

NPTEL

NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

Course Name

Stress Management

By

**Prof. Rajlakshmi Guha
Centre for Educational Technology
IIT Kharagpur**

Lecture 20: DIY Strategies Stress Management

(Refer Slide Time: 00:24)

**STRATEGIES FOR RELIEVING
STRESS**

Hello everybody so we are back for the final session of week 4 that is strategies for relieving stress and in this session we are going to discuss do-it-yourself program that you could work on you could practice at home and you could also ask people to work on this. Now this also brings us to the last session of this lecture session course.

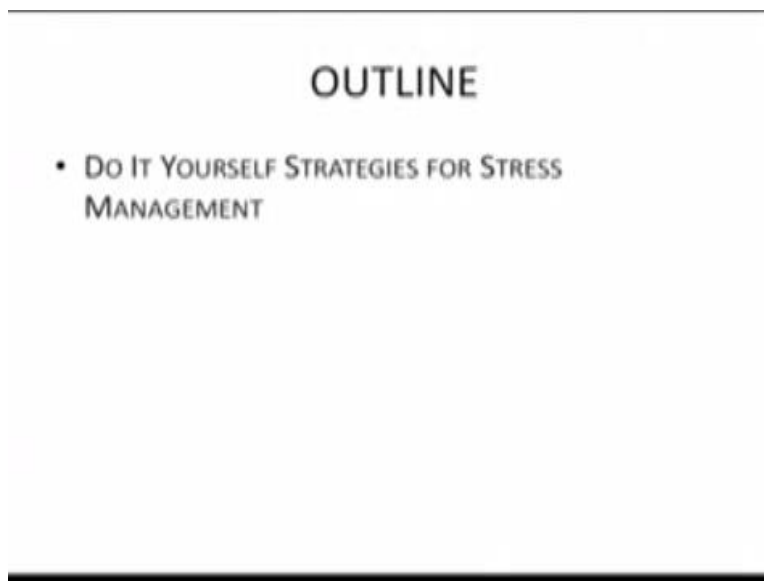
So in this what we have discussed in summary so far is we have understood what stress is what is the physiology behind stress what is the psychology behind stress and what are the stress

measures and how do we, what are the strategies that we could employ to reduce stress. In this course I have very briefly introduced to several topics relating to stress, but I have not gone into a lot of details primarily because this is just a short course and if you are more interested than maybe we could have a longer course in future which would help you to know more about more details about specific topics.

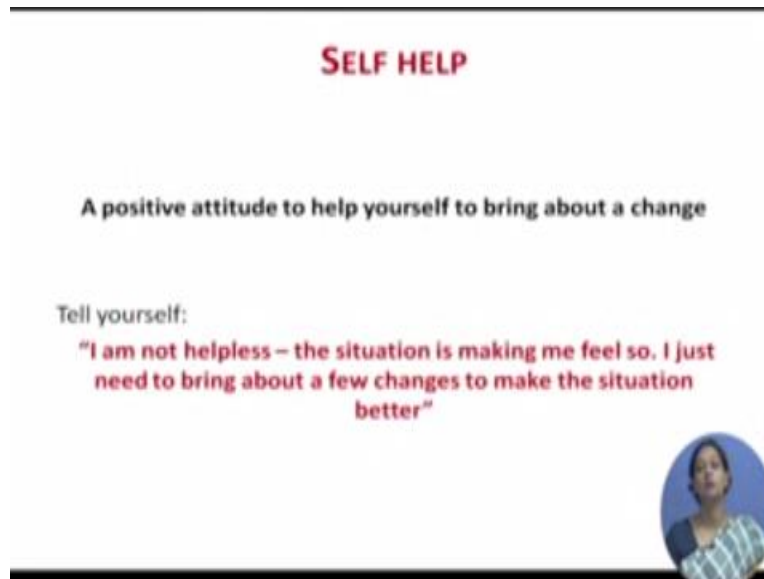
Now stress and stress studies is a vast topic and it involves a lot of areas in psychology, in biophysics, and different medical science and different areas even in organizations. So in this course, in this 10 hour course our focus was mainly to help you deal with stress to help you understand stress better and to understand the stress else better and especially the stresses in your personal life and how to deal, learn strategies to deal with them effectively.

