

NPTEL

NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

Course Name

Stress Management

by

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Lecture 11: Understanding your stress level

Hello everybody welcome to this third week on stress management here in today's in this week's sessions we are going to talk about developing resilience to stress.

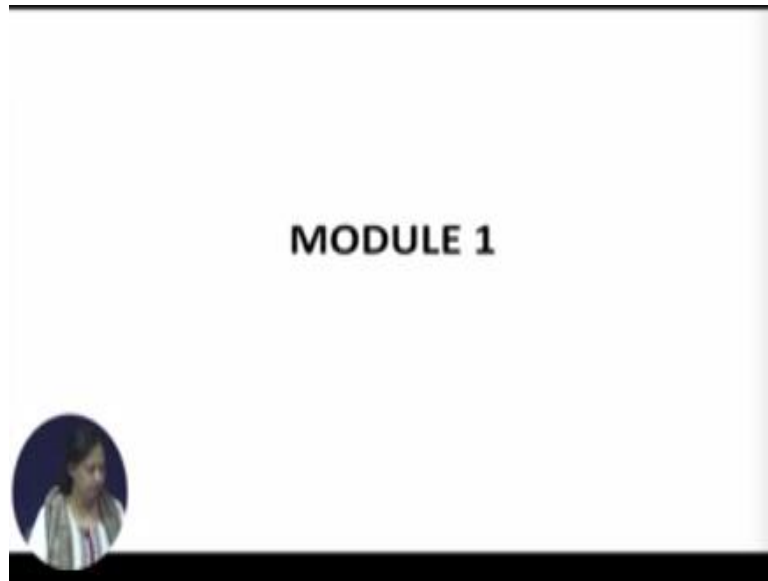
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**DEVELOPING RESILIENCE TO
STRESS**

And in the first module that is today's module we are going to understand what your stresses are and how to assess your stress level.

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OUTLINE

- UNDERSTANDING YOUR STRESS LEVEL



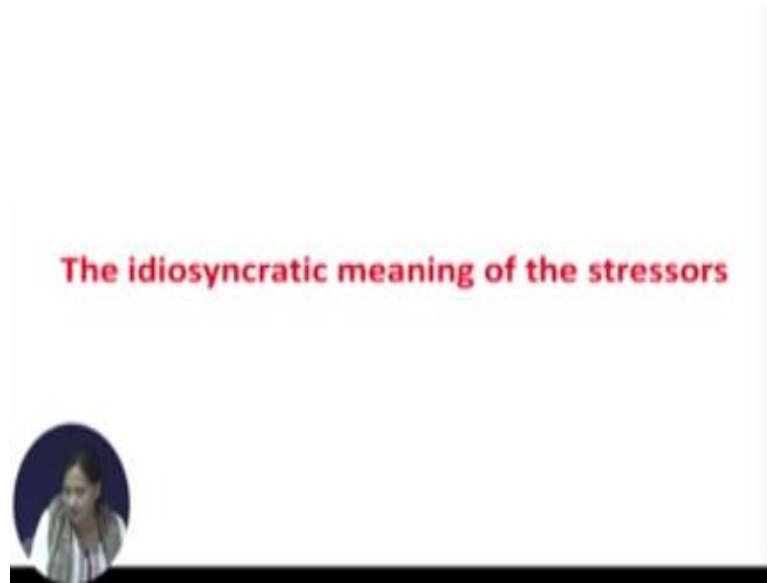
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There is an old joke about a man who went to a psychiatrist because of a problem with thumb-sucking. After several months of therapy, the patient was delighted with the results and was describing them to a friend. "So," the friend said, "you don't suck your thumb any more?" "Oh, no," replied the patient, "I still suck it as much as ever. But now I know why!"



But before we start off with the session. I will tell you about an old joke in psychology and psychiatry this goes like this the Bears yeah there is a man who goes for treatment to a psychiatrist for more than six months because he has a habit of sucking his thumb and after six months one of his friends asked him so has the treatment helped you yes it has so you don't suck your thumb anymore oh no of course I do but now I know why.

