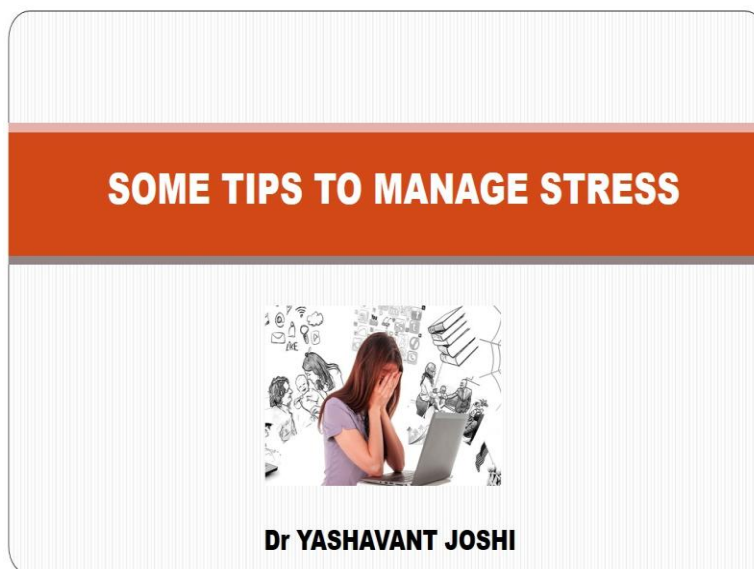


Basic Certificate in Palliative Care
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Week-05
Lecture 03: Some Tips to Manage Stress

This is week number 5, lecture number 3. Here I am going to present a lecture written by Dr. Yashwant Joshi.

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The topic is some tips to manage stress. Nowadays stress has become a way of life. Whichever profession you are, there is always some or other amount of stress in your life.

In professional life, it in social life and even anywhere you go about. So, management of stress is very important to lead a healthy, normal, psychological, without psychological problem a life which is healthy and normal physically and mentally healthy.

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SOME TIPS FOR DOCTORS

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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Decrease or Discontinue Caffeine | 7. Realistic Expectations |
| 2. Regular Exercise | 8. Reframing |
| 3. Relaxation/Meditation | 9. Belief Systems |
| 4. Adequate Sleep | 10. Ventilation/Support System |
| 5. Pacing Or TIME OUT | 11. Humor |
| 6. Work-Leisure Balance | |

So here we are going to talk about the stress management in healthcare professionals. As they see patients in and out, particularly palliative care physicians, they see many patients suffering in advanced stage of the disease, lots of grief, lots of bereavement and lots of pain and agony.

So they have tremendous stress and burnout. Stress may be because of the workload also, may be because of various factors, but here are few tips to get rid of stress and these are decrease or discontinue the caffeine, regular exercise, relaxation and meditation, adequate sleep, pacing or time out, work-leisure, balance and realistic expectation, reframing and belief systems, ventilation or support system and humor. We will go each point wise.

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1. Decrease or Discontinue Caffeine



Most people do not realize that caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate and cola) is a drug, a strong stimulant that actually generates a stress reaction in the body. The best way to observe the effect of caffeine is to get it out of the system long enough to see if there is a difference in how you feel. Three weeks is adequate for this purpose and 75% to 80% of people will notice a benefit. They feel more relaxed, less jittery or nervous, sleep better, have more energy (a paradox, since you are removing a stimulant), less heartburn and fewer muscle aches. **Many people feel dramatically better and cannot believe the difference.**

First is decrease or discontinue caffeine. Many people do not realize that caffeine, coffee, tea, chocolate and cola is a drug and strong stimulant that actually generate a stress reaction in the body.

So your caffeine intake should be restricted and one can reduce it over a period of time. Suppose you are having 5, 7, 10 cups of coffee per day, you can reduce it over a period of time of almost 3 weeks and then you will see that you will have more energy, more refreshment, you will feel more relaxed and by reducing caffeine intake, many people feel dramatically better and cannot believe the difference.

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2. Regular Exercise



Exercise is the most logical way to dissipate excess energy. It is what our bodies are trying to do when we pace around or tap our legs and fingers. It is much better to channel it into a more complete form of exercise like a brisk walk, a run, a bike ride or a game of squash. During times of high stress, we could benefit from an immediate physical outlet but this often is not possible. However, regular exercise can drain off ongoing stress and keep things under control. I recommend physical activity every day. At the very least, it is important to exercise three times per week for a minimum of 30 minutes each time. Aerobic activities like walking, jogging, swimming, bicycling, racquet sports, aerobics classes and dancing are suitable. **For chronic or acute stress, exercise is an essential ingredient in any stress reduction program.**

Second point is regular exercise. Now in this era of lots of comfort and availability of vehicles, easy chairs, cool atmosphere in the office, we do not have much exposure to outside weather and no exercise, almost no exercise and that to work from home and IT professionals have more hours sitting in front of computer rather than walking around. That is why in morning hours or evening hours you need to have a routine of exercise, maybe 30 minutes, 45 minutes, 1 hour or so.