So in the final session that is today we are going to talk a little about do-it yourself program or the DIY program.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:24)



(Refer Slide Time: 02:28)



So to start off with it I must first ask you two have a positive attitude towards self health. Now when we are talking of helping somebody with in some issue or in some problem it is not the individual who is helping his attitude to help which is important. It is also important that the individual who is trying, needs to try to help himself. So for especially since we, this was on a lecture mode and you are going to use these by yourself.

So I would suggest that you have a very positive attitude to help yourself and to bring about a change. So if you think this is not magical thinking this is I am not asking you to follow any rituals for this, but if you think that you can bring about a change you can bring about a change you could try a very simple technique that I am asking you today if showing you that our body has a sense of control.

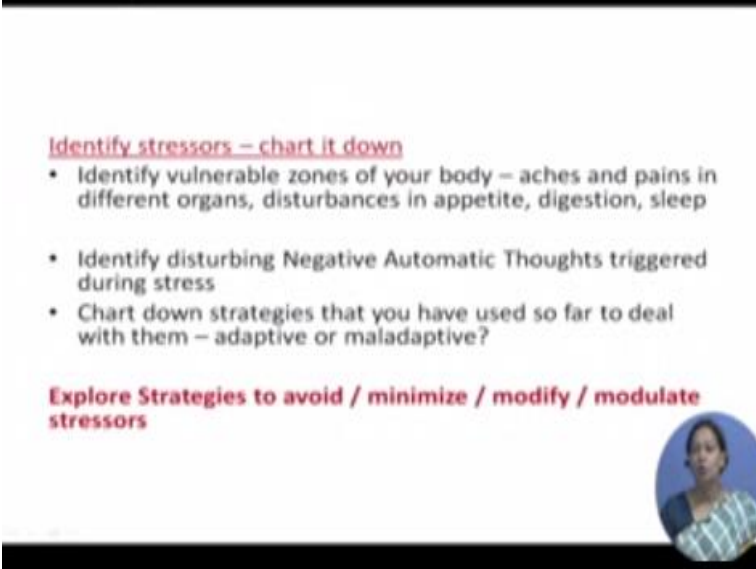
So if you could one very simple thing is if you tell yourself when you go to bed today that tomorrow morning I am going to get up at 6am no matter what and you are telling this you do not need to shout and yell and tell yourself, but you can say it quietly to yourself you will see that tomorrow you will get up at 6am maybe you will not feel like getting up after you are awake so you might go back to sleep again.

But nevertheless you will wake around 6 tomorrow morning, so your biological system actually listens to what you are saying. So we must we need to get this awakened and you need to have this positive attitude to bring about a change. So you can start with telling yourself that I am not helpless the situation in this case is making me feel, so I just need to bring about a few changes in the situation to make it better.

So it is not that I am helpless, please remove the sense of global feeling of helplessness if you are stressed or if you know anybody who is very stressed and very depressed about it so you can start with saying telling this individual or you can tell yourself that this is the situation is making me stress. So I can work on that situation to help myself so it is not a generalized condition so if I am it is like, you know when we were discussing about I am no good.

So it does not mean that if I am no good in this place today does not mean I will be no good in this place every day and I am no good in every other sphere of life. So this is the moment you start thinking that this is a problem and this needs to be addressed the problem is in the situation then obviously this anxiety of global helplessness will reduce. And as I told you earlier that this feedback is going to the brain and the brain then tells you how to respond in a more positive way.


(Refer Slide Time: 05:49)



Identify stressors – chart it down

- Identify vulnerable zones of your body – aches and pains in different organs, disturbances in appetite, digestion, sleep
- Identify disturbing Negative Automatic Thoughts triggered during stress
- Chart down strategies that you have used so far to deal with them – adaptive or maladaptive?

Explore Strategies to avoid / minimize / modify / modulate stressors



So first and foremost when you are doing a DIY program you need to identify the stresses and chart it down. So we have discussed about stress analysis so you could use that format or you could start identifying the vulnerable zones of your body. So you identify the stresses what are the stresses that are affecting me in my current day, what are the things that I call stresses, because it is, it may be, and please do not discuss this with friends and everybody to write down your stresses.

It is what may be a stressor to you may not be a stressor to another person and what may be a stressor to your parents may not be a stressor to you. So you write down the stresses then identify the vulnerable zones in your body that are affected by the stress. So I told you earlier again if I am stressed then I have a headache and the backache. So this is my vulnerable zone I have cervical spondylosis and that increases when there is stress.

