

1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Psychology
Course Name	Psychology 03 (Class XII, Semester - 1)
Module Name/Title	Meeting Life Challenges - Part 1
Module Id	lepy_10301
Pre-requisites	To understand the nature, signs and symptoms of stress; and the types and sources of stress
Objectives	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to understand the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signs and Symptoms of Stress• Response to Stress• Types of Stress
Keywords	Stress, Eustress, Distress, Stressors, Primary appraisal, Secondary appraisal, Physical and environmental stress, Psychological stress, Social stress, social pressure

2. Development Team

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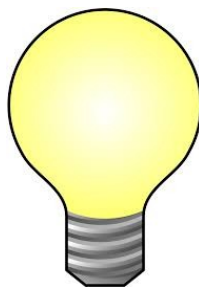
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Source:https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2013/07/12/17/17/crossing-151955_960_720.png

While waiting to cross the road on a busy Monday morning, you may be temporarily stressed. But, because you are alert, vigilant and aware of the danger, you are able to cross the road safely. Faced with any challenge, we put in additional efforts and mobilize all our resources and support system to meet the challenge. All the challenges, problems, and difficult circumstances put us to stress. Thus, if handled properly, stress increases the probability of one's survival.



Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/8b/Light_bulb_icon.svg/2000px-Light_bulb_icon.svg.png

Stress is like electricity. It gives energy, increases human arousal and affects performance. However, if the electric current is too high, it can fuse bulbs, damage appliances, etc. High stress too can produce unpleasant effects and cause our performance to deteriorate. Conversely, too little stress may cause one to feel somewhat listless and low on motivation which may lead us to perform slowly and less efficiently. It is important to remember that not all stress is inherently bad or destructive.

Eustress is the term used to describe the level of stress that is good for you and is one of a person's best assets for achieving peak performance and managing minor crisis. Examples are -

- Studying for a new qualification over a period of time - sustaining us as we work towards something bigger that will move us forwards in life like a new qualification.
- Learning and adapting to new routines and cultures when travelling. When we travel, we must get out of our routines and comfort zones – and adapt to different food, time zone, customs, language, scenery and so on.
- Networking and connecting with others to grow ourselves and our businesses. Meeting lots of new people at once and showing ourselves and what we do to a larger world.
- Performing at our best when we play competitive sports or a fitness activity. Eustress helps us perform better in the moment and also to improve ourselves by staying committed to our exercise routine even when we may not feel like it.
- Preparing for and working towards big goals or events like getting married, having a baby, getting a new job or promotion.
- Developing new skills especially where we have to practice to improve and work through the awkward beginner's stage e.g., learning a new hobby, language or sport.



Source: https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2015/07/27/11/16/despair-862349_960_720.jpg

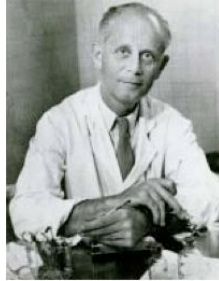
Eustress, however, has the potential of turning into '**distress**'. It is this latter manifestation of stress that causes our body's wear and tear.

Thus, stress can be described as the pattern of responses an organism makes to stimulus event that disturbs the equilibrium and exceeds a person's ability to cope.

Nature of Stress

The word stress has its origin in the Latin words 'strictus', meaning tight or narrow and 'stringere', the verb meaning to tighten. These root words reflect the internal feelings of tightness and constriction of the muscles and breathing reported by many people under stress. Stress is often explained in terms of characteristics of the environment that are disruptive to the individual. **Stressors** are events that cause our body to give the stress response. Such events

include noise, crowding, a bad relationship, or the daily commuting to school or office. The reaction to external stressors is called 'strain'. Stress has come to be associated with both the causes as well as effects. However, this view of stress can cause confusion.



Source:<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/27/5a/ac/275aac94f72341f1b2d7b2e8a6b7dc79.jpg>

Hans Selye (see the picture above), the father of modern stress research, defined stress as “the nonspecific response of the body to any demand”, that is, regardless of the cause of the threat, the individual will respond with the same physiological pattern of reactions. Many researchers do not agree with this definition as they feel that the stress response is not nearly as general and nonspecific as Selye suggests. Different stressors may produce somewhat different patterns of stress reaction, and different individuals may have different characteristic modes of response. Each one of us will see the situation through our own eyes and it is our perception of the demands, and our ability to meet them, which will determine whether we are feeling ‘stressed’ or not. *Stress is not a factor that resides in the individual or the environment, instead it is embedded in an ongoing process that involves individuals transacting with their social and cultural environments, making appraisals of those encounters and attempting to cope with the issues that arise.*

Stress is a dynamic mental/cognitive state. It is a disruption in homeostasis or an imbalance that gives rise to a requirement for resolution of that imbalance or restoration of homeostasis. The perception of stress is dependent upon the individual’s cognitive appraisal of events and the resources available to deal with them.