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So in today's session we are not only going to know the why of the stresses and what other stresses that are affecting you we have actually studied more of the why but today we will get no more about the house. So how these stresses affect you and how much do they affect you and what can you do with that so that brings us to the idiosyncratic meaning of the stresses now what exactly do we mean by idiosyncratic meaning primarily it actually means that each individual has a different way of experiencing a stressor.

So each individual sees a stressor as different as different stimuli so that just brings us to the old question that every individual is unique every individual is different so we need to understand how that individual perceives the situation so that we will just discuss this with an example now that here we are going to talk about two individuals A and B both are college students, and both love playing the guitar so we start off with A who loves playing the guitar has a year for music picks up any tuned he hears. He met a music teacher and looks forward to the classes.

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EARLY EXPERIENCE AND ITS ROLE IN STRESS

A - loves playing the guitar – has a ear for music, picks up any tune he hears, met a music teacher, looks forward to the classes, enjoys playing with people, participates in competitions. For A playing the guitar is relaxing and fun

B – born in a musical family, had a tune for music, could play several instruments, loved playing the guitar, father and brothers would play well too, drilled for learning lessons well, criticized if wrong, worked hard to do well, improved, won accolades in competitions, joined college. Played in the college music group – others not as serious or efficient, but he would give his best. Anxious before every performance – vomiting / becoming ill after the performance

He is eager and he enjoys playing with people participates in group activities participate in competitions so for a how would he actually appreciate or how would he look towards the guitar sessions or guitar lessons to him to a it would be more relaxing and fun now let us look at B becomes from a musical family he is also a college student mind you of the same age as a bee comes from a musical family where his family can play the his parents father and brother can play several instruments and he plays the guitar well of which he prefers playing the guitar most and he plays at really well.

Now throughout his childhood he has been go he has been going through rigorous sessions and trainings and he has been criticized and for his mistakes and after that he really worked hard he worked well improved on his guitar playing anyone several accolades and then he finally joined the same College as it did now both are in the same College both are facing a competition.

So how do you think B is actually going to look at look towards the competition I look at the competition for B which is very contradicting to a 4b the less on the per every performance is very, very anxiety-provoking situation so he is extremely stressed during a fed or a during and before a performance and he vomits several times and after the performance he becomes ill so most of the times after the performance he becomes ill so what is actually happening.

Now we see that A and B perceive the sessions differently so this just gives us this to enhance this point once again that the same situation can be stressful for one and again for the other it may be an armless one and one of enjoyment and relaxation.

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SAME SITUATION – DIFFERENT RESPONSE

Same situation can be stressful for one – harmless / self-enhancing, for another
Difference – in perception and interpretation

A – pleasant experience – positive memories, self appreciation
B – every performance is a test of personal worth

It might be argued that the stress drives B to excellent levels of performance, but it is far more certain that the repeated stress will take its toll on B both physically and mentally

Now why is there a difference my new let me just tell you this that this case of A and B that I just told you is from a personal experience of the students that I have seen as a psychologist in our college I am just citing an example from there so it is not one of the book this is very real time and many of you sitting there and listening to this lecture and going through the slides may feel.

But yes I have also gone through this several times or you have come across somebody who has had these similar problems and there is a difference in perception between two people because of their early experience because of the way they have been bred because the way they have been punished or appreciated for their work and that makes them perceive a situation differently so for one it may be very stressful for the other it may be relaxing as it is to it.

Now this as we have discussed already but it is a perception of the situation and the interpretation of the facts but of course with A and B we can also bring this point and you

may it may probably be coming to your heads right now that but we actually performs better because he is been striving hard and he has worked well and yes he is definitely ahead of others in his group so definitely he is going to do better.

So is that good or bad it is fact that his performance will be better but what cost so he excels but if this repeated stress happens then it will take a toll on its health we have seen that he starts vomiting and becomes ill after a performance imagine him going through this for several times you just recall your lecture on chronic stress and you will realize that if this goes and for a while then he will suffer from many of the problems that one individual goes through in chronic stress now let us get to the next part of today's session, so we will start with stress mapping so we have seen that the stresses are different for different people and people give different meaning to a stimulus.

