

1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Psychology
Course Name	Psychology 03 (Class XII, Semester - 1)
Module Name/Title	Life Skills and Stress Management Techniques - Part 3
Module Id	lepy_10303
Pre-requisites	Knowing about nature of stress, sources and types of stress, effects of stress and coping with stress
Objectives	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to understand the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">To understand and apply the various techniques including life skills in dealing with stress
Keywords	Life skills, Assertiveness, Time management, Rational thinking, Self care, Positive attitude, Social support, Resilience

2. Development Team

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Promoting Positive Health And Well-Being

It is unlikely that we will go through life without some experience of personal crises causing acute pressure for a while. Many people sail through and rebuild their lives very positively. They are likely to have constructive attitudes and also have lots of emotional and social support of various kinds available to them. When we find ways of managing these pressures and can use the energy to create something positive out of the situation, then we will have learned to survive healthily and this will leave us more prepared to cope with future crises. It is like being immunized against the dangers of unhealthy stress.

1. Stress Resistant Personality: Kobasa reports that people having high levels of stress but low levels of illness exhibit three main personality traits of hardiness. These are termed as the '**three Cs**', i.e. *commitment, control, and challenge*. *Hardiness* is a set of beliefs about oneself, the world, and how they interact. It takes shape as a sense of personal commitment to what you are doing, a sense of control over your life, and a feeling of challenge. Stress resistant personalities have control which is a sense of purpose and direction in life; commitment to work, family, hobbies and social life; and challenge, that is, they see changes in life as normal and positive rather than as a threat. Everyone does not have these characteristics; many of us have to relearn specific life skills in areas such as rational thinking, and assertiveness to equip ourselves better to cope with the demands of everyday life, etc. People with such above

mentioned characteristics are able to resist or stay away from stress much more than other people.

2. Life skills: Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Our ability to cope depends on how well we are prepared to deal with and counterbalance everyday demands, and keeps equilibrium in our lives. These life skills can be learned and even improved upon. Assertiveness, time management, rational thinking, improving relationships, self-care, and overcoming unhelpful habits such as perfectionism, procrastination, etc. are some life skills that will help to meet the challenges of life.

World Health Organization (WHO) defines life skills as set of positive and adaptive behaviour of an individual which helps him/ her to deal effectively and cope with the challenges of the environment. The ten life skills as given by the WHO are self awareness, empathy, coping with stress, coping with emotions, healthy interpersonal relationship, effective communication, problem solving, decision making, creative thinking and critical thinking.

Like skill	Meaning
Self awareness	It indicates being aware about ones strengths and weaknesses. It is also the capacity for introspection and the ability to recognize oneself as an individual separate from the environment and other individuals.
Empathy	Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from the other being's perspective, i.e., the capacity to place oneself in another's position. Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the "heart" of another. There are many definitions for empathy which encompass a broad range of emotional states It means being able to feel what other person is going through. Stepping into someone else's shoes.
Coping with stress	This indicated the ability of a person to deal effectively with any stressful condition. Types of coping strategies are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Appraisal-Focused:</i> directed towards challenging personal assumptions. • <i>Problem-Focused:</i> reducing or eliminating stressors. • <i>Emotion-Focused:</i> changing personal emotional reactions.
Coping with emotions	This means the ability to keep the emotions under control even in adversities.

Healthy interpersonal relationship	An interpersonal relationship is a strong, deep, or close association or acquaintance between two or more people that may range in duration from brief to enduring. This association may be based on inference, love, solidarity, regular business interactions, or some other type of social commitment. Interpersonal relationships are formed in the context of social, cultural and other influences. The context can and may and perhaps will vary from family or kinship relations, friendship, marriage, relations with associates, work, clubs, neighborhoods, and places of worship.
Effective communication	A two way information sharing process which involves one party sending a message that is easily understood by the receiving party. Effective communication by business managers facilitates information sharing between company employees and can substantially contribute to its commercial success.
Problem solving	It is the ability to weigh and elect the best from the available options.
Decision making	Decision-making can be regarded as a problem-solving activity terminated by a solution deemed to be satisfactory. It is therefore a process which can be more or less rational or irrational and can be based on explicit or tacit knowledge.
Creative thinking	This indicates out of the box thinking or a novel or new way of looking at any object , situation or condition.
Critical thinking	Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. Someone with critical thinking skills is able to do the following : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the logical connections between ideas • identify, construct and evaluate arguments • detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in reasoning • solve problems systematically • identify the relevance and importance of ideas • reflect on the justification of one's own beliefs and values

3. Assertiveness : Assertiveness is a behaviour or skill that helps to communicate, clearly and confidently, our feelings, needs, wants, and thoughts. It is the ability to say no to a request, to state an opinion without being self-conscious, or to express emotions such as love, anger, etc.

openly. If you are assertive, you feel confident, and have high self-esteem and a solid sense of your own identity.

