

NPTEL

NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

Course Name

Stress Management

by

**Prof Rajlakshmi Guha
Centre for Education Technology
IIT Kharagpur**

Lecture 05: Stress and the college student

Hello everybody welcome back to the fifth module of scientific foundations of stress.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:25)



**SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS
OF STRESS**



Today we are going to talk about stress in college life for this session we are giving a separate chapter separate discussion to stress in college life because I feel that this is a very important time of our lives and this is a big place of transition so if at this stage an individual cannot deal with things effectively then these stresses may have a long-term impact on an individual's life


basically beat on the physiological aspects or on the psychological aspects of life so today's session we will talk about.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:16)



OUTLINE

- STRESS IN COLLEGE LIFE
 - STRESSORS
 - SIGNALS
 - EFFECTS



The stressors in college life what are the signals of stress that you have to understand that you have to focus keep in mind if you are a student or if you are a teacher and the effects of stress and how to deal with it how do different colleges across the world I will deal with the stress stressful levels of students will also discuss that a little in brief.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:32)



Case vignettes:

Case 1: AC- "I have low grades"

Case 2: BD – "I can't understand the language"

Case 3: EG – "I can't balance my academics and family"



To start off our discussion I shall focus on a few case vignettes things that I have seen as a psychologist in a college and to take case one it is about a student named AC who comes around with a problem of low grades now this is a very common issue with many students now I see reports that he has low grades and that's why he does not feel like going to class he is one of the he was one of the toppers in his school in his village in his town and in a state he was one of the rank holders.

So this is the first time in his life that he is not performing well so this is a cease problem is not a new one an ACS problem is faced by many students who are staying who are in college and who are undergoing the pressures and the stresses of college life so how did AC respond to his low grades so the he started he stopped going to the classes and initially before his mid SEM exams he thought that well if I, I do not want to go right now I would rather take some few days of study in my room in my hostel room.

And that would help me to deal with things better but as the days went by the avoidance behavior of going to the classes increased or I should say the anxiety increased and with time he stopped going to classes he did not take his myth sense and after that he also did not read it go to classes

before his enzyme exams and finally he did not appear for the finals as well he did not have the prerequisites to it in the exam his attendance was low now this is one case as I have mentioned is a very frequent thing we come across amongst college students all across the world.

The second one is about BD, BD stacking from a different part of the country and he was not familiar with the language now the lang his regional language that he spoke his mother tongue that he spoke was different from many other people in his college so they spoke a different language and he was also not well versed in English in which the academics was being conducted now BD he was also under going stress because of a problem with his second language acquisition now what did that result into he stopped interacting with others.

So since he could not express his opinions his ideas his views in a second language so he stopped interacting with people he spent more time indoors in his room and occasionally with one or two few of friends who spoke his mother tongue now this is also a very common feature with students traveling different lands to study we often come across students who have gone to the west to study and are facing problems with the language with the other food habits the temperature the climate weather conditions etc and also the attitudes of people.

Now it says it is also something that we come across in India where students from different states when they come and study in another other states also face the same issue now the resultant behavior in case of BD is also a stress so he so he started avoiding people he became withdrawn and he spent more time in those on his laptop either on social networking or watching movies so this is our playing games these this is again another stressor for a student during the college years.

The third case we will talk about is EG who is a senior student and he was married and he was doing his research where he complained about not being able to balance his academics and his family this is also another problem that college students go through as this is the time for transition and senior many of the senior students have to take responsibility of families so either they are married or they have family responsibilities home that needs to be addressed it becomes a problem for them to cope with the pressures of academics.

The daily pressures as well as the family pressures now in the case of easy EGs wife and child also lived on campus also live nearby but he had to divide his time between his academics his lab work which many times continued for hours at end and again spend time with his family with his wife and child now the this was a cause of stress because he could not distribute his time over the two equally and he actually did not know what to do now these are some of the things that we generally come across in most of the students so I have just given you three examples real-time examples that I have come through come across as a psychologist and we will discuss that what are the other things that a college student goes through.