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Like A, each of us experiences uniquely stressful situations-

- events in our lives that we customarily react to with **alarm, resistance, and-if the reaction continues long enough exhaustion**

Since these stress-inducing situations are personally determined, however, the only way to detect them-and thereby begin to gain some sense of control over them-is by mapping out the role they play in our lives

And that is why one is a stressor and one is not now we will,

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STRESS MAPPING...

- **sensitize yourself to potential stressors in the environment**
(B might ask himself, for instance, when it is that he feels stressed and discover that it is usually before a guitar performance)
- **keep a stress journal or notebook**, a day-by- day account of when and where the signs of stress appear
Helps in developing self control as it reveals the patterns of stress, these unique configurations of stressor and response that operate in your life
- **Personal stress analysis** - a method by which you systematically evaluate and interpret the information in the journal
This analysis, when well grounded in your examination of potential stressors and in your careful observation of your own behavior, can then serve as the basis for the subsequent development of a comprehensive program of stress management

Knowing your personal stressors and how you react to them provides a tremendous opportunity for you to alter your behavior, coping more efficiently or perhaps avoiding stressful situations altogether

Shaffer, 1982

Understand this better we will undo the stress mapping so this is a technique that you can follow for yourselves or you can actually practice it on somebody who is going through a lot of stress or may be is manifesting symptoms of stress without knowing exactly, why? so first and foremost to undo before you do stress mapping will have to understand some of the terms.

So one now to start off with it is sensitizing yourself to potential stresses in the environment so what exactly is a sensitizing so primarily you have to be aware of what other stresses in your environment many times we are not even aware that this is causing stress so recall your session on chronic stress we have seen that there are some individuals acute stress and chronic stress we saw that there are some individuals who do not even realize that they are actually getting stressed in the situation and that is affecting their performance they feel that it is the external factors or the others who are actually making them stress now.

We need to first realize what the stresses are in the environment so in this case we might ask himself when it is that he feels stressed and discovered that it is usually, before a guitar performance most of the times in the case of acute an individual can actually point out so many of you are many people who say that I have a problem in talking in front of the group knows that that is a trigger for a stress response so they can actually point it out that public speaking is a problem with me, the next thing is keeping a stress journal or notebook.

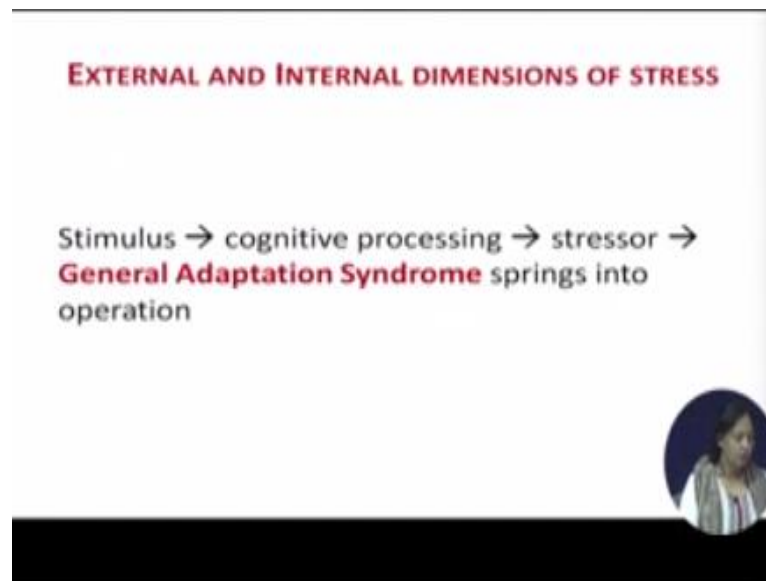
So it is a day-by-day account of when and where the signs of stress appear so here this helps in the development of self-control as it reveals the patterns of stress those unique configurations of the stress or and response that operate in an individual's life so what we need to do here is if you have a chart of what are the stresses that have been affecting you everyday how you have been responding to it we will see how we can do that then you know after a week's time that generally what are the times that you are stressed and how do you feel what are the thoughts that come to your mind and how if it is happening on a regular basis on a particular time.