Assertive people tend to have the following characteristics:

- i. They feel free to express their feelings, thoughts, and desires.
- ii. They are also able to initiate and maintain comfortable relationships with other people.
- iii. They know their rights, and respect self and others.
- iv. They have control over their anger. This does not mean that they repress this feeling; it means that they control anger and talk about it in a reasoning manner.
- v. Assertive people are willing to compromise with others, rather than always wanting their own way, and tend to have good self-esteem.
- vi. Assertive people enter friendships from an 'I count my needs. I count your needs position'.

Assertive people are able to say No to others, however, it can be hard to say no to friends and peers. It takes courage. Below are some refusal skill techniques that can help teens say no to drinking and drugs. Being prepared will help. Know how to deal with the situation before it happens.

- 1. Say "No Thanks".** This indicates refusing clearly.
- 2. Give a Reason or a Fact.** This gets you away from the person or situation.
- 3. Walk Away.** One of the most effective refusal skills is to simply walk away. You may feel obligated to stand and face "the enemy" but you need to just leave. Say no and walk away while saying it.
- 4. Change the Subject.** You can offer another alternative activity.
"No. Let's go play outside instead of at home."
- 5. Repeated Refusal.** Keep saying "no" over and over again. It will buy you some time to use another refusal technique.

4. Time Management: The way you spend your time determines the quality of your life. Learning how to plan time and delegate can help to relieve the pressure. The major way to reduce time stress is to change one's perception of time. The central principle of time management is to spend your time doing the things that you value, or that help you to achieve your goals. It depends on being realistic about what you know and that you must do it within a certain time period, knowing what you want to do, and organising your life to achieve a balance between the two.

5. Rational Thinking : Many stress-related problems occur as a result of distorted thinking. The way you think and the way you feel are closely connected. When we are stressed, we have an inbuilt selective bias to attend to negative thoughts and images from the past, which affect our perception of the present and the future. Some of the principles of rational thinking are: challenging your distorted thinking and irrational beliefs, driving out potentially intrusive negative anxiety-provoking thoughts, and making positive statements.

6. Improving Relationships : The key to a sound lasting relationship is communication. This consists of three essential skills: listening to what the other person is saying, expressing how you feel and what you think, and accepting the other person's opinions and feelings, even if they are different from your own. It also requires us to avoid misplaced jealousy and sulking behaviour.

7. Self-care : If we keep ourselves healthy, fit and relaxed, we are better prepared physically and emotionally to tackle the stresses of everyday life. Our breathing patterns reflect our state of mind and emotions. When we are stressed or anxious, we tend towards rapid and shallow breathing from high in the chest, with frequent sighs. The most relaxed breathing is slow, stomach-centred breathing from the diaphragm, i.e. a dome like muscle between the chest and the abdominal cavity. Environmental stresses like noise, pollution, space, light, colour, etc. can all exert an influence on our mood. These have a noticeable effect on our ability to cope with stress, and well-being.

8. Overcoming Unhelpful Habits : Unhelpful habits such as perfectionism, avoidance, procrastination, etc. are strategies that help to cope in the short-term but which make one more vulnerable to stress. Perfectionists are persons who have to get everything just right. They have difficulty in varying standards according to factors such as time available, consequences of not being able to stop work, and the effort needed. They are more likely to feel tense and find it difficult to relax, are critical of self and others, and may become inclined to avoid challenges. Avoidance is to put the issue under the carpet and refuse to accept or face it. Procrastination means putting off what we know we need to do. We all are guilty of saying "I will do it later". People who procrastinate are deliberately avoiding confronting their fears of failure or rejection. Various factors have been identified which facilitate the development of positive health. Health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Positive health comprises the following constructs: "a healthy body; high quality of personal relationships; a sense of purpose in life; self-regard, mastery of life's tasks; and resilience to stress, trauma, and change". Specifically, factors that

act as stress buffers and facilitate positive health are diet, exercise, positive attitude, positive thinking, and social support.

9. Diet : A balanced diet can lift one's mood, give more energy, feed muscles, improve circulation, prevent illness, strengthen the immune system and make one feel better to cope with stresses of life. The key to healthy living is to eat three main meals a day, and eat a varied well-balanced diet. How much nutrition one needs depends on one's activity level, genetic make-up, climate, and health history. What people eat, and how much do they weigh involve behavioural processes. Some people are able to maintain a healthy diet and weight while others become obese. When we are stressed, we seek 'comfort foods' which are high in fats, salt and sugar.