So you could have some area of your body maybe an injury awhile playing football when you are very young. Now that leg injury or that knee injury hurts when you are stressed. So, you know you identify your vulnerable zones there are many people who have a constipation or

irritable bowel syndrome they have to they have diarrhea or they have a disturbed bowel movement when they are stressed.

So you know many times before we realize in the thought process that we are stressed our body starts giving us the triggers or the indicators that yes see, you are stressed, you are stressed and that could be seen in these different areas. So you could start having suddenly the headaches have increased or maybe you know a knee joint has started aching which was a vulnerable area or maybe you are having problems with sleep many people when stress start seeing a lot of nightmares I was just talking to an individual the other day who told me that you know I often see nightmares relating to my childhood.

So they are strange disturbed, you know I cannot strange disturbed occurrences that I see and I cannot sleep properly. So what are the nightmare is about oh! I see that I am failing my math's exam or I have studied for the wrong people. Now this gentleman is in nowadays in any of in school or pursuing a catalyst.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:34)

Identify stressors – chart it down

- Identify vulnerable zones of your body – aches and pains in different organs, disturbances in appetite, digestion, sleep
- Identify disturbing Negative Automatic Thoughts triggered during stress
- Chart down strategies that you have used so far to deal with them – adaptive or maladaptive?

Explore Strategies to avoid / minimize / modify / modulate stressors

He is a practicing medical physician and he starts dreaming about the nightmares are related to his schooldays. So if you are having such anxiety provoking dreams that are disturbing you or there are fearful dreams or even, you know unpleasant dreams are you having disturbed sleep you are waking up at night early in the morning, feeling low, or you were going to bed but not being able to sleep for a long while that could be a trigger that could be a feedback to you that you are not you are stressed.

So you need to find out first the areas of the body or the zones that are being disturbed then that may also give you an idea about the stress. Next is getting into the negative automatic search, so what are the thoughts that are being triggered during the situation. So maybe you have not identified the stressor assuming that you have not identified the stressor you are having some disturbances in your body mechanisms.

And you are very often having negative thoughts I cannot do this or they are going to really abuse me or make fun of me or ridicule me or say some other negative thought that is not helping you. Now we discussed about negative automatic thoughts earlier now these are maladaptive thoughts that are not very helpful to the individual to it does not promote productive behavior.

So these are thoughts like that brings down your mood and that actually performs helps you perform or maladaptive behavior. So if you think that if these thoughts are very frequent that okay I am no good or I am not being able to do anything in my life or I will not be able to do anything in my life and future if these thoughts or related thoughts are disturbing you very often even for the slightest of things then you know that there is something that is going wrong.

So you could delve into it further, so these are just ways these are things that we will discuss before, but I am just giving you a briefing once again for your DIY technique. So then chart down the strategies that you have used so far to deal with them. Now this is very important, because all of us use some way or the other so you have the stresses down then after that you have noticed the vulnerable zones that are being affected the body mechanisms and the bodily affected areas.

The thought is you have discussed you have to put down your negative automatic thoughts maybe you have just for one whole day or maybe for two days you have put it down all the immediate thoughts that come to your mind. Now the fourth section in the fourth column you have put down the strategies that you used to deal with these situations.

So say for headache whenever you have a headache what do you do you do you sleep for the last few days have you been sleeping for all. So now has there been if you have when these negative automatic thoughts come when these disturbing thoughts come what do you do Oh! I watch a movie or I play computer games.

Now that would be a maladaptive technique in some cases if you have your examiner on the corner and you are playing computer games throughout the day just to avoid this attention of exam then definitely it is a maladaptive behavior. So this strategy, this maladaptive strategy so once you have written down the strategies in the fourth column in the fifth column you can identify it as adaptive strategy or maladaptive strategy.