So you know that there is this particular situation or this particular event or this particular in individual actually triggers a stress response so that will help you to be more in control of your situation and deal with the stimulus now, thereafter other thing that we could do is the personal stress analysis this is a method in which you systematically evaluate and interpret the information in the journal so we actually have a stress journal and then we have to analyze the information from the stress journal and thereby sort out how to deal with the stressor.

So this analysis when well grounded in your examination of potential stress stressors and careful observation of your own behaviour can then serve as the basis for the subsequent development of a comprehensive program for stress management so what you're actually doing is this is more of a self help technique.

So you have charted down your stresses and you actually once you've followed it for a few days time or a few weeks time you actually know what the stresses are and how to deal with it so that the that gives you more control over your stresses so that brings us to again understanding the external and internal dimensions of stress we have studied about the external sources of stress and internal source of stress earlier but just to revise it once we know that when there is a stimulus there it is cognitively processed by an individual.

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And how he processes the stress stimulus leads to if it is processed as something threatening to the survival of an individual then it becomes a scene as a stressor and the gas or the general adaptation syndrome or in this case the sympathetic activation system or the fight-or-flight response springs into operation so just to revise with one example I see a bear coming I I am running and I think okay why am I running because there is a mad dog chasing me so I will be stressed I'm running I think why am I running oh this is basically because I'm participating in a competition in a in a race at event.

So I'm more excited so the processing actually helps the way we are dealing judging the stimulus if it's in the third time I am I think oh it's because I'm jogging at morning then I will not be stressed at all it will be pretty relaxing to me now to understand the external dimensions of stress i have taken down this town from Shaffer and you can see this is something that you can follow yourself also you will see that these are some of the external dimensions that are putting down as noise air pollution adverse lighting overcrowding negative personal in interactions adverse work conditions if we all are students if you are a student then it would be your work condition.

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Dimension	Number of "Yes" responses	Additional comments or observations
1. Noise	0 1 2 3 4 5	
2. Air pollution	0 1 2 3 4 5	
3. Adverse lighting	0 1 2 3 4 5	
4. Crowding	0 1 2 3 4 5	
5. Negative personal interactions	0 1 2 3 4 5	
6. Adverse work conditions	0 1 2 3 4 5	
7. Major life changes	0 1 2 3 4 5	
8. Availability of choices	0 1 2 3 4 5	
9. Rules of living	0 1 2 3 4 5	

Shaffer, M., 1982

Or your occupational place would be your classroom or your lab and major life changes availability of choices and rules of living. So we will just see what are the questions that we need to remember when we are talking of these external dimensions so what are the questions you need to ask yourself or in fact if you are trying to do this with somebody else then what are the questions you would ask there.

So when you are talking of the external dimension of noise some of the questions that you need to ask is are you working in a noisy environment are you especially sensitive to noise you startled easily in to response to noises are you more relaxed when you are quiet rather than when you are in an active or a noisy environment now for air pollution again are you living in the urban or rural area.

So where you work or where you actually wear your occupation is there is it there people are smoking a lot do you yourself smoke do you have does that make you more irritated and unpleasant is their proper ventilation at home and work is there more pollution is a more of odours now odours can be very irritating and several times it may also cause a headache now for adverse lighting so do you feel your eyes areas trained during your working hours or you are doing your in your class do you rub your eyes often.

Now several times when there is an irritational response in the eyes and many times when we cannot see clearly we have a habit of rubbing our eyes in fact when there is high pollution and there is a dryness of the eyes that can also irritate the humour in the liquid in the eyes and that actually in the aqueous humour and actually causes more of irritation and Robbie, when you have to perform tasks that are visually demanding do you get headaches now this is one of the major things that you come across in students several times this has been students complain that they have been having problems with headache service your headaches but without realizing that they might actually have a problem or a problem with their vision does working indoors in artificial light make you more depressed and less energetic.