Exercise helps by keeping your body fit, your reflexes intake, flexibility of joints and muscles and during exercise you generate endorphins in your body which is a mood stimulator. So naturally your stress will go away and you will feel much better. So for chronic or acute stress, exercise is an essential ingredient in any stress reduction program. If you don't have time to go out, you can do exercise at home, on static cycle, on your terrace, on your garden or on your balcony, whatever facility you have but some sort of exercise is must in life.

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3. Relaxation/Meditation



Where the stress reaction is automatic, however, the relaxation response needs to be brought forth by intention. Fortunately, there are many ways of doing this. Sitting quietly by a lake or fireplace, gently petting the family cat, lying on a hammock and other restful activities can generate this state. There also are specific skills that can be learned which are efficient and beneficial. **A state of deep relaxation achieved through meditation is actually more physiologically restful than sleep.** These techniques are best learned through formal training courses which are taught in a variety of places. I can attest to the benefits of regular meditation from personal experience. **And on days when exercise is not possible, relaxation techniques are an excellent way to bring down the body's stress level.**

Relaxation and meditation, this is exercise to mind. In previous slide we talk about exercise to body, now this is an exercise to mind and to keep mind relaxed is must throughout the day, maybe small-small period of relaxation you can snatch from your daily routine like between two meals, after breakfast or after a supper or in the evening or while having a tea break or coffee break in the office, you can have relaxation and meditation. We had talked about this in some other lecture also. In this era of too much of technology, you will feel that most of our time is spent in front of computer or mobile. So switching of all those devices and looking out of balcony or window, looking at the far of places that give that also gives relaxation and it is it is very good for your eyes. In meditation, you need not shut down all the thought but just close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing, your thoughts and without having much attachment to it and this will definitely help you reducing the stress.

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4. Sleep



As mundane as it sounds, sleep is an important way of reducing stress. Chronically stressed patients almost all suffer from fatigue (in some cases resulting from stress-induced insomnia), and people who are tired do not cope well with stressful situations. These dynamics can create a vicious cycle. Sleep is fine but if you sleep too long, it throws off your body rhythms during the following day. It is better to go to bed earlier. **Daytime naps are an interesting phenomenon. They can be valuable if they are short and timed properly (i.e., not in the evening).**

Every person should set a body clock. The best is early to bed, early to rise. This is very age old proverb but still true in today's time as well. By giving regular sleep to your body and rest to your body, you can by giving regular rest to your body, you can reduce stress to very great extent. Sometimes day time naps, few minutes like 10-15 minutes after lunch or in between two meals or when you had already some exhausting meeting or some exhausting work you have done, give rest to your body for 10-15 minutes and this gives us very good effect to your body and mind and reduces stress.

I have definite exercise routine in my daily. Every day morning hours I go for one and half hour, one hour to one and half hour for walk and exercise but few of the days I skip and just relax and sleep. Then I discuss with my colleague and I feel very upset that today I couldn't go for walk or couldn't go for exercise. So my colleague tells me that consider that that you gave the time to your body to heal. So in between your routine, a set up schedule, few days you may skip exercise or going out or something that is the time don't feel upset but you are giving time to your body to heal and that is also very much required.

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5. Pacing Or Time Out...

Pacing has two components: monitoring your stress and energy level, and then pacing yourself accordingly. It is about awareness and vigilance; knowing when to extend yourself and when to ease up. **It is also about acting on the information your body gives you.**

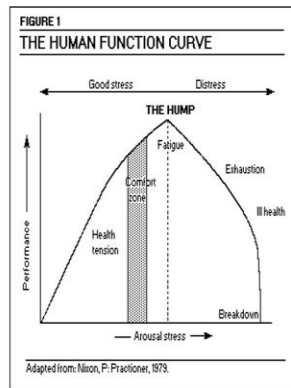


Pacing or time out. Pacing has two components, monitoring your stress and energy level and then pacing yourself accordingly. You should not continuously, you should, you cannot be workaholic, continuously working, working, working. In between you must give a thought that says how long you are working, does it, is having any stress on your mind, does it having any harmful effect on your thoughts and your body parts, your body is aching then pace, pace out. Give some time to yourself.

It is about so creating awareness about your stress and vigilance about your stress. Knowing when to extend yourself, keep on working, working, working or knowing when to ease it out and relax. It is also about acting on the information your body gives you. Sometimes definitely your back starts aching, your legs are aching or you are having headache then you must realize that it is some sort of stress because of your work or whatever you are doing and it is time to pace out.

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Pacing or Time-out...