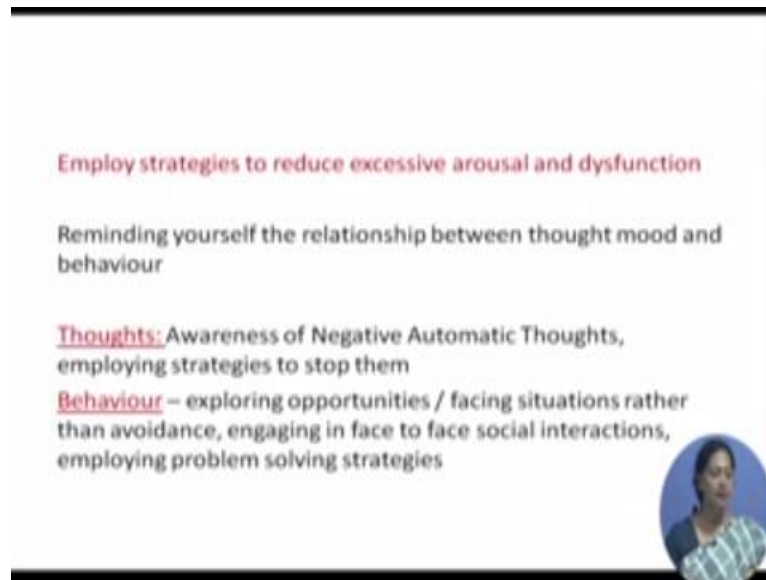
How do you segregate between the two, an adaptive strategy is something that brings out on productive behavior a maladaptive strategy is something that brings about unproductive behavior. So sleeping could be a productive strategy in some places, but sleeping maybe a maladaptive strategy when you are tensed I feel oh! man if I sleep then it is going to remove all my anxieties.

Now here sleeping is a maladaptive strategy, the reason being that it is not helping you to productively perform before an exam. On the other hand say playing computer games if you are one who is creating computer games in a job and that is what your role is then playing computer games is not and maladaptive strategy, but if your job requirements are such but if it is that you are playing computer games to divert yourself from the anxieties of the current of your current life then definitely that is a maladaptive strategy.

So you have to write down after that you can write down the strategies that you have used whether they are adaptive or maladaptive. And then after that you will have to explore strategies

to avoid minimize, modify, and modulate the stresses. So you select most strategy, different strategies for the instead of these that you have been using if they have not been productive for you.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:53)



Employ strategies to reduce excessive arousal and dysfunction

Reminding yourself the relationship between thought mood and behaviour

Thoughts: Awareness of Negative Automatic Thoughts, employing strategies to stop them

Behaviour – exploring opportunities / facing situations rather than avoidance, engaging in face to face social interactions, employing problem solving strategies

The next one is to employ strategies to reduce excessive arousal and dysfunction. So we know that during stress there is a physiological arousal, so how do you remove that physiological arousal that excessive arousal and that brings about the dysfunction we have realized that it brings about only in, not only these immediate headaches and problems with digestion.

So other than that even in the long-term effects are stress it brings about chronic illnesses relating to psychosoma or psychological and bodily symptoms. So here what can you do you have to first and foremost that is very important remind yourself that there is a relationship between thoughts mood and behavior.

So if you tell yourself this you will know why I am asking you the reason being that if you tell yourself then you know that the thoughts have a link with the mood, so what you are thinking will affect your mood, and what you are thinking will also affect your behavior, and behavior

will also affect your thought and mood. Why am I emphasizing this harping on this for so much, the reason is again that the thoughts actually, so if you change the way you are thinking it will also affect your behavior and your mood.

And when you are feeling good you will have more positive thoughts and when you are having more positive thoughts and you are feeling good even your behavior will be more positive. So all these three, so you need to break the cycle of negative thoughts bringing about low mood and then maladaptive behavior.

So here, so first when I said that after you have linked the thought mood behavior you need to be aware of the negative automatic thoughts and employ strategies to stop them. In the previous section you have already marked the automatic thoughts that are coming to you. Now what you do is you started, you need to start employing different strategies we have talked about the different strategies of stopping negative automatic thoughts.

One of the things is identifying the cognitive errors so what it the link am I always creating am I always using generalization over generalization I am no good, I am no good as a person am I over generalizing one simple thing to the whole global pattern of my life, or am I using personalization I am taking everything towards myself or is it any other I am coming to arbitrary influence.

So I am just deriving things from one small incident, so are these are any other cognitive distortions are you using if there is any such thing then you need to identify that. And one good way is of stopping these is to again as I said you need to tell yourself that I can deal with it there are alternate expect explanations to the situation rather than the negative thought automatic thought.

So you need to challenge that automatic thought, so you have identified the automatic thought in the previous section in that chart that we drew. And now you are challenging that automatic thought, how are you challenging of first you have seen is there a pattern of thinking in the way you are thinking the way you are dealing with things is there a pattern.

So are you employing any cognitive distortions or cognitive error strategy is to actually think whether you are using some of the errors being some of the distortions being maximization and personalization are between inference and we have spoken about these earlier also. So are you employing any of these then are you actually you have to tell yourself okay I am employing these so I am aware of it. The moment you are aware of your negative automatic thoughts half your work is done, you can immediately tell yourself stop there are challenged that there are other explanations to this.