So that could also be one of the factors so if you are spending more time in those and getting less of ultraviolet rays now that can also affect your bones and several times it also causes energy loss and depression, now overcrowding so do you actually sitting a place or work in a place or stay in a place several times it happens with students there they have adjustment problems and stress because of the way they are living so maybe you have to share your accommodation with two three individuals now that could be one of the causes of stress and may actually affect your mood without you knowing really why you're feeling.

So irritated after you joined Collins many times we attributed to the food or the heat or it could be these factors of course but it could also be other factors now you need to take cognizance of what are the external factors that are actually affecting you, so negative personal interactions so are you actually having several irritable conversations or discussions or conflicts with your colleagues your peers your friends now if that is a problem then you need to also check for how long has this been going on has this occurred recently or has this been going on for a while.

Now adverse work conditions several times we generally get involved in a work that we do not like I come across many students who've joined the college because their parents wanted to them to do engineering and they had no interest in the subject so even the because there is a lack of interest which we will see is one of the internal factors but the and the adverse work conditions i am not liking the way the labs are running i have to rush to class I don't like the way say there are students people who get back to classes after working in the industry so change of environment many times they are not used to sitting in the classes for a long time.

So the working conditions could be an adversity and that may cause a lot of stress to the individual bringing about several physiological changes major life changes this is a very important factor we have talked about the life events scale earlier and we will talk about it again in the next session but this is a life changes or life events recent life events in the two years whether it is a positive change like getting married moving into a new house joining a new job joining a new college okay other these could be positive stress positive events but then also these changes may act as a stress or and of course there are negative life events like losing a loved one financial crisis maybe legal hassles and academic failures and losing a job these could act as major life events no availability of choices.

Now how much of a choice do you have or this actually brings in the concept of control so if do you in your workplace or in your occupation do you have much of a choice to decide now that several times makes a person feel either bored or powerless so we've talked about learned helplessness earlier so many times people develop this concept that will develop this idea of sense of learned helplessness that I cannot help myself in the situation because I have no power.

So this such people are more stressed and their counter parts rules of living not this actually you could ask these questions to yourself and to others whom you are giving this do the rules you live by at home or work restrict your life too much do you regard those rules as too inflexible or feel trapped by them is your expression of your feelings or creativity restricted or stifled by those rules now it is also very important as to who is making the rules.

Most of the times for students these are young adults I say A essence the rules are made by others especially adults of the family or in fact for students it may be in a college residential college setting it will be the administration but even otherwise are there many rules that you have actually imposed on yourself and you have to go by them this may seem a wonder too many of you but I we do come across individuals where they have imposed rules I am for the next four years because I want a job at the end of a good job at the end of this term in college I am NOT going to do ABCDE and these things are imposed on oneself many times these also have an impact on your life because it is creating stress.

Now of course these this brings us to the question so then do we need to have rules or do we these are very common problems that we have talked about so how can we do without them

so external stresses or external dimensions or stress cannot be done without so here the idea is not to see or not to actually eliminate them from your schedule but from your life but the idea is to understand whether these dimensions are having an impact on your stress level so you have to in this checklist what you can do is you see how many of these yes responses do you give to these dimensions and you can put in your additional comments or observations.

So the more of the yeses as you can understand that these are actually having an effect on your stress level so now that brings us to the internal dimensions of stress so here we are talking of the biological factors so we start with the nutritional adequacy so do you eat irregularly or have an unbalanced diet are you anorexic do you have other eating disorders do you find that your energy level fluctuates throughout the day do you eat too much how do you eat too much on one kind of food do you crave sweets when you are tired it's very interesting that many depressed people and many anxious people have a craving for chocolates and sweets actually chocolates help you when you are depressed I will not get into the details of it.