The stress process given by Lazarus and his colleagues:

Source:https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/de/1/13/Stressmodell_von_Richard_Lazarus.png

The process is based on the cognitive theory of stress propounded by Lazarus and his colleagues. An individual’s response to a stressful situation largely depends upon the perceived

events and how they are interpreted or appraised. Lazarus has distinguished between two types of appraisal, i.e. primary and secondary.

Appraisal:

Primary appraisal refers to the perception of a new or changing environment as positive, neutral or negative in its consequences. Negative events are appraised for their possible harm, threat or challenge.

- Harm is the assessment of the damage that has already been done by an event.
- Threat is the assessment of possible future damage that may be brought about by the event.
- Challenge appraisals are associated with more confident expectations of the ability to cope with the stressful event, the potential to overcome and even profit from the event.

Secondary appraisal occurs when we perceive an event as stressful. It is the assessment of one's coping abilities and resources and whether they will be sufficient to meet the harm, threat or challenge of the event. These resources may be mental, physical, personal or social. If one thinks one has a positive attitude, health, skills and social support to deal with the crises, s/he will feel less stressed.

This two-level appraisal process determines not only our cognitive and behavioural responses but also our emotional and physiological responses to external events.

These appraisals are very subjective and will depend on many factors.

- i. The past experience of dealing with a stressful condition how one perceives stress determines, If one has handled similar situations very successfully in the past, they would be less threatening for her/him.
- ii. Whether the stressful event is perceived as controllable, i.e. whether one has mastery or control over a situation also affects stress. A person who believes that s/he can control the onset of a negative situation, or its adverse consequences, will experience less amount of stress than those who have no such sense of personal control. For example, a sense of self-confidence or efficacy can determine whether the person is likely to appraise the situation as a threat or a challenge.
- iii. The stresses which people experience also vary in terms of intensity (low intensity vs. high intensity), duration (short-term vs. long-term), complexity (less complex vs. more complex) and predictability (unexpected vs. predictable). The outcome of stress depends

on the position of a particular stressful experience along these dimensions. Usually more intense, prolonged or chronic, complex and unanticipated stresses have more negative consequences than less intense, short-term, less complex and expected stresses.

- iv. Thus, the experience and outcome of a stressor may vary from individual to individual. Stress, includes all those environmental and personal events, which challenge or threaten the well-being of a person.
- v. The cultural context in which we live determines the meaning of any event and defines the nature of response that is expected under various conditions.
- vi. Finally, the stress experience will be determined by the resources of the person, such as money, social skills, coping style, support networks, etc.

Thus, all the above factors determine the appraisal of a given stressful situation.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

The way we respond to stress varies depending upon our personality, early upbringing and life experiences. Everyone has their own pattern of stress response. So the warning signs may vary, as may their intensity. Some of us know our pattern of stress response and can gauge the depth of the problem by the nature and severity of our own symptoms or changes in behaviour. These symptoms of stress can be physical, emotional and behavioural. Any of the symptoms can indicate a degree of stress which, if left unresolved, might have serious implications.

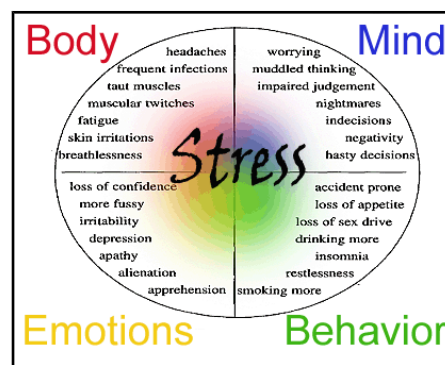
Response to Stress

The stressors can be external, such as environmental (noise, air pollution), social (break-up in a relationship, loneliness) or psychological (conflict, frustration) within the individual. Very often, these stressors result in a variety of stress reactions, which may be physiological, behavioural, emotional, and cognitive.

- i. At the physiological level:

The arousal plays a key role in stress related behaviours. The hypothalamus initiates action along two pathways. The first pathway involves the autonomic nervous system. The adrenal gland releases large amount of catecholamines (epinephrine and norepinephrine) into the blood stream. This leads to physiological changes seen in fight-or-flight response. The second pathway involves the pituitary gland, which secretes the corticosteroid (cortisol) which provides energy.