Clearly case 1 and case 3 are two different people from having different problems but in case two as well but the age difference between case 1 2 and s 3 are a lot but it still it shows us that what are the different very kinds of problems that college students have to clearly go through and deal with now to that brings us to the developmental tasks.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:15)

Developmental tasks during college years

- Achieving emotional independence from family
- Choosing and preparing for a career
- Preparing for emotional commitment and family life
- Developing an ethical system

Managing these transitional changes requires college students to develop new roles and modify old ones, and that can result in a great deal of stress

Chickering, A. and Gergen, R. J., 1985

During college years college expects us to be emotionally independent from the family we are this is a transitional time where a student is moving from home to an independent setting if it is a residential setting all the more of independent doing things by himself dealing with things taking

decisions for himself and again is also not has to take care of his emotional distortions as well as emotional distress by himself or relate to his other friends and not run back to his family this is a problem that we come across in India more so because still 18years of life we often see students or maybe a little later to staying with their parents and their parents have play a law huge responsibility in taking decisions for them.

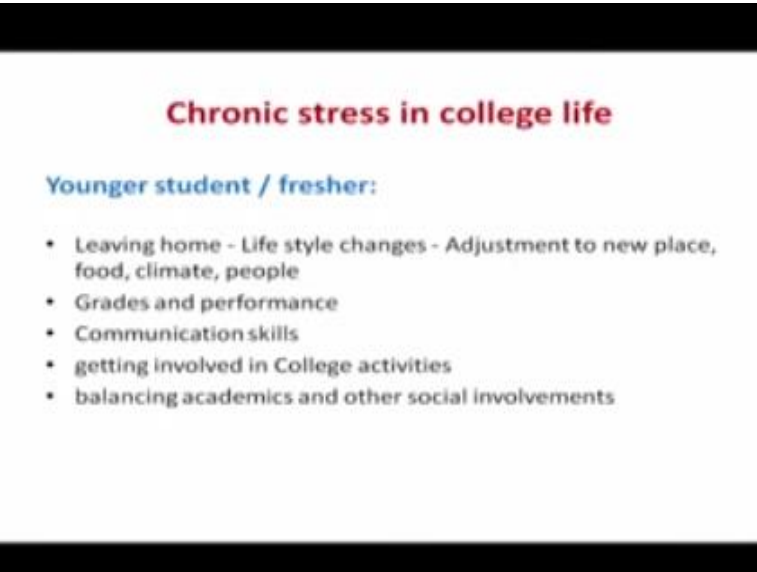
Now so college years expect you to be emotionally independent and choose and prepare for a career so a student comes to call is looking forward to a career either in academics or in a job setting and this decision making very frequently becomes a huge task by itself many students who are good in academics are expected to stay in academics for a for their career options but many times the selection of a career is a confusion because the student may want to do something else that is in no way related to what his parents want him to do or what the others his teachers others expect him to do.

And that is why this the independent decision of taking responsibility and selecting a courier and dealing with the stresses of that career option also become an important developmental task preparing for emotional commitment and family life is another new step that comes at this phase of life so the student has moved from the adolescent years to adulthood and during this young adulthood period they have to take decisions for moving into the next phase of family life so taking responsibility for another individual and a building up a family is a huge development will task.

And of course building an ethical system of his own so, so far there were the ethics over as per the family as for the school system that the student followed but during this phase of life the student selects the college students selects his has deterministic ideas about his ethical values in life thinks that he prefers he wants to follow and that maybe very different from what his family has expected him to do above all the college years has the primary in a focus of college life is academics and this so imagine a student has to carry on with all these developmental tasks along with maintaining an equal focus on academics, academics by itself can be a stressor.