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INTERNAL DIMENSIONS OF STRESS

Dimension	Number of "Yes" responses	Additional comments or observations
1. Nutritional adequacy
2. Junk foods and non-foods
3. Exercise
4. Rest
5. Workload and pacing
6. Personal priorities
7. Social fulfillment
8. Spiritual and creative fulfillment
9. Diversity and intellectual balance
10. Personal interests

This could be an exercise for you could check it up how chocolates can reduce depression so the next is are you actually having more of junk foods and non-food so are you mod on kur-kure and chips and more of non foods like alcoholic beverages many times we come across students and people who are on the job on different place just surviving on snacks and

extensive use of beverages so it could be more of gold rings and non-alcoholic as well as alcoholic beverages now the next question is do you exercise.

So I you is your cardiovascular system in a good condition do you get winded up after climbing a flight of stairs if you exercise in frequently do you still try to go all out and try to maximize performance so you have sudden out bursts of energy at a time of the day or at the end of the day now this is a very important question at the end of the day do you feel energetic or exhaustive if it is that you're feeling too exhausted at the end of the day then you might you need to look at your daily schedule.

So are you getting over stressed on a particular time of the day and there after it is taking a toll on your health the next thing is also are you getting adequate sleep many times a lack of sleep or disturb sleep pattern can cause a lot of problems students have a tendency of sleeping late and getting up late so that by itself we do not get proper sleep at mornings many times we do feel that our I sleep best and the early hours of the morning but say around because I slept late around 4am or around two a.m. in the morning.

So I can it would be a good idea if I sleep for long actually that is not so what happens is it the body that needs more rest at night that is how we are biologically made so at morning even if you sleep there is a sense of fatigue after getting up now so when you are feeling energetic exhausted at night these are also conditions that you need to look at posture is also a very important thing that needs to be addressed so you can ask yourself this question.

How many hours do you actually sit or stand while working so does your work required to remain in one posture several times many people who work on the computer for longer us have complaints of cervical spondylosis and also they develop obesity near towards the lower end of their body now this is because of the postural condition and that may actually bring about a lot of back ache and pains this is also something that you need to ask when you go to sleep does your body ache or feel tense.

Let's come to rhythm and pacing do you push yourself at work is you're working pace rushed or abrupt when you work you set your own comfortable pace or do you tend to match it with the work rhythms of those around you so when caught in a traffic jam you very angry and frustrated do you become irritable waiting in a line so is it also you can relate this to the type

a personality pattern which we studied earlier where a person the personality pattern is also important on the rhythm and pacing of the individual and of course we are talking when we talk about personnel psychology it's more of you know your philosophy in life so are you in conflict about your work or some other aspects of your life so here that brings us to what we really want.

So I was as I was talking about students who join a particular branch of study because of their parents desires may have a conflict with their own desires so do you feel as though you need to hurry and that you must be doing something at all times do you like yourself you respect yourself so many times we see that self esteem and self efficacy can be an important factor for causing stress.

Sexual fulfilment is also a very important factor so if are you satisfied with your sexual life are you having if there are married individuals several times they may have or if an individual is into a sexual relationship we often see the stressful conditions affect their sexual relationships now spiritual and creative fulfilment for this you can ask yourself do you feel a lack of meaning in your work or life we've spoken about meaning in life and meaning in work.

So you have to ask yourself if you are feeling empty or purposeless or do you have the areas of interest or self expression that you feel up locked or unfulfilled are you it can you imagine can you font a size that brings us to sensory and neurological behaviour so are you the type of person who start with noises do you get uncomfortable on motion sick in moving vehicles just walk walking up or down the stairs make you feel dizzy so imagine a person.