- Increased stress produces increased performance, initially.
- Once you pass a certain point (the hump), any more stress results in decreased performance. Trying harder at this point is unproductive or even counterproductive. The only sensible move is to take a break.
- We need a certain amount of stress to function well (healthy tension) and it is called eustress (good stress). However, stress becomes harmful (distress) when there is too much, when it lasts too long or when it occurs too often.
- One of the first symptoms of distress is fatigue, if we ignore it, then it becomes exhaustion.

Pacing out or time or time out. In one of the lecture Dr. Yashwant Joshi also said that it is a, there is a good stress and when it is harmful to your body it is distress. So when you are doing some work out of good stress like you are facing an exam or you have to face some program, plan some event, so you are continuously working. So the, your performance will keep on rising but at one level it will reach the peak and you will start feeling fatigue. Then fatigue is followed by exhaustion and exhaustion is followed by ill health and you break down.

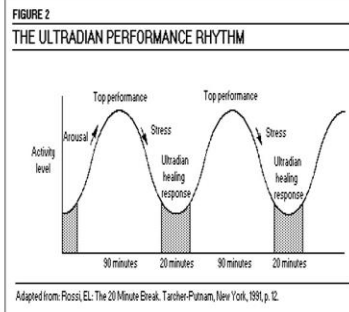
When this, there is a starting point of fatigue that is also starting point of distress and this fatigue ends into breakdown. So don't allow yourself to reach up to this level of exhaustion or ill health and breakdown. When you start feeling fatigue, pace out, give some time to yourself. Don't stretch good stress, should not be stress up to distress and so don't ignore the feeling of fatigue which can lead to distress.

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Pacing or Time-out...

The other key to pacing is taking periodic **time-outs**. Too many people go far too long without breaks, therefore a short recess every couple of hours throughout the day is a must.

We have cycles through the day (peaks of energy and concentration interspersed with troughs of low energy and inefficiency). These cycles are called "ultradian rhythms" because they happen many times per day. The main point is that we need to watch for these troughs and take 20 minute "ultradian healing breaks" when they occur, as opposed to working through them and building up stress.

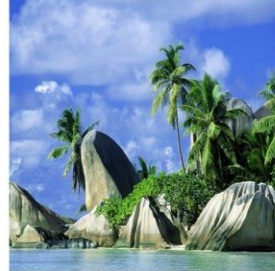


Pacing or time out, the other key to pacing is taking periodic time out. Like now recently I have taken up or decided every Sunday I will relax, no work, no going out, no attending any meeting, not attending any program, not planning anything. So this periodic pacing out also helps it in reducing the stress. So once there is a arousal of the activities, you reach a performance level, then once there is a start of stress, you plan a pacing out and relax. Again you will build up your mental capacity and physical capacity to perform more, again more and more. So pacing out periodically is also very important to reduce stress.

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Pacing or Time-out.

It is not always convenient for people to take time-outs when nature tells us to but we can all become better at this. A mid morning break, lunch, a mid afternoon break and supper divide the day into roughly two hour segments. **These time-outs can include power naps, meditation, daydreaming, a social interlude, a short walk, a refreshment break, a change to low-concentration tasks or listening to music.**



Pacing or time out and this time outs can include power naps, meditation, daydreaming, social interlude or a short walk or a refreshment break, a change to low concentration task or listening to music. Whenever you feel there is a distress, you start some alternative work which will decrease the distress, there will be distraction and there will be pacing out time. Pacing out doesn't mean that going to hill station or spending an international trip or something like that. Even in your own home, you can have a pacing out time and relaxing time. As I said in Sunday, I just don't get out of my bed and just relax, read, listen to music, read book or something or other.

Now we need pacing out time away from mobile also that has become a very much necessity nowadays in this mobile and social media culture. So Sunday if somebody calls, I don't pick up the phone. Even if I pick up, I will say today is Sunday, I, there will not be phone in my hand. So this is the way one can get rid of stress and try to be as healthy physically and mentally.

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6. Work-Leisure Balance



Leisure is one of the most pleasant stress relievers ever invented. It is strange that people resist it so much e.g., feeling selfish, guilty. Leisure time and levels of distress are inversely proportional - the less leisure, the more stress. Self directed activities can include exercise or recreation, relaxation, socializing, entertainment and hobbies. The word leisure is derived from the Latin word *licere* which means "permission." The main reason so many people do not have enough leisure is that they are not giving themselves permission to make the time to enjoy it.

One must understand the work leisure balance. The word leisure is derived from Latin word that means permission. So permitting yourself to relax. Leisure is one of the most pleasant stress reliever ever invented. So whenever you are in stress or you had enough work whole week you have worked so hard, you know, and now weekend Saturday, Sundays are there and you have nothing, don't plan anything, it is in your hand. They don't plan anything and give a leisure time to yourself.

