

STRESS IS BAD BUT THE **GOOD NEWS** IS IT'S MANAGEABLE



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Editor's Desk

Welcome!

Dear Reader,

Welcome to first issue of KIMS e-newsletter on 'WELLNESS'.

Wellness epitomizes a lifestyle reflecting sound health, happy frame of mind exuding positivity and energy. The horizon of WELLNESS is very wide. It encompasses physical, intellectual, emotional, social and such other dimensions denoting enhanced quality of life.

Many people in the world are healthy, but not necessarily happy. Wellness includes health, happiness and passion that define life to its full potential.

All times, health may not be in our hands. But wellness certainly is. Every month KIMS Newsletter on WELLNESS will feature an article to achieve and accelerate your wellness that impacts quality of life in varied ways.

We wish you all well.

Dr. Bhujanga Rao Vepakomma

Chief Editor

- Annapurna is a worried woman these days thinking whether her son will garner a medical seat lest he remains unsettled.
- Jacob is constantly under tension with his nagging boss who would flare up over a minor mistake.
- Ritu gets tensed up after viewing negative news such as highway accidents, communal rights, natural calamities...



Stress is...

- *being under pressure*
- *being away from our normal state*
- *not being able to enjoy life*
- *not being able to deliver your normal output*
- *not being congenial*
- *having lot of negativity*
- *huge gap between expectation and result*

Our lives abound with many such stressful situations. Right from a traffic jam to a political situation can trigger stress. The TV channels contribute in their own way by magnifying gloomy and horrendous news. Sometimes meeting deadlines, paying bills, running errands, caring family becomes stressful due to constant work pressure. All these things take a toll on our health. We can't change whatever is happening around us but we can change ourselves. Our perceptions about things can insulate us from stress. The chronic stress can adversely impact the health over a period of time. Major killers like heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, asthma etc., are associated with long-term stress. Day-to-day symptoms of stress include headache, backache, sleeplessness, irritable bowel syndrome etc.

What is stress?

Fear, panic, apprehension, agitation, anxiety or trepidation are examples not only associated with cognitive mind of human beings but also evince a physical response from the body like heart beating faster, lungs drawing more oxygen, glands releasing stress hormones.

Stress is a natural psychological and physical reaction to the challenges of life. A small amount of stress can be good. But multiple challenges can push you beyond your ability to cope up.



Stress is universal and encompasses all people irrespective of gender, place or time. However some defeat it while some get defeated and succumb.

We know that our mind and the body are linked. Whatever happens in the mind effects the body and vice versa. The constant worries we encounter in the mind will have impact on the body. The connection between the body and mind can be harnessed to overcome the stress.

There are variety of relaxation techniques like meditation, yoga, exercise that help you to be calm and relaxed and also help you to cope with stress and recover from it.

When a threat is anticipated, automatically the body releases a stream of hormones that increase the heart rate and blood pressure.

Once the threat is gone, the body should return to its normal state. However the chain of pressures in our daily life creates a situation that in some cases normalcy is not restored.

Stress affects your performance, functioning, behavior, relationships and most importantly health. It is like a demanding mistress that keeps you on your toes and leaves you dry and drained out.

Health issues, work, finances, relationships, accidents, deaths, traffic jams, vices, all these can create stress. It is in our hands to deal and cope with many factors by

being disciplined, organized, and punctual and health conscious. For example if we develop the habit of being little early to our duties like going to office or keeping to an appointment or catching a flight, we can avoid many stressful situations.

Bad habits cause guilt and thereby stress. We need to shed such habits that produce guilt and stress. If some action of yours is causing you to tell lies, that will burden you with stress.

Problem with some people is they have no problem. So, they search for a problem or invent pain. Recollecting painful events of the past or past failures or imagining a frightful future trigger stress. Unrealized ambitions can cause stress if one continues to live in the past. There is one dermatologist who dreamt of becoming a Cardiologist in his youth. Now he is highly successful yet whenever one meets him he rues over the fact that he could not realize his dream of being a Cardiologist. This is the kind of people who purchase stress wantonly though it makes no sense. There is no dearth of such people in the society who keep brooding over issues that are no longer relevant.