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Dimensions	Number of 'Yes' responses	Additional comments or observations
1. Material concerns
2. Job tasks and methods
3. Events
4. Process
5. Health and safety
6. Personal knowledge
7. Social fulfillment
8. Spiritual and creative fulfillment
9. Sensors and neurological behavior
10. Personal interest

Who has this problem of vertical think about him working in a place where he has to move up and down the stairs or actually has to do a lot of work from a higher place so that definitely is going to be a stressor for him so it's not only the environment the environment would be adequate for him if it was at a lower height so even the sensory responses of the individual may work as a stressor in fact I have seen a student of architecture who has this problem and this individual had to climb up in to higher places to understand fault of all his job but that was one of the job demands to actually assess the plane but that act as an immense stressor for him so that brings us to personal interest.

You can ask yourself if you fail to take time to do things for yourself are you always busy with work would you feel guilty if you did something just to satisfy yourself and not anyone or anything else you make excuses to avoid doing things that you would really like to do by yourself so are you always opt up to do a lot of work now if on these also just like the intern external dimensions if there are too many yeses and additional comments you can actually see that these are some of the major areas that you need to take care of, now that brings us to the stress analysis.

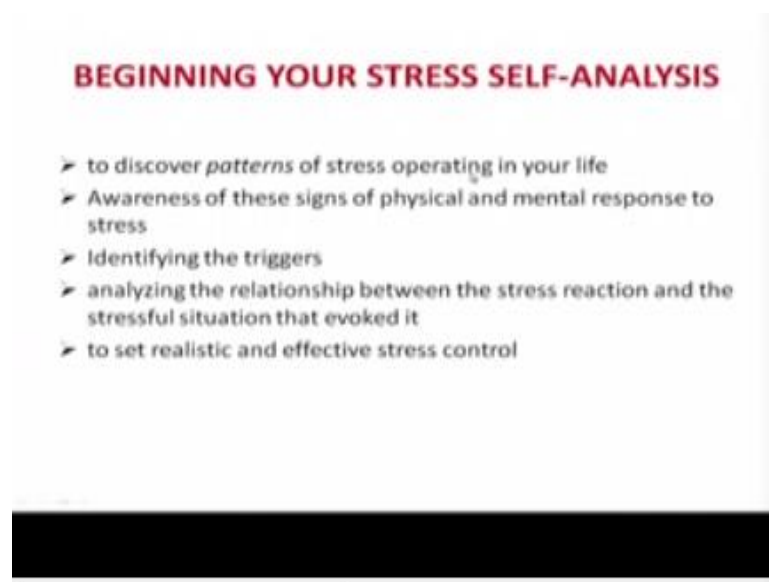
So how do we do the stress analysis you have to discover patterns of stress operating in your life so that we have actually seen and aware of these signs of physical and mental response to stress identifying the stresses and analyzing the relationship between the stress reaction and

the stressful situation that evoked it now we'll have to set realistic and effective stress control measures so think about this so here are some of the bodily symptoms so when we have seen the internal and external stresses we have marked it down okay these are the internal stresses stress dimensions that I am affected with and these are the external ones.

Now let us look at the bodily symptoms when these stresses effect so you can have this list of bodily symptoms the feeling states and the cognitive States and motor symptoms all by you and you can actually mark whether the you when there is an internal or an external dimensional stress what are the worldly symptoms so I will not get into details you can check this out as you can see these are all the sympathetic activation symptoms and we have discussed more or less all of these so in some time or the other.

Now these are the feeling states so what are the feelings that you are going through during that stressor. So are you affected by any of this or is, there anything more that is affecting you so then you have the cognitive states, so what whether you're feeling dread.

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Dreaded are you dreading that situation are you apprehending a scary situation are you feeling in attentive so many times students and in fact even others also whenever we complain of a stressful situation we don't come and say that I am stressed about this we generally say that I am losing focus I cannot concentrate I can't remember things.

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So I am having serious nightmares about things and people talk about a lot of anxiety provoking dreams so may be something like I I can always see that I cannot answer the question paper or my boss is asking me questions that I have no answers and this is one recurrent dream that I have so will not get into dream analysis right now but these are some of the features and some of the motor symptoms are muscular tightness tremors ticks or spasms.

