



Research Paper

HRM Suggestions for Stress Management of Employees Working in IT Industries and Other Sectors in India - A Review

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a kind of pain in psychological and emotional level. It imperils the health and wellbeing of a person. The harmful effect of stress is expressed as anxiety, depression, insomnia, memory loss, irritation, frustration, anger, headache, heart burn, fatigueness, feeling of discomfort or restlessness. Prolonged stress may cause breathing problem, panic attack, obesity, chest pain, hypertension, gastric ulcer, diabetes, heart problem, mental illness, etc. During stress period secretion of stress hormones like adrenalin, noradrenalin and cortisol are secreted which helps to cope up with the adverse situation. Stress has been classified as physical, psychological, psychosocial, psychospiritual, acute and chronic stress. All kinds of stress can be managed by devoting some time for deep breathing practice, physical exercise, hobbies, connecting with friends, enough of rest, listening to music, spending time with family, nature and greenery.

KEYWORDS: Stress, Psychological, Physical, Depression, Hormones, Exercise, Management

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I. INTRODUCTION

The worries caused by difficult situations yield stress. Stress is a psychological factor. The feeling of emotional or physical tension is expressed as a stress. It is a type of psychological pain and a feeling of emotional strain with mental pressure. The psychological stress has a particular relationship between the person and environment. It is appraised by the person as taking or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her wellbeing (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The factors of stress may be irritation, frustration, anger, nervousness, discomfort, constant worries, inability to meet some challenges, taking a bad decision etc. The manifestation of stress may be feeling restlessness, insomnia, lack of concentration, loss of memory, anxiety, depression etc. (Giannakakis & Koujan, 2022). Management of stress needs practice of specific behaviours and adopting certain associated factors (Hailu, 2020). It causes provocative behaviour, avoidance of intimacy, disturbances in attachment etc. (Haviland *et al*, 1995; Lowenthal, 1998). Small amount of stress may be beneficial as it improves motivation and adaptation to environment. But excessive amount of stress may yield hypertension, gastric ulcer, depression, mental illness or even risk of heart stroke. According to Selye (1974), the non-specific result of any demand upon the body putting effect on mental or somatic system is also considered as a stress. In the language of Sarafino (2002), the bodily reaction to a change which needs physical, psychological and emotional adaptation is called stress.

When someone feels to be under some pressure (stress), the nervous system and adrenal gland release stress hormones like adrenaline (epinephrine), noradrenaline (norepinephrine), cortisol etc. The level of these hormones increases at times of stress. It causes the physiological changes in body to help to cope with apprehended dangers or threats. Such type of response of body is called stress response. In other form, it is also called fight or flight response (Turner & Bagnara, 1976). When body is under stress a hormone called CRH (Corticotropin-releasing hormone) is secreted from hypothalamus region of brain which stimulates anterior pituitary gland to release ACTH (Adrenocorticotrophic hormone) to stimulate adrenal gland to release stress hormones together called catecholamines (adrenaline, noradrenaline, dopamine etc.). Dopamine is also one of the happy hormones which helps body to remain relaxed with feeling of pleasure during stress period.

II. BIOLOGICAL EVENTS DURING STRESS

The stress hormone cortisol is a steroid hormone and its excess secretion weakens the immune system and enhances decrease in energy level. Similarly excess secretion of adrenaline also increases heart rate, breathing, blood pressure etc.. So the liver releases more sugar to blood stream in order to increase more production of energy. This physiological condition in body triggers sympathetic nervous system to be more active for maintenance of higher amount of sugar level in blood. If such kind of body condition continues, it increases the risk of damage in heart and impairment of kidney. During stress period the heart works a lot harder, so that the heart gradually becomes less effective and less efficient. As a consequence less quantity of blood is supplied to vital organs of body, so that the efficiency of functioning of such organs reduces gradually. Thus prolonged stress enhances the risk of more diseases and weakens immune system of body.