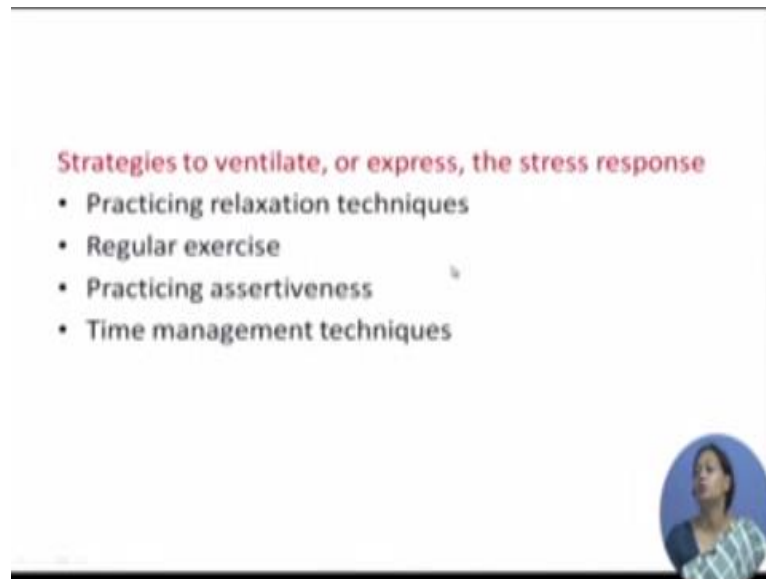
Like when I was walking down the road my friend, I smiled at him he do would look at me and go away he would look at me and he went away it means he does not like there is something wrong with me. Now challenge is sought there are other explanations to it, it may not be this it may be that he is engaged about something else, he is preoccupied, he is disturbed himself or maybe something else or maybe he was busy, he was running for some appointment.

So you are employing strategies to stop these thoughts then comes the behavior pattern. So you have to explore your opportunities and face situations rather than using avoidance as a technique always. So here what you are doing is you are employing different behavioral strategies. So that not the things that you have used so far and when I feel depressed or when I feel very anxious I just sit in my room and play computer games.

On the other hand why do not you explore if you are really disturbed about an exam why do not you talk to a few people and find out what exactly is required to clear that exam or maybe you can download some material. Many people have this strategy of downloading a lot of material and not reading any of them.

So then you could employ this strategy of okay, from now on I am going to reduce this downloading attitude or habit of mind then I am going to bring it to an arrow and let me just see what are the things that I can cover. So you are exploring other opportunities and in fact one of the we have seen that friendship is a way of reducing stress. So engaging in face-to-face social interactions and employing different problem-solving strategies actually help reduce stress.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:02)



So now that brings us to strategies to ventilate or express the stress responsible say you have practiced all this and you ask me mam I have done all this, but I am still stressed, so what do I do I feel like just kicking the door or maybe boxing the wall. So what do I do with it, so now comes the relaxation techniques you can start, you can select any of the relaxation techniques.

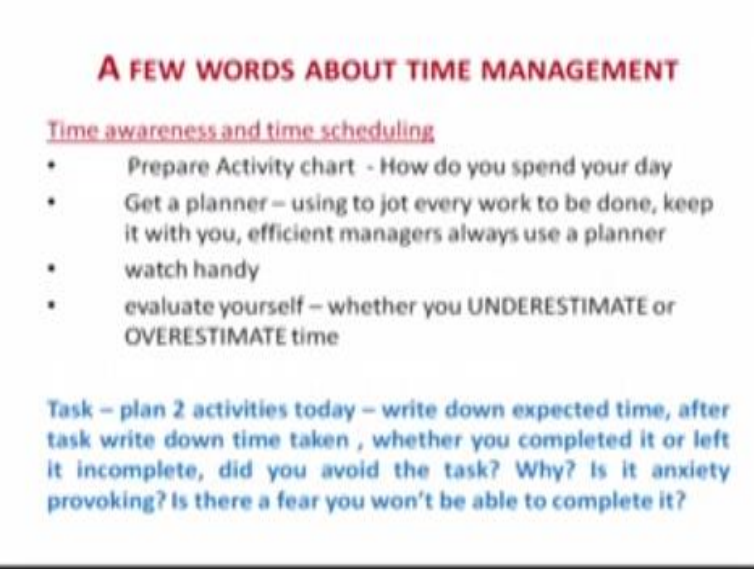
Then start with that, you can start with practicing assertiveness many of the times we have seen that people who are stressed out more often than not they are also very non-assertive. So start practicing assertiveness in your behavior and you can of course it is very important I will suggest that you start exercise if you are not doing exercise just start today.