- ii. The emotional reactions to experience of stress include negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, embarrassment, anger, depression or even denial.
- iii. The behavioural responses are virtually limitless, depending on the nature of the stressful event. Confrontative action against the stressor (fight) or withdrawal from the threatening event (flight) are two general categories of behavioural responses.
- iv. It includes beliefs about the harm or threat an event poses and beliefs about its causes or controllability. These include responses such as inability to concentrate, and intrusive, repetitive or morbid thoughts.
- v. An individual's experiences of stress depend on the physiological strength of that person. Thus, individuals with poor physical health and weak constitution would be more vulnerable than would be those who enjoy good health and strong constitution.
- vi. Psychological characteristics like mental health, temperament, and self concept are relevant to the experience of stress.



Source:https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2013/03/26/06/29/burnout-96856_960_720.jpg

Source:<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/09/StressSymptoms.gif>

Types of Stress

The three major types of stress are physical and environmental, psychological, and social. It is important to understand that all these types of stress are interrelated.

Physical and Environmental Stress Physical stresses are demands that change the state of our body. We feel strained when we overexert ourselves physically, lack a nutritious diet, suffer an injury, or fail to get enough sleep. Environmental stresses are aspects of our surroundings. that are often unavoidable such as air pollution, crowding, noise, heat of the summer, winter cold, etc. Another group of environmental stresses are catastrophic events or disasters such as fire, earthquake, floods, etc.

Psychological Stress These are stresses that we generate ourselves in our minds. These are personal and unique to the person experiencing them and are internal sources of stress. We worry about problems, feel anxiety, or become depressed. These are not only symptoms of stress, but they cause further stress for us. Some of the important sources of psychological stress are frustration, conflicts, internal and social pressures, etc.

Frustration results from the blocking of needs and motives by something or someone that hinders us from achieving a desired goal. There could be a number of causes of frustration such as social discrimination, interpersonal hurt, low grades in school, etc.

Conflicts may occur between two or more incompatible needs or motives, e.g. whether to study dance or psychology. You may want to continue studies or take up a job. There may be a conflict of values when you are pressurized to take any action that may be against the values held by you.

Internal pressures stem from beliefs based upon expectations from inside us to ourselves such as, 'I must do everything perfectly'. Such expectations can only lead to disappointment. Many of us drive ourselves ruthlessly towards achieving unrealistically high standards in achieving our goals.

Social pressures may be brought about from people who make excessive demands on us. This can cause even greater pressure when we have to work with them. Also, there are people with whom we face interpersonal difficulties, 'a personality clash' of sorts.

Social Stress These are induced externally and result from our interaction with other people. Social events like death or illness in the family, strained relationships, trouble with neighbours are some examples of social stresses. These social stresses vary widely from person to person. Attending parties may be stressful for a person who likes to spend quiet evenings at home while an outgoing person may find staying at home in the evenings stressful.

Sources of Stress

A wide range of events and conditions can generate stress. Among the most important of these are major stressful life events, such as death of a loved one or personal injury, the annoying frequent hassles of everyday life and traumatic events that affect our lives.

Life Events Changes, both big and small, sudden and gradual affect our life from the moment we are born. We learn to cope with small, everyday changes but major life events can be stressful, because they disturb our routine and cause upheaval. If several of these life events that are planned (e.g. moving into a new house) or unpredicted (e.g. break-up of a long-term

relationship) occur within a short period of time, we find it difficult to cope with them and will be more prone to the symptoms of stress

Daily Hassles These are the personal stresses we endure as individuals, due to the happenings in our daily life, such as noisy surroundings, commuting, quarrelsome neighbours, electricity and water shortage, traffic snarls, and so on. Attending to various emergencies are daily hassles experienced by a housewife. There are some jobs in which daily hassles are very frequent. These daily hassles may sometimes have devastating consequences for the individual who is often the one coping alone with them as others may not even be aware of them as outsiders. The more stress people report as a result of daily hassles, the poorer is their psychological well-being.

Traumatic Life Events These include being involved in a variety of extreme events such as a fire, train or road accident, robbery, earthquake, tsunami, etc. The effects of these events may occur after some lapse of time and sometimes persist as symptoms of anxiety, flashbacks, dreams and intrusive thoughts, etc. Severe trauma can also strain relationships. Professional help will be needed to cope with them especially if they persist for many months after the event is over.

The body responds to each type of stress in similar ways. Different people may feel it in different ways. For example, some people experience mainly digestive symptoms, while others may have headaches, sleeplessness, depressed mood, anger and irritability. People under chronic stress are prone to more frequent and severe viral infections, such as the flu or common cold, and vaccines, such as the flu shot, are less effective for them. Of all the types of stress, changes in health from routine stress may be hardest to notice at first. Because the source of stress tends to be more constant than in cases of acute or traumatic stress, the body gets no clear signal to return to normal functioning. Over time, continued strain on your body from routine stress may lead to serious health problems, such as heart.