2.1 Types of Stress

Broadly the different kinds of stresses can be classified as mentioned below:

2.1.1 Physical Stress

It is a feeling of physical tension due to excess work in inconvenient situation. The causes of this kind of stress may be due to muscle tension, headache, dizziness, restlessness, weakness, fatigueness, digestive problem etc. Its remedies are taking deep breathe, stretching body, doing meditation, eating healthy well balanced food, doing regular exercise, taking plenty of sleep or rest, avoiding excess alcohol and tobacco etc. (Breus & O'connor, 1998; Chong *et al*, 2011; Greenwood & Fleshner, 2011).

2.1.2 Psychological Stress

It occurs when someone is having mental or emotional pressure. The causes of this kind of stress may be due to resentment, frustration, irritation, sadness or grief, worries, anxiety, angry mood, feeling of guilty or shame or jealousy, panic attack, fear or criticism, depression, making bad decisions etc. All these factors are enough to damage one's health (Schneiderman *et al*, 2001; Richard & Susan,1984). The remedies of this type of stress are engaging more in physical activity, taking healthy diet, minimizing phone use, less screen time, going for an outside work, reading good books, exercise, practicing a hobby, stretching body before bed time, reducing caffeine intake, spending time with good friends or family members, spending time in native places, practicing deep breathing and yoga, spending time with pet animals etc. (Bonanno, 2004; Harkness & Hayden, 2018).

2.1.3 Psychosocial Stress

It is the stress arising due to some adverse situation or experience in social life. It may be facing social fears, social boycott, social superstition, hostile neighbours, interrupted relationship, social criticism, spreading of rumors by friends or relatives, disrespectful situations, social conflicts, loss of trust or self esteem, doing a social crime, losing self worth, having low social status or any other social factors leading to stress (Cohen *et al*, 1983; Long, 2019). The remedial measures for this type of stresses are selfbalancing, avoiding adverse situations, outing to distant places, having pleasure trips, developing boldness, seeking friends support and suggestions etc. (Can *et al*, 2020)

2.1.4 Psychospiritual Stress

The stress pertaining to spirituality of mind is called psychospiritual stress. It happens when someone fails to achieve a goal through spiritual belief, religious pressure, metaphysical fears, ghostly events, divine violations, disobedience of godly traditions, fear of witchcraft or black magic or sorcery, emotional sadness with one's god or any other mythical factors. It causes joyless striving and unproductive efforts to fulfill goals or misalignment within core spiritual beliefs resulting ineffective self management. Such situations disrupt relationship, threaten personal safety and yield traumatic disorders with mental depression (Bonanno, 2004). The remedies for this are constant prayer up to self satisfaction, meditation, proper counseling, self-consolation, self-actualization and psychiatric consultation with treatment. Besides the remedies suggested for psychological stress may also be practiced.

2.1.5 Time stress

There is a correlation between time management and stress (Ahmady *et al*, 2021). When someone becomes worried about not doing things in right time or running out of time to complete the given task, time stress occurs. It results hopelessness, feeling unhappy, getting trapped and worrying about deadlines. Also this kind of stress arises when someone is rushing to a meeting but getting late, unable to finish a task within a possibly manageable time given or trying hard to accomplish something in a day but it appears not to be possible. The steps to avoid time stress are (i) starting early the task given and focusing on the work till later part of the day. (ii)

prioritizing the tasks given and framing a time schedule (iii) leaving less important tasks towards last part of the day etc.

2.1.6 Anticipatory Stress

It is the stress that someone experiences concerning future. This type of stress occurs in daily life and it influences the cognitive and emotional wellbeing (Luong, 2016). It is based on lack of confidence or apprehending something that may go wrong. For example, the stress or fear that occurs for an upcoming presentation belongs to this category also. The steps to avoid this type of stress is to make well preparation and guess all possible tough questions and prepare its suitable answers.