So to perform in academics and be consistent in performing well in academics is by itself a huge stressor for the student so managing these transitional changes requires the college students to develop new roles and modify the old ones as I was talking about the ethical system also any building an emotional independence from the family taking autonomy and taking responsibility for one's actions so these all these factors together can build up a lot of stress within the individual.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:31)



Chronic stress in college life

Younger student / fresher:

- Leaving home - Life style changes - Adjustment to new place, food, climate, people
- Grades and performance
- Communication skills
- getting involved in College activities
- balancing academics and other social involvements

So some of the chronic stressors during college life what I have done is I have divided into this into two parts as in what are the primary stressors faced by students the younger students that is the fresher's and the first second years and third years and then we go into the stressors faced by the senior students so students who are completing their academics or they are completing their research areas so they are so this group the age group is distinctly different from so the younger student or the pressure has just left home and joined College.

So it requires a lot of adjustment issues as I was talking about the first case today he has and also the second one they have come from different places and two they have to adjust to a new college setting and with their new food habits build up new habits so staying alone in a hostel

room and also with the climate climatic conditions and the people around them so imagine somebody who was brought up in Chennai has suddenly to go and live somewhere in Delhi for the first time or say somebody who has spent his childhood years his school years in Dehradun as to come and stay in Koraput.

So the weather conditions are very different the language people speak are very different and also the way the, the food habits the way the customs are carried out are entirely different so think about a senior student in this stress may also happen to somebody who is traveling across the world maybe to do a different country you say to study for his postdoc or say for his PhD so they are also the adjustment stage is causes a lot of stress because that is the time when you have to really adopt yourself and I adapt yourself to the surroundings.

Now grades and performance the first when the fresher joins the college so getting accustomed to these things and also maintaining grades and performance is very important so think about a student who has been very good in his academic life during his school years has ranked and on national levels and then has come to college a well reputed college and thereafter his grades are not as good as it was during the school use that by itself would be a stressor so the problem is that when you are going up to college the school was a small setting where you were presented with a collage and appreciated by teachers and parents and everybody around you.

But the call in college there are many more like you and the student starts feeling like a small fish in a large ocean so it is this exposure this first exposure to a new world is always stressful so it is imagine the how much of extra stress and additional stress that the student is going through when he has just come to college so adjusting to the environment and adjusting to this rebuilding your own self concept that well I am good but there are others who are like me or maybe better so this adjustment the person who can do this adjustment will, will actually resort to more adaptive behavioral patterns.

A person who does not will actually again start missing out classes or not adapt to his surroundings and that may affect his physiology as well so communication skills so I was talking about developing communication skills one of the problems in the school setting is we do not

entertain encourage too much of interactions if it is a good student who is studying for a longtime and is not interacting with people much that is not seen as demerit or that is not seen as a limitation but with time we see that communication skills is very imp becomes a very important factor for adjustment during college years.

So how I understand people how I effectively present myself being social interactions is one of the major stressors to a student during his college years and as a psychologist I often come across a lot of students who have more stress because of their communication skills this if it is not dealt with properly during the fresher years it becomes a problem later on when people go for placement and more.

So as I was saying earlier that many students carry this idea that well I am not good enough and it lowers their self-esteem and even in the latter part of life unless there are really good positive events they have they carry this idea of low self-esteem that I, I cannot speak in public or I cannot carry on with a good conversation now this could be easily dealt with during the preliminary years now another major stressor during the first and second year of college is getting involved in college activities.

So imagine a student who has come from a school setting where he studied a lot he's worked hard and now entered a college setting with a lot of activities to join so it is, it is a huge new world in front of him so think about a student like this who gets involved in several activities now balancing academics and mind you in a residential college setting like ours we see students have a problem with balancing their social activities as well as academics.

So we often come across students getting into too many social activities in our many clubs and societies but later on and not being able to fulfill the requirements of all and there it is effect in their academics so as I was mentioning right now balancing academics and social in involvements often become a problem so of course we do see a lot of students later on once they are too after 23 years of stay in college they reduce the number of activities to a selected few of their entrance but many times the damage has already been done.

And they it affects their personality also the stress affects their physiological well-being and subjective value for the senior student and Here I am talking of students who are just passing out of college or think about students who are safe from UG or PG level and students who are finishing with their research doctoral degrees in college for them it is the career decisions take April, April in their life so their weather how will I whether this is a good career decision whether I am taking the right step moving towards academics and sometimes the future is pretty unknown to them.