10. Exercise : A large number of studies confirm a consistently positive relationship between physical fitness and health. Also, of all the measures an individual can take to improve health, exercise is the lifestyle change with the widest popular approval. Regular exercise plays an important role in managing weight and stress, and is shown to have a positive effect on reducing tension, anxiety and depression. Physical exercises that are essential for good health are stretching exercises such as yogic asanas and aerobic exercises such as jogging, swimming, cycling, etc. Whereas stretching exercises have a calming effect, aerobic exercises increase the arousal level of the body. The health benefits of exercise work as a stress buffer. Studies suggest that fitness permits individuals to maintain general mental and physical wellbeing even in the face of negative life events.

11. Positive Attitude: Positive health and well-being can be realised by having a positive attitude. Some of the factors leading to a positive attitude are: having a fairly accurate perception of reality; a sense of purpose in life and responsibility; acceptance and tolerance for different viewpoints of others; and taking credit for success and accepting blame for failure. Finally, being open to new ideas and having a sense of humour with the ability to laugh at oneself help us to remain centred, and see things in a proper perspective.

12. Positive Thinking: The power of positive thinking has been increasingly recognized in reducing and coping with stress. Optimism, which is the inclination to expect favorable life outcomes, has been linked to psychological and physical wellbeing. People differ in the manner in which they cope. For example, optimists tend to assume that adversity can be handled successfully whereas pessimists anticipate disasters. Optimists use more problem focused coping strategies, and seek advice and help from others. Pessimists ignore the problem or source of stress, and use strategies such as giving up the goal with which stress is interfering or denying that stress exists.

13. Social Support : Social support is defined as the existence and availability of people on whom we can rely upon, people who let us know that they care about, value, and love us. Someone who believes that s/he belongs to a social network of communication and mutual obligation experiences social support. Perceived support, i.e. the quality of social support is positively related to health and wellbeing, whereas social network, i.e. the quantity of social support is unrelated to well-being, because it is very time consuming and demanding to maintain a large social network.

Social support can help to provide protection against stress. People with high levels of social support from family and friends may experience less stress when they confront a stressful experience, and they may cope with it more successfully. Women exposed to life event stresses, who had a close friend, were less likely to be depressed and had lesser medical complications during pregnancy.

Social support may be in the form of *tangible support* or assistance involving material aid, such as money, goods, services, etc. For example, a child gives notes to her/his friend, since s/he was absent from school due to sickness. Family and friends also provide *informational support* about stressful events. For example, a student facing a stressful event such as a difficult board examination, if provided information by a friend who has faced a similar one, would not only be able to identify the exact procedures involved, but also it would facilitate in determining what resources and coping strategies could be useful to successfully pass the examination.

During times of stress, one may experience sadness, anxiety, and loss of self-esteem. Supportive friends and family provide emotional support by reassuring the individual that she/he is loved, valued, and cared for. Research has demonstrated that social support effectively reduces psychological distress such as depression or anxiety, during times of stress. There is growing evidence that social support is positively related to psychological well-being. Generally, social support leads to mental health benefits for both the giver and the receiver.

14. Resilience and Health: Resilience is a dynamic developmental process referring to the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging life conditions. It has been described as the capacity to 'bounce back' in the face of stress and adversity. Resilience has been conceptualised as reflecting feelings of self-worth and self-confidence, autonomy and self-reliance, finding positive role models, seeking a confidant, cognitive skills such as problem solving, creativity, resourcefulness, and flexibility and a belief that one's life has purpose and meaning. Resilient individuals are able to overcome the effects of trauma, stress and adversity and learn to live psychologically healthy and meaningful lives. Resilience has recently been defined in terms of three resources:

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- a) I HAVE (social and interpersonal strengths), i.e. ‘people around me I trust and who love me no matter what’,
 - b) I AM (inner strengths), i.e. ‘respectful of myself and others’,
 - c) I CAN (interpersonal and problem solving skills), i.e. ‘find ways to solve problems I face’.

For a child to be resilient, s/he needs to have more than one of these strengths. For example, children may have plenty of self-esteem (I am), but may lack anyone whom they can turn to for support (I have), and do not have the capacity to solve problems (I can), will not be resilient. Outcomes of longitudinal studies of children provide evidence that in spite of extreme vulnerabilities related to poverty and other social disadvantages, many individuals develop into capable and caring adults.