Stress impacts every phase of life. Even the teens are not exempt. It is observed that many young boys and girls are suffering from lack of emotional support and look to social media for the same. Again, good many of them feel bad for using social media. Parental interaction with children is more important to relieve them from stress. Parents should remember that their behaviour impacts the children. Managing your own stress can decrease the amount of stress your team feels. In many cases, parents are responsible for building stress in their family members by transferring upon their greed or trying to impose their ambitions upon them.

Work and stress

Many feel that they are working 24x7 since the advent of the cell phones and email culture. The concept of leisure is missing in the work life. Job insecurity is one of the main causes of the stress. Not following work-life balance is another reason.

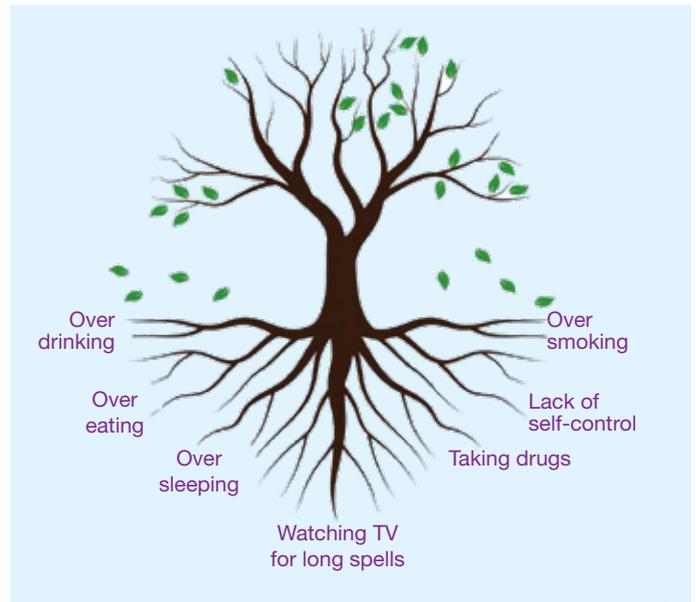
If you feel the work-life balance is not satisfactory then, one needs to ponder over....

- Does the work satisfy you?
- Do you get the support you require?
- Do you feel energized or worn out after your work?

Some deal with stress in healthy ways like calling a friend or having a walk or going for a swim etc. But often people do not follow such things.

Awareness about how we handle stress can help in making right choices. If your response is to over eat you can try listening to music or call a friend to divert your attention. Maintaining and nourishing social contacts can be quite beneficial to relieve stress.

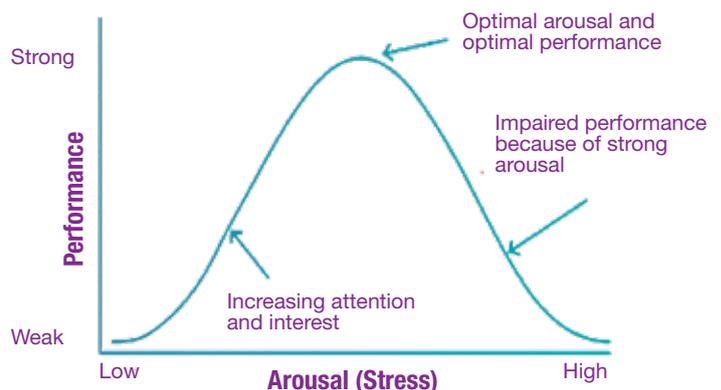
Women are more prone to stress but they tend to cope better by relating to their friends more often.



Often people indulge in negative things which escalate stress further. Life will be like typical of a tree in autumn lacking liveliness

Stress and performance

The famous Yerkes – Dodson Law tells that performance and arousal (stress) are related. Increase in arousal to a certain level helps to improve performance. Once the arousal level reaches the optimal level, performance of the individual starts to diminish. Research shows that moderate arousal is generally best; when arousal is very high or very low, performance tends to suffer. That's why researchers say certain amount of stress is good. The optimal level of stress differs from person to person based on factors like the complexity of task, skill set available, and confidence level. Stress management techniques practiced with regularity help to enhance ones optimal level.



It is not possible to eliminate all sources of stress but we can mould and train ourselves to handle it better to reduce the stress and build resilience. We need to cultivate ourselves to use our traits to overcome stressful situations and challenges. Chronic stress has effect on the physical health in multiple ways like it pushes up the blood pressure leading to cardiac problems. It plays a role in diabetes, aging, asthma, irritable bowel syndrome,

Does stress come with warnings?