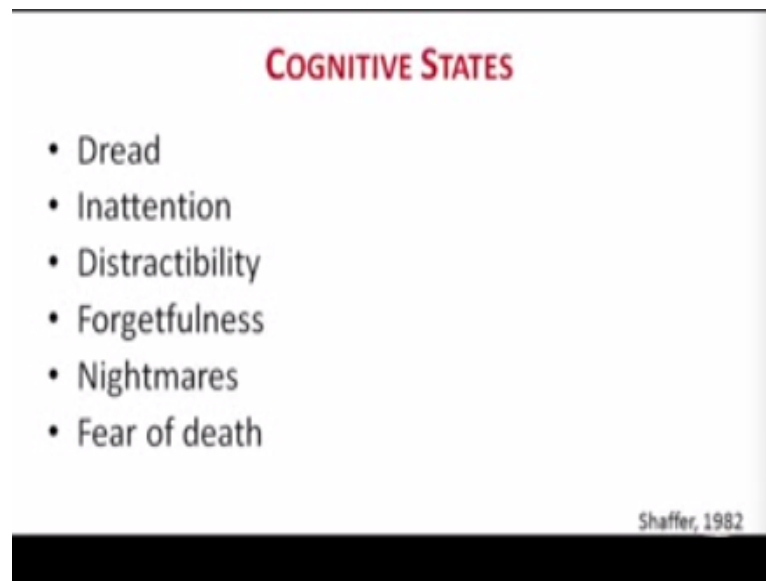
So many people have a habit of a muscular tick the cheek or it could be eyes going up like this so that increases during a stressful situation or in chronic stress you can see it more frequently.

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So there's an increased total reaction I am getting shocked at every new thing in coordination and a lot of sighing and freezing and feeling immobilized now so here we get to see a copy of the stress journal again I have taken this from Shaffer.

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And you can see that you put your date and time signals what are the signals of stress how long did that symptom continue what happened before the symptom and what was the event when the symptom stopped what did you do how did you feel and you have your chart of bodily symptoms e.g. States cognitive states and motor symptoms just beside you.

So now you if you form this format if you follow this for several days together then you will understand that whether you could do this date and time you could do it say on four times of the day or you can do it on two times of the day and you see if you have identified your stressor from the internal and the external dimensions then you could actually do it around that time whether stressor occurs.

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When that event occurs so even so by this and by your own comments you actually see that how if you follow it for a certain period of time how you are generally responding generally there is a pattern of the way we respond to stress so sometimes the insights may come quickly and of course sometimes there is a lot of thoughtful observation that is required before you understand that well this could be a stressor safe it could be something very simple like you are taking the car pool with somebody.

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FORMAT FOR STRESS JOURNAL

Date and time	
Significance of stress	
Duration of symptoms	
Event(s) prior to symptoms	
Event when symptoms stopped	
Comments	

Shaffer, M, 1982

When you go to your college or when you go to office and every time just before you go out to your office there's this weird sensation of you know just avoiding just missing the car so missing. The carpool so you know if you see that you love your job so there is no problem with the job you have no problem with your health and everything being ok then there is only one factor that there may be a person who is a little too over critical when you towards you every day.

So just avoiding the person may bring about you know several responses and this may take a lot of time for one to understand that well this was the trigger so another one small thing that I will share with you before I end today's session is self discovery in interpreting the stress situation you could try this on yourself say associating the body parts and sensations related to your stress pattern so just to identify that this free association is a technique by which you just write down or saved.

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Stress journal effective if maintained for a longer period of time
(weeks)

- Observations and insights may be immediate, may be
prolonged

Without stopping without hesitating without a second thought what are the what are the words that come to your mind when you talk of stress so if I talk of stress the first thing that comes to me is head so if I go further it will be ache so maybe I get a tension headache. So you could that so you write down the words you will see that most of these words are actually related to the sensations that you have and the particular organs bodily parts that are related to your stress situation.

So that brings us to the end of this session today and going back to the old joke of the man sucking his thumb I hope that you've not like that man you not only know the why but you can you've explored to the how and now you really know how to deal with the stressor thank you.