobbies, Recreation and Leisure**

Hobbies, recreation and leisure provide a highly admirable support to the individuals to overcome stress. All these three, help the individuals (who are under stress due to several reasons) relax and gain much wanted relief from stress. Relaxation sets in rather fast when an individual who is experiencing high stress, engage himself/herself in an activity which becomes a hobby or forms a part of recreation, because the individual does this task in a leisure manner which does not add much pressure to him/her. As stated earlier hobbies and recreational activities are performed in a relaxed and leisurely manner.

Leisure activities may be active such as participation in sport or in artistic creation or they may be passive like engaging in spectator sports, attending musical programmes or visiting museums, art galleries. Leisure activities can include solitary pursuits such as reading or quiet contemplative activity. Some aspects of leisure activities are creative as they allow the human beings to develop their potentialities and to employ their talents and skills in new ways. The leisure activities have

a re-creative function enabling the individuals to renew their energies. Thus again they can prepare themselves for confronting the demands of their everyday responsibilities including those connected with their work.

Some leisure time activities like reading, T.V. viewing, card playing etc. contribute to the maintenance of the personality.

Hobbies, recreation and leisure help the individuals manage stress adequately because the activities provide good exercise to both body and all psychological systems. The individuals experience relaxation and they get immense happiness of knowing what their potentialities are. Moreover these activities enable them to develop or maximize their potentialities. As these activities are done in a less formal atmosphere, there is much scope for sense of humour which acts as an antidote to stress. The individuals acquire the ability to concentrate on the present more than the past or future by engaging themselves in the leisure time activities with a lot of interest. As many of the hobbies, recreational and leisure activities give an opportunity to the individuals to know more about others, the very socialization process becomes healthier and in course time the philosophy of each individual changes for the better because he gets a better view of the world. Thus, the value system becomes quite strong and well-knit. What the formal education fails to deliver these informal activities very effectively contribute to the development of individuals. If each individual is fully developed, management of stress becomes/ pretty easy.

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### Intext Questions 28.3

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Fill in the blanks :

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an activity which one enjoys doing in one's free time.
2. Recreation is a form of amusement or way of \_\_\_\_\_
3. Leisure is a period when one is \_\_\_\_\_ from employment or duties of any kind.

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### Try it yourself

1. List out your hobbies.

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2. How do you spend your leisure time ?

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3. Have you achieved anything through recreation ?

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### **What you have learnt**

Relaxation is a state which is just opposite to the state of stress or tension. Among the several methods by which one can attain relaxation, deep muscle relaxation and biofeed back are the most widely used and popular procedures.

Thought stopping systematic desensitization Rational Emotive therapy. are some of the cognitive strategies by which stress can be effectively managed.

Proper analysis of the environment and making the environment as stress fresh as possible she by training those who are in environment. Make other to appreciate genuinely the sincere efforts of the individual concerned. This will develop on healthy basis for managing the stress.

Hobbies, recreation and leisure time activities not only divert the attention of the individuals from stress producing thoughts to relaxation, but also do those activities enable the individuals to realize their potentialities and to grow healthy.

### **Terminal Questions**

1. How are bodily reactions to stress altered ?
  2. Explain any two cognitive strategies for the management of stress.
  3. What role do hobbies, recreation and leisure play in the management of stress ?
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## **Key to Intext Questions**

### **28.1**

1. Increased Behavioural
2. Rigid, tight
3. Deep muscle relaxation, Bio feed back

### **28.2**

1. Thinking
2. Systematic desensitization, thought stopping.
3. Rational Emotive Therapy.

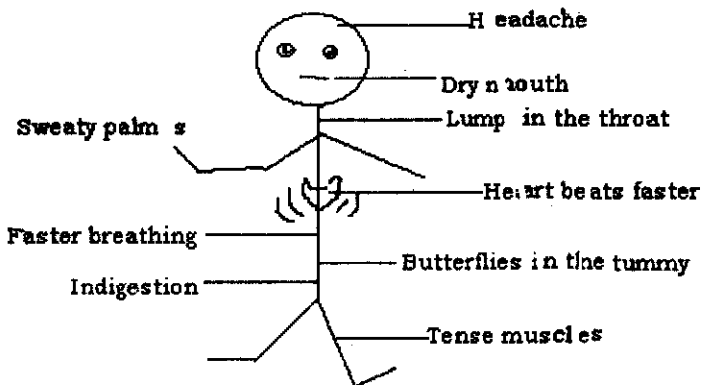
### **28.3**

1. Hobby
2. Relaxation
3. Free

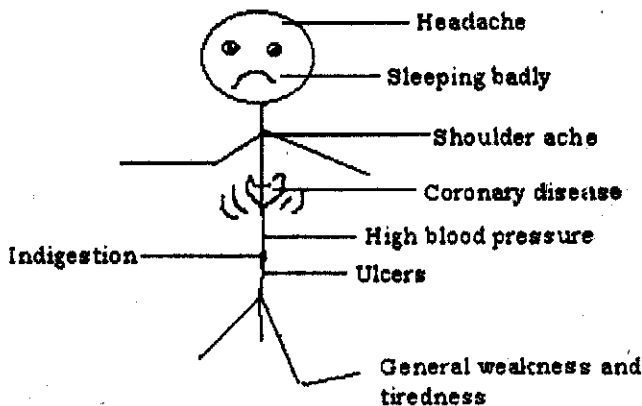
## **Hints to Terminal Questions**

1. Refer section 28.3
  2. Refer section 28.4 and 28.5
  3. Refer section 28.7
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**Short Term Effects of Stress**



**Long Term Effects of Stress**



Effect on emotion :  
 helpless, lonely,  
 tired, nervous,  
 panicly, angry bo-  
 red,depressed, tense,  
 short tempered.

Effect on relationship :  
 bad tempered,violent,  
 don't listen, pick up  
 fights, impatient with  
 everyone put people  
 down

Effect on Actions and Behaviours ,  
 smoke more, chew nails, take drugs  
 drops things, clumsy, fiddle laugh,  
 don't eat.