And it should not be I will start tomorrow let us start today so make the plan to go for a walk sometime today evening or today some time of the day and go for a brisk walk and make it a part of your regiment for the next one month. And then see how it has affected you well in what ways is it positive, how is it helping you with your confidence, your overall psychological well-being and physiological well-being.

That is why I have emphasized so far that this course on stress management and is not only about learning theoretical things about stress, but it is also about employing them in your own life practicing these techniques and helping yourself. So in fact I do practice myself some of these techniques that I have been talking about.

And finally we will talk about some time management techniques that you could incorporate into your do-it-yourself regime.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:00)



A FEW WORDS ABOUT TIME MANAGEMENT

Time awareness and time scheduling

- Prepare Activity chart - How do you spend your day
- Get a planner – using to jot every work to be done, keep it with you, efficient managers always use a planner watch handy
- evaluate yourself – whether you UNDERESTIMATE or OVERESTIMATE time

Task – plan 2 activities today – write down expected time, after task write down time taken , whether you completed it or left it incomplete, did you avoid the task? Why? Is it anxiety provoking? Is there a fear you won't be able to complete it?

So about time management the most important thing is time awareness and time scheduling. So you need to prepare an activity chart that is how do you spend your day. Now before I start on time management again as I would say for any of these stress management programs it is very important that you start today and you should have the motivation and the attitude to start it and to continue it and to evaluate it after a certain period of time or say after completion.

Now in this case I would ask you that it is not like a lot of preparation needs to be done to start. So for exercise also I need a lot of preparation I need to buy these shoes and that equipment and get myself registered in the gym then I can start the exercise regime. Otherwise I need to get my

registration done in the swimming club only then I can start, you know that you could start with a very basic walking program.

Similarly about time management when I am going to talk about the activity chart or getting a planner oh! mam I did not buy the planner so that is why it would not start it. Let us have more motivation and more of a positive attitude for this program. So prepare an activity chart so you have the time written down so to 24 hours and beside you write an activity list. So generally how do you spend your day for students it could be a different plan for the week and the weekends or even if you are an office goes you will have a weekly plan and a weekend plan they really separate.

So you can put it down as a weekday plan and weekend plan. So how do you actually spend your time. So you will have be honest with yourself that is also very important. So do not pretend to yourself as to how you spend your time. So you may write that against I studied for five hours every day maybe that is the time when you actually sit with books and what is happy. So you are not really studying.

So if you pretend that I study six hours of the day or five hours of the day every day and that takes up your activity chart you are actually losing a lot of time maybe that is what you could more positively employ in some other activities. Now the next thing is getting planner, so use this to jot down every bit of work that needs to be done and you need to keep it with you always.

So when you are traveling to some place say you are going to you going to your classes a plan that could be a very small thing like this, so it is like a pocket diary that you have and you have written down what the important things that need to be done today and, you know if it, if there is something that has to be done next week, so you could put it down say two days before that you need a submission to be made next Tuesday you can put it down on that.

So when you open next Tuesday schedule on Monday you will know what exactly is in store. So that will give you the best way I have seen that students do it is on an excel sheet or you know

one of these ever notes also really work well so you could use one of these apps that are available or you can do it on the computer.

And you know that will give you a glance of what how what are the things that you have for the week for the week ahead it will also give you an idea as to which other days which are heavy days for you which are the days you have more time, so at a glance it is always better to see things from a larger perspectives at a glance when you are seeing these this is this is more easier and more convenient to deal with.

So in fact efficient manners managers always use a planner and have a watch handy. So you should also start having a watch handy so many times that brings us to overestimation an underestimation of time many times I see students tell me that I do not have a watch, but I have a good and as of time I have a good idea of how much time I require.