The main reason so many people do not have enough leisure is that they are not giving themselves permission to make the time to enjoy it. Some people don't think only, they feel that now it is and most of our job in corporate sector are now called 24 by 7. So 24 hours all the 7 days they are busy with either laptop or mobile or talking to people and sometimes people who are working with the foreign country clients they have to work at late nights also and this, these are the reasons for stress and that stress brings so many diseases in your life and we call it lifestyle diseases, non-communicable diseases which can be hypertension, diabetes, obesity, cardiac problem, skeletal muscular problem and sometimes even depression.

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7. Realistic Expectations



When expectations are realistic, life feels more predictable and therefore more manageable. There is an increased feeling of control because you can plan and prepare yourself; physically and psychologically. For example, if you know in advance when you have to work overtime or stay late, you will take it more in stride than when it is dropped on you at the last minute.

One should have realistic expectations. You cannot expect yourself to be Mukesh Ambani or Tata Birla.

Whatever is your education, your capacity, be satisfied with whatever you are getting in life. When expectations are unrealistic they bring stress. For example, if you know in advance secondly you should expect what you are going to do today, maybe tomorrow or in next week. At least a framework should be there. Now suppose today you have plan to go home early and suddenly your boss says that you have to do overtime that will bring stress.

So always plan such activity and do not, should not have a last minute change which can bring stress to your body and mind.

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8. Reframing

The key to reframing is to recognize that there are many ways to interpret the same situation. It is like the age-old question: Is the glass half empty or half full? The answer of course is that it is both or either, depending on your point of view. There is more than one meaning to the same reality. However, if you see the glass as half full, it will feel different than seeing it as half empty because the way we feel almost always results from the way we think. **The message of reframing, then, is that there are many ways of seeing the same thing - so you might as well pick the one you like.**



Reframing, the key to reframing is to recognize that there are many ways to interpret the same situation. Sometimes we are stressed because of the certain situation like in office you feel that this work I don't like to do, now it is dumped on myself and you remain under stress. At the same time you think, you may feel that this is not my work, this is not in my job description still it is dumped on me and you feel stress. See it in another frame that maybe this is an opportunity to learn something new.

Secondly this is a challenge to me that whether I can do it or not and if you are able to do it you feel really good and motivated. See other things around that in spite of this work given to me my boss is very nice to me considerate to me he gives me leave whenever I want and also thing. So always reframe the situation try to find out the positive aspect of it and of course sometimes it is just not possible then you have to compromise and say no for such work. But as far as possible whatever situation is there at home or in office try to reframe and adjust into it this will relieve your stress. You can discuss such points with your colleague, your friends and they can guide you well.

The message of reframing then is that there are many ways of seeing the same thing. So you might as well pick the one you like.

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9. Belief Systems



A lot of stress results from our beliefs. **We have literally thousands of premises and assumptions about all kinds of things that we hold to be the truth like "The customer is always right," or "Men shouldn't show their emotions" and "Children should make their beds."** We have beliefs about how things are, how people should behave and about. Most of our beliefs are held unconsciously so we are unaware of them. **This gives them more power over us and allows them to run our lives.**

Belief system in our society the way we are brought up there is a strong belief system that we should act like this, we should not do like this, we should wear this, we should not wear this, we should pray God, we should respect elder and so many things and this may bring stress like in particular religion it is a custom that every morning you they have to go to temple. Now sometimes you are you don't feel like going sometimes you want to relax in spite of having time.

So this will bring stress. So be flexible in your activities and in your action. So the customer is always right, men should not show their emotion all such belief system needs to be broken and this gives them more power over us and allows them to run our life. So don't allow this belief system to add stress on yourself.

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10. Ventilation/Support System



There is an old saying that "a problem shared is a problem halved." People who keep things to themselves carry a considerable and unnecessary burden. We can do much by allowing us to ventilate. We can also help ourselves by developing a support system (a few trusted relatives, co-workers or friends to talk to when we are upset or worried).

Ventilation and support system everybody should have one or two good friends to whom you can talk out even in middle of the night or anytime you wish and I am sure everybody does have and this is a very good stress buster. So be in company of the people you like your friends circle or whatever you want brings out your stress from inside that should be planned out.

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11. Humor



Humor is a wonderful stress reducer, an antidote to upsets. Laughter relieves tension. In fact, we often laugh hardest when we have been feeling most tense.

But, remember that humor is an individual thing; what is funny to one individual may be hurtful to another.

It is wonderful when friends/patients can poke fun at themselves.

Humor, sometimes small small humors in day to day conversation is gives wonderful stress buster. Humor which makes you laugh to the extent that tears rolls out from your eyes are the beautiful stress busters in our life and this many a time it happens when you are with friends, you are with your loved ones. So, laughter relieves the tension and it relieves your stress. So here are few steps to relieve stress and I am sure many of you must have practice it in your life also. Thank you very much.