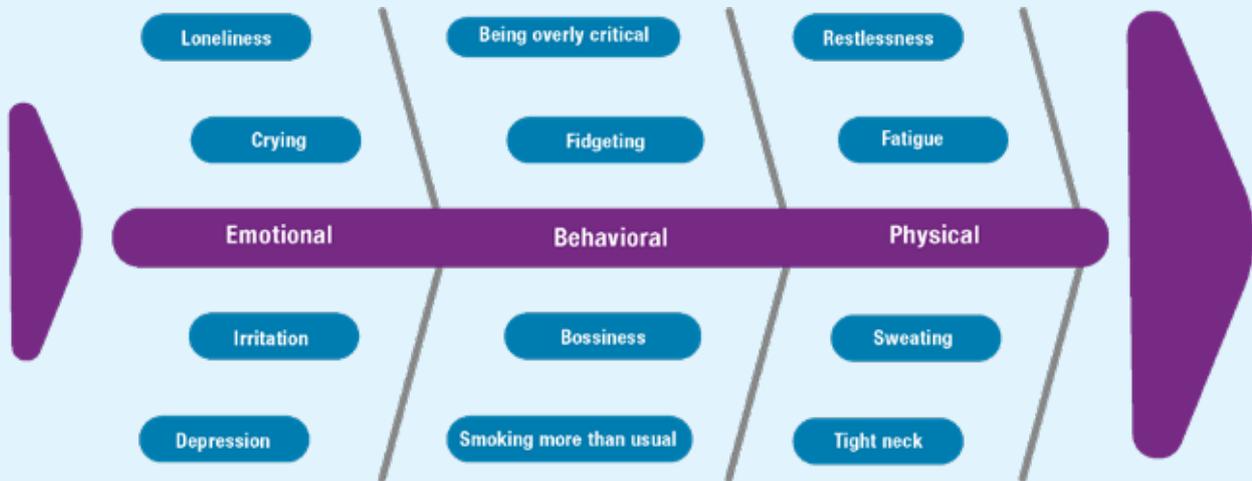
Stressful person receives several warning signals like

(a) **Physical:** Sweating, fatigue, faster heartbeat, indigestion, tight neck and shoulders, restlessness and many more.

(b) **Behavioral:** Being overly critical, fidgeting, bossiness,

excessive use of alcohol, taking up smoking or smoking more than usual, withdrawing from company of others, brooding about bad situations and many more

(c) **Emotional:** Anger, crying, irritation, nervousness, anxiety, loneliness, depression, boredom and more.



ulcers and other gastrointestinal disorders. In contrast people who are better equipped to handle stress tend to be in better health.

Luckily, we have stress management tools to set our body system right. It can help your body and mind to adapt.

You don't have to wait till the onset of damage to your health, relationships or quality of life. By practicing stress management techniques you can reduce stress and cope with it better.

Coping strategies

Identify which functional role or situation is triggering stress. Is it your role as parent or spouse or employee? If the stress is in your work area, try to sit with the boss and talk it out. If the spouse is the cause, you can have a heart to heart open chat. Talk to your child if it is causing stress. Things will be better than you expect. It is better than bottling up the emotions inside and undergoing stress.

These stress relief techniques are like vaccines that provide immunity and protection. These vaccines give you capacity to cope with stress. But unlike vaccines where a single or double dose is enough, these stress relief vaccines are to be taken every day. The results are immense and long-lasting.

From ancient times relaxation techniques have been in vogue in our country that include meditation, yoga, chanting, pranayama, prayers and many more. These scientifically proven techniques will build resistance to manage and control the stress. The relaxation techniques like meditation can boost production of nitric oxide in the

body that can yield good benefits like keeping the blood pressure under control.

Whatever techniques you choose to practise, it is to be done regularly. It is always better to allot a particular time slot in the day for this purpose.

Breathing

First thing is to focus on your breath and watch the process of inhale and exhale. If your mind wanders, nothing to worry. Take a deep breath and return to your focus. Slowly you find a soothing relief taking place. By practicing this for about 15 minutes a day, you can help reduce the cumulative effects of stress on your body.