So what do I do head where do I go these questions are their minds are filled up with such questions relationship issues by now the, they have to move into the next phase of life of getting settled and relationship is used also take an important part and if there are so if there are breakups or you know even plans for settling down these things often cause more stress in the individual family responsibilities also increase and if a student is married then as I have mentioned earlier balancing as we saw in EGS case.

The third case that I was talking of the balancing the family life and academics becomes a huge problem so and another question that I am often faced with by students is why am I doing this what am I doing so why am I running for especially during the placement season or almost at the end of their career in the college I often come across this question by students where they say that whether I am it is not about whether I am taking its this is a good job or that is a good job it is more about whether why am I doing this whether this is the thing for me.

So sometimes there is a sense of existence he will crisis where the student tries to look for meaning in life so it goes beyond the financial aspects the power aspect the future prospects it is more about identifying and it is more of philosophizing what are who I am and where I am and what exactly do I want to do so these questions become very important to the student at this phase of life so we have seen that the senior student as well as the junior student the younger one who is just joined College have their different kinds of stresses.

And so imagine as I was mentioning that it's a whole lot of thing that the student has to go through and above all in academics there is always the pressure of time and this is the pressure to

perform so no matter what additional problems you have these are in any in addition to it or the primary prima facie you to see that your submissions are on time that your presentations are on time that you have performed well in the exam and you have been there on time so these are huge dresses for this student.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:48)

Stress signals

- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased worrying
- Trouble completing assignments on time
- Not going to class
- Short temper or increased agitation
- Tension
- Headaches
- Tight muscles
- Changes in eating habits (e.g., "stress eating")
- Changes in sleeping habits

Now talk about the stress signals if you are a student and if you are facing these things in your life so be it that you are from an engineering school or your med school or from any other college and if you have these any of these stress signals and please wait pause and think about it what is actually causing these factors now several times these come to us as cognitive problems of course the student does not come and tell, tell us that ma'am I have difficulty concentrating and I am having clinical depression it is not like that.

They will present as I cannot remember things I cannot concentrate I have problems in attending to things I do not have interest in anything I have trouble completing, completing my assignments on time I am not going to class I feel snappy and irritated very often so anybody tells me anything you know I get easily angry and you know somehow my just the lid goes off

and I feel like just bashing that person and students often complain of tension headaches tight muscles tightness in muscles.

And they will not tell you tension headaches they will just say that there is this headache and there is this overall pain and there are there is a loss of appetite and I often come across students surviving on chips and snacks and there is a severe change in sleeping habits so these things are very frequently seen a students and another very important thing that I come across is excessive fatigue and loss of interest I do not feel like doing anything I do not feel like I do not have the energy for anything I feel very exhausted.

And it just seems that the day is not carrying on at all now these are some of the signals that you need to watch out for if you are a student or if you are the guardian of a student and you should stop and check out what weather how many of these symptoms you have and whether these signals have been carrying on for a longer time now what are the effects.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:26)



Effects of stress

- Sleep disturbance
- Avoidance behaviour → Absentism
- Poor academic performance
- Internet / computer addiction
- Social isolation
- Alcoholism and substance abuse

- Tension headache
- Obesity
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Clinical depression
- Anxiety Disorders
- Suicide

We have spoken about sleep disturbance and definitely we come across many students in college who sleep very late and they get up very late very often they will tell you that I got up at eleven

o'clock eleven a.m. because I slept at four now the question is that because you slept at four you got a bet 11 rather I should say that is the way they think but otherwise a silly is because you caught up at eleven that you slept at four so these things they need to there is this delayed sleep a problem that very often happens to college students.