2.1.7 Situational Stress

It is the short term stress occurring in certain temporary situations which causes temporary symptoms like headache, lack of concentration etc. When someone faces hatredness, physical abuses or injury, divorce, racial comments, fear of public speaking, any other uncomfortable situation or any form of anxiety, death of a close cousin or friend etc., this kind of stress happens (Selye, 1975, 1983).

In modern age, stress has become inescapable element. If it goes untreated, it affects the health and wellbeing of the individual and his socio-economic situation (Can *et al*, 2020). If stress persists for long time, it causes psycho-pathological conditions (Harkness & Hayden, 2018).

2.1.8 Encounter Stress

When someone worries about interacting with certain persons or group of people in an unpredictable manner, this type of stress develops. Also when someone is apprehending any real or imagined danger, this kind of stress occurs. The severity of encounter stress makes people to feel it as very painful or unbearable and the situation yields traumatic experience (Traue, 2001).

2.1.9 Acute Stress :

If the stress is very intense, unpleasant and causes dysfunctional reaction after a traumatic event, it is called Acute Stress Disorder (ASD). The symptoms of stress may continue less than or more than one month when it is diagnosed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This kind of stress produces constant anxiety, low mood, irritability, emotional ups and downs, poor sleep, poor concentration, desire to be alone etc. ASD causes Acute Stress Reactions (ASR) which continues for 3 days to 4 weeks or more (Fanai & Khan, 2021). Acute stress may constrict the air passage causing shortness of breath and so rapid breathing. Further it causes sickness symptoms like chest pain, headache, stomach upset, sleeping trouble and high blood pressure. In such situation a person has to take up more physical exercise, meditation, laughing, yoga, enough sleep, listening to music and spending more time with favourable family members and friends.

2.1.10 Chronic Stress

This category of stress generally occurs when someone is exposed to stress for long period of time. It may be due to continuous monetary problem, trouble at work place, divorce or other family problem, dissatisfying job, troubles for marriage, death of a loved one, losing a job, unemployment or unable to get a job, insecure future, high pressure job or excessive work load, serious health issues etc. If chronic stress is prolonged, it can have detrimental impact on health and general wellbeing. The diseases like diabetes, depression, heart problem, hypertension, gastric disorder etc. may occur due to chronic stress. The treatment for this type of stress includes antidepressant medication cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), meditation, counseling for coping with the situation etc. (Nerurkar *et al*, 2013).

2.1.11 Effect of stress

Stress causes mental and bodily tension. It yields different symptoms like headache, depression, insomnia, heart burn, high blood pressure, stomach pain, muscular fatigueness, fertility problem, diabetes or hyperglycemia, heart risk, weakened immune system etc. Stress acts as a slow killing agent. There are many other signs of stress such as memory loss, difficult to focus on work, indigestion and other digestive issues, feeling of low self esteem, feeling fatigue, muscle ache, change in sleep pattern, under anxiety, difficulty in breathing, obesity, panic attack, eye sight problem, chest pain, excess sadness, hopelessness, suicidal attempt, desire to live in isolation or avoiding family and friends, burst of anger, crying and losing interest in daily activities. All these symptoms of stress act as warning signs which needs to be addressed with priority in order to prevent further complications. However moderate stress is beneficial as it stimulates the production of a chemical called interleukin which boosts immune system. But no doubt chronic stress lowers immunity and causes inflammation symptoms in body. According to some authors, good stress is called eustress. When someone feels excited hearing

any good news or seeing an event, pulse rate increases with surge of happy hormones (Dopamine, Endorphin & Oxytocin).

III. Management of Stress

Stress is inevitable and a part and parcel of life. So everyone must know how to deal with it in order to determine the quality of life. There are many approaches and practices to combat stress.

3.1 Deep Breathing Practice

It activates sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system which reduces overall stress and anxiety of body. The breathing must be slow and deep which, through our nervous system, provides relaxation response. It is a quick stress relieving tactic. Daily practice of at least one hour deep breathing has proven result. It lowers blood pressure and heart rate. Deep breathing associated with diaphragmatic breathing, abdominal breathing, belly breathing, paced breathing is very much effective.