You have to fix a routine and stick to it to succeed. Regularity and repetition are the fundamental requirements. You can gradually increase the span of time. It is advisable to have a particular place, and a particular time. Supposing you want to do it in the morning, fix a time slot and action slot, like before going for morning walk or after bath or after daily worship or prayer.



Body scan toe to top

It helps in relaxing the muscles. It makes you more aware of your body and mind.

Following are the steps

- Lie down comfortably and close the eyes and take few deep breaths.
- Now concentrate on one's right big toe. Imagine it being open and relaxed.
- Now change focus to other toes imagine them being open and relaxed.
- Likewise, gradually shift focus to other parts like foot, leg, thigh, abdomen, chest, back, eyes and forehead.
- Focus on breath. If any part of the body still remains tense, again focus on that part of the body.
- One will feel the body is light and relaxed.

Yoga

Yoga is India's gift to the world and its awareness is fast spreading because of its wide range of benefits of mind and body.

There are many types of yoga postures designed for particular health benefits. These are better practiced under a teacher to reap full benefits and avoid problems arising out of from wrong postures.

Hobbies

Develop a hobby like music, games, gardening, reading or writing, anything that makes you feel happy. When you put your heart and soul into it, it provides you a gateway to relief from stress.

Guided imaging

Visualization is an effective way of invoking the relaxation response. It can be flower garden or green forests or beaches or mountains, but choose the one that appeals to you and is soothing; otherwise it will not be effective.

- Sit in a calm place, close your eyes and take deep breaths.
- Visualise the scene as discussed above.
- If any thoughts intrude, observe them appear and disappear and then return to your focus.
- Practice this for 15 to 20 minutes.

Mindful meditation

It involves focusing the mind on what is happening in the present. This technique relieves stress and helps manage other health conditions such as blood pressure, heart disease, sleep and gastrointestinal problems. It also helps in driving away distracting thoughts of past and future.

One can sit in his place and practice this or one can do it while doing any work. One can practice this while walking, eating, playing, or singing songs. Important thing is to focus and enjoy what you are doing and feel it intensely; your senses are to be fully alert and alive to feel every

sensation. Supposing you are eating you must feel its taste, flavor, aroma and drink in every aspect associated with action.



Spiritual life

For those who believe in spiritual life, chanting, 'Smarana' has great significance. Chanting the mantra or your favourite God's name can have a positive effect. It enhances the feeling of security and combat the stress.

Human body has a built-in mechanism to deal with stress. As discussed earlier there are two kinds of stress, good and bad. The good stress propels you to take on the challenge. While the bad stress cripples you. Some people thrive on good stress. It excites them and enables them to do better. It is possible to change your response to stress. So, you draw strength from it instead of feeling drained out.

When one notice that his heart is beating faster before making a public speech, know that his body is trying to give more energy and one can take advantage of that. When one is overburdened with work try to indulge in some small act of kindness or being benevolent to someone. One will notice that he is already feeling better.

Attitudes are more important than other things in combating stress.

Remember most of the stress comes from the way we respond. Adjust attitude, and due to that extra stress would go.

Positivity, helpfulness, cheerful disposition, contentment, courage, love, will help overcome stress. Jealousy, greed, anger, hatred, intolerance etc breed stress. Some complain about the neighbour, haggle with the vegetable vendor, shout at beggars, fight with cab drivers, and scream at Police if traffic is not in order. Their stress levels are always high and we see many such people having multiple health issues springing out of invited stress.