So this is the first signal that things are not in order avoidance behavior as I was speaking of anxiety avoidance behavior very often leads to absenteeism we were talking about the first case where the fear of facing a teacher or fear of facing the class very often leads to absenteeism and poor academic performance so stress may take its impact mature its impact on academics on health so like we have always speak already spoken about headaches and irritable bowel syndrome clinical depression

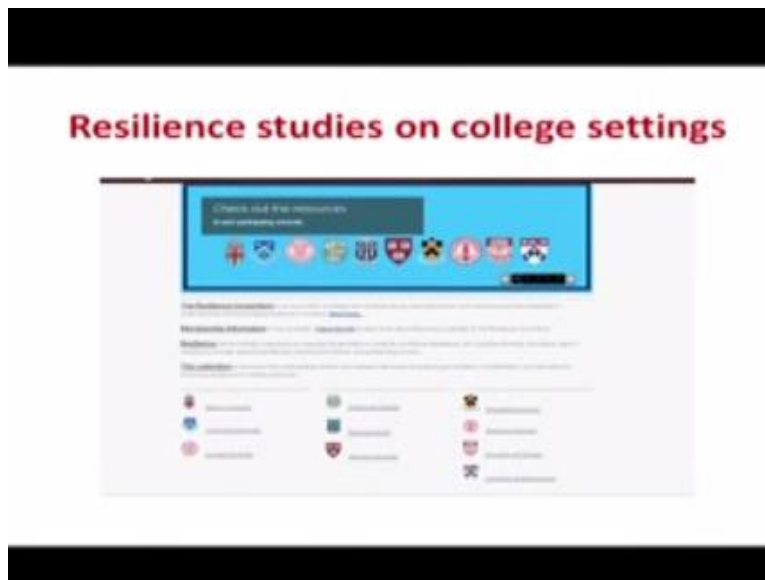
And anxiety disorders and several times may also lead to suicide when the student feels that I cannot deal with things anymore there is no hope for me now the other effects could be something of when there is isolation when there is withdrawing from social interactions then moving into other aspects to keep that individual engaged and remove all the other anxieties from his head from his mind so we often come across the student having internet college student having internet addiction gains addiction and also taking resort to in alcoholism and other substance use.

Now several times we see that even peer pressure may start alcoholism and substance use but later on that becomes a way of dealing with stress so there is we must look out for these things so the, the behavioral symptoms or be it the physical science if we are if you are a student or if you are a water garden of a student now several in several college settings to deal with stress there are many programs on stress management and resilience building that are being carried out in the previous session.

I spoke about in module four I spoke about resilience and there I just spoke about hardiness and I think it is very important to work on resilience building for resilience actually means bouncing back from stress we come across individuals who will deal with stress effectively and come back

no matter what the situation is while there are others who in a full situation given we have started about the personality variables but it is also very important to work on resilience.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:16)



So you could look up the resilience studies I am just mentioning this a few studies that are carried on across the world so the resilience this is a picture from the resilience consortium this is a web page home page of the resilience consortium that is carried out by several US universities and they all have their programs and in this website you will see you will come across several strategies to deal with stress and also build your resilience okay.

So in Stanford that is a wonderful thing that they carry out where you know they talk about how what was your worst grade so there will be there are teachers putting up there was great so that just reminds you that it is you know the only one who is had a bad time you know people have had bad times bad patches in their lives but they have just grown out of it and come out of it and succeeded.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:14)



So you can check out this website on the resilience consortium this is another one from the Australian Government and they work on student resilience and well-being this is also a very interesting site and you will get a lot of information on building up your resilience dealing with stress and regarding resilience call it studies in India.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:36)



Resilience studies in College settings In India

We are in IIT Kharagpur we have a project on resilience building and currently we are working on designing modules to work to deal effectively with stress and build up your resilience and bouncing up against bouncing back from and our cities so very soon we hope that this will be available for use and definitely you can take a look at that.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:09)

Summarizing

- Stressors in college life
- Signals of stress
- Effects of stress
- Resilience studies

So finally to summarize today's session we spoken about the stresses in college life about the signals of stress and how it out stress affects the individuals and we have spoken about resilience studies I hope you will take a look at this and this model module of scientific foundations of stress was interesting to you and even the assignments will be so thank you.