3.2 Physical Exercise

It is a great stress reliever and help to improve overall quality of life. One must maintain regular physical exercise. Daily taking a quick walk is very much beneficial. Exercising movement of ankle, finger and arms also reduces stress. Even a busy person can do ten minutes walk inside office premises or in a natural place or in office garden. It increases blood flow and lessens stress. Satisfactory sexual life is a very good stress reliever. During this period more secretion of endorphin hormone (natural pain killer) occurs. Also more secretion of oxytocin hormone takes place which lowers much body stress and enhances positive mood.

3.3 Nutrition Factor

Certain vitamins like Vit-A, B-Complex, Vit- C and E are very important supplements that deplete stress. Eating healthy food also makes body and mind feel better and helps to combat stress. Thiamine or Vit-B₁ is called anti-stress and anti-depressant vitamin. Vit-B₃, B₉ and particularly B₁₂ improves mood, relaxes brain and maintains a healthy nervous system. On the whole, taking Vit-B complex has positive impact to relieve occupational stress. It decreases the level of cortisol called a stress hormone. One may take green tea daily which has enough B-complex as well as anti-anxiety property. It alters Gamma-Amino-Butyric Acid (GABA) receptors and increases serotonin level which lowers stress and anxiety.

3.4 Scheduled Time for Hobby

One must keep some fixed time to do things he enjoys. It may be gardening, social work, joining a club, playing games (outdoor or indoor) visiting parks, sitting in a calm and quiet place in nature or temple, spending some time with friends and have coffee or tea with them, making fun or humor with good friends or others etc. make mind feel relaxed. It is known that enough of laughter reduces blood pressure, stress and depression due to release of happy hormone endorphin called natural body pain killer. This also stimulates production of T-Cell to strengthen immune system. Engagement in a creative work, preparation of choice food, writing any article for journal or news paper, reading favourite books, drawing pictures and colouring it are other items that one can adopt to minimize his stress. Women prefer chitchat and like to spend more time with their children and friends as it releases more serotonin in them which acts as a natural stress reliever. All these above steps can be taken up to bring down stress.

3.5 Stay Connected with Others

Since humans are social beings, so staying connected with people you like will help to reduce stress. By ventilating the stress to a trusted friend and taking his counseling will help to minimize stress or cope up with it. Their support will provide mental relaxation. Besides, someone may remain associated with any religious or sports or cultural organization that will make one feel supportive in difficult times of life.

IV. GENERAL STEPS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Listen to music to improve mood
- See rising or setting sun
- Get enough sleep
- Practice Yoga and Meditation
- Spend time with pet
- Eat less stimulants like alcohol, caffeine or others
- Stretch body on a chair or bed
- Laugh seeing funny videos

- Get away from noise of TV, radio or other sound devices
- Take rest (sleep) for 7-8 hours
- Take up body massage as it relaxes body, lowers B.P., improves blood circulation and stiff muscles, reduces anxiety along with depression etc.
- Use of smart phone as less as possible
- Eat grape, strawberry, orange (citrus food with Vit-C) daily
- Sit closing eyes for some time with positive thoughts and imaginations
- Smell scented flowers
- Spend time with family or other social well wishers
- Take bath when feeling stress
- Spend some time in nature, park, forest, greenery place etc.
- Avoid excess use of social media
- Pray for sometime which gives emotional comfort
- Eat dark chocolate (it acts as anti-oxidant and lowers stress hormone secretion)
- Do palm massage frequently
- Count numbers backward
- Rub feet over a Golf ball
- Try to change overstressed job
- Keep pet dog which gives greater satisfaction, reduce loneliness and anxiety
- Stand before mirror and observe changing own facial expression
- Chew gum for 10-20 minutes
- Yawn forcefully during stress time
- Clap alone 5-10 times during stress period
- Utter some positive words to yourself in a lonely place
- Crying also lowers stress, improves mood and strengthen immune system

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