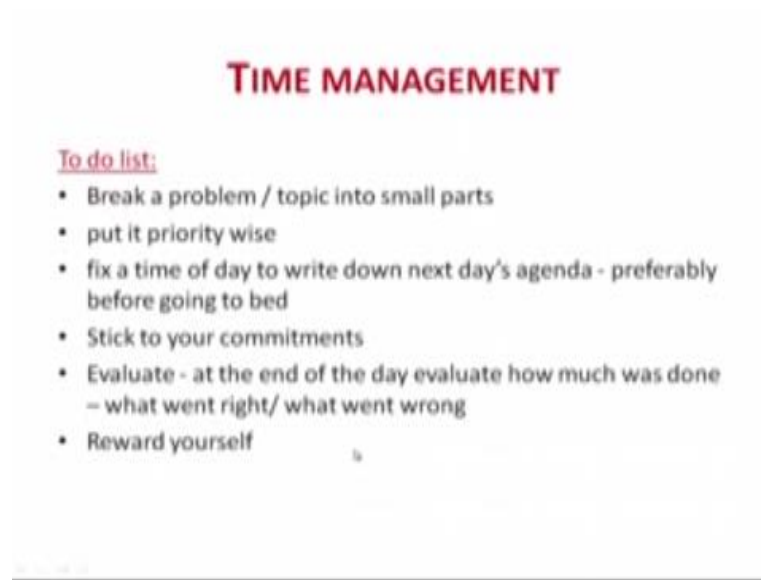
Most of the times these people have a very poor judgment of time the reason being that either the overestimate time or they underestimate time you could try this on yourself, just plan two activities today write down the expected time that you require to complete these activities and after the completion of the task write down the time taken.

So say you keep an academic activity if you are a student or a teacher and you see, you know if it is not time, but I am going to attend a class for 45 minutes obviously it will be 45 minutes this is how the class is scheduled to be. I am talking about an activity for yourself say I am going to finish this chapter in one hour. Most of the times you will see that either there is an overestimation of time or there is a underestimation of time.

So now then you need to explore whether you complete in it or you left it incomplete. So actually you can also find out more about yourself discipline, do you complete a task when you start or do you just leave it after half completing it half done or maybe you know with all the excitement fuses away once you started the task. And why does it fuse away, do you avoid the, did you avoid the task is it anxiety provoking, is there a fear that you would not be able to complete it.

And maybe you know that is why you have left it for later. So these are things that you could explore.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:39)



So you need to have a to-do list so break a problem or a topic into small parts very often just before exams students say I am going to finish this topic this subject in three days or I am going to finish this subject in one day when the time reduces then it becomes from chapters and subtopics it becomes subjects in a day or subjects in half a day and things like that. So is that possible.

So if you start a little ahead and you have got it all written down as topics chapters topic subtopics. So once you finish each one you can actually take it, so you know you could put it down as done half done revised still yet to be revised you could put it down in your own way and you have to prioritize it. So the to-do list it you know the breaking up of a problem also helps you to deal with it better you can adjust your time likewise.

Otherwise if you say I am going to finish this chapter in an hour you will see that you did not realize there were so many subtopics on it that needed to be done. Now that is why, you know once you put it in sub parts you can finish it and you can take it that well this required 15 minutes this is done maybe it will sum up to 1 hour maybe it will go a little more than that. So rather than seeing it as a chunk it is easier to manage time if you put them in parts.

The other thing is it also induces this sense of achievement, so if you finish one topic you will feel confident that yes I have done it, but think about this if you put it as a chapter if you have even finished three fourth of the chapter the motivation falls when you see I have not finished this topic this chapter at all. So this sense of achievement this sense of completion should also be acknowledged so you can put it down in parts.

And put it priority wise and fix a time to write down next day's agenda we call this agenda setting and I prefer students to write this down before they go to bed. So if you write it down next is planned the things that you need to do, one you could keep one of an academic activity and a non-academic activity. And no matter what happens if there is hails now storm you are going to complete the activities on the next day.

So stick to your commitments and of course at the end of the day you need to evaluate and you need to see how much was done what was right, what was wrong, so that will give you an idea of whether you have gone on the right way. And of course, reward yourself that does not mean playing a computer game or having something that is not good for your health, but you could reward yourself by maybe, you know listening to some music or taking sometime out.

So another important thing is when especially when you are doing your academics you could keep breaks. So once you finish something so you reward yourself by just going for a walk and coming back and sitting again. So the breaking down of topics also helps so that is a reward by itself to you.

So this is basically some of the techniques that I feel you could employ and you could work on and I hope all these strategies that you have learned in this one month's course will help you to

deal with stress and help you to be more effective and more productive as a human being, thank you.