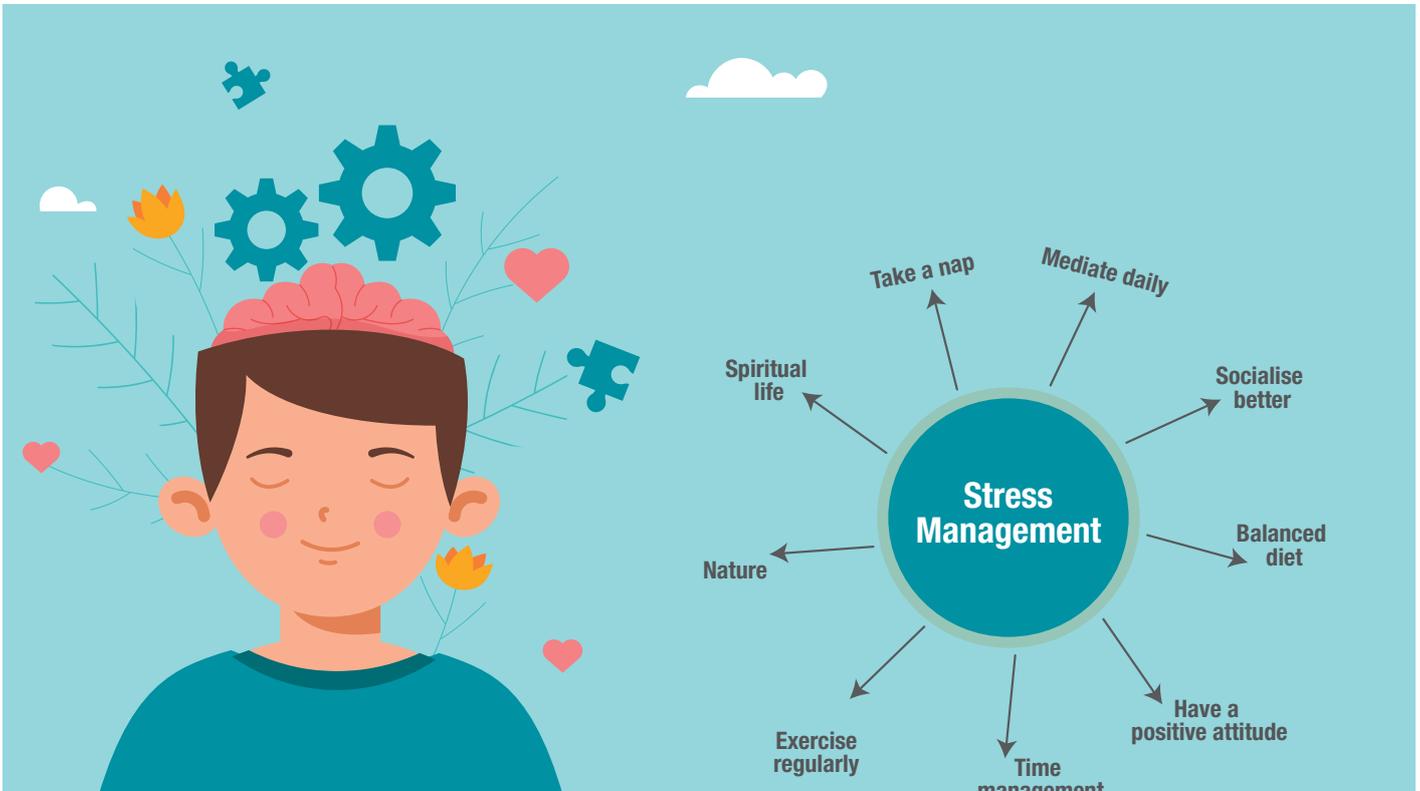
Be kind and reach out to people and offer help in whatever way you can. And also accept help from others when it is offered.

Gratitude helps one feel more positive and enjoy better health and relationships and handle stress better. Laughter is the best medicine. There is no point in being tight-lipped. Laugh often. It boosts the immunity.

It is good to be good. Swami Vivekananda proclaimed that

“Doing good and being good is the essence of religion.”

In many social relationships, ego plays an all important role in creating stress. The feeling that I am inferior or superior or unwanted can result in stress. A child overcomes stress faster because it has no ego. Small appreciation is enough. That is why it is said- children cry for attention and elders die for attention.



Harnessing stress

- *A small act of kindness for someone provides good relief.*
- *Nurture social relationships. Isolation and loneliness can infuse stress.*
- *Before one takes care of others one should take care of himself. Learn to love and respect self and self-nurturing*
- *Have a positive attitude. Optimists tend to do better in coping with stressful situations.*
- *Good communication skills help well in dealing with stress. Empathetic listening and speaking clearly will reduce the misunderstandings and the resultant stress.*
- *Regular exercise diffuses stress.*
- *Eat right and eat well.*
- *Pets can have good effect on physical and emotional levels. They provide good comfort and help in combating loneliness and laziness.*

Avoid arguments

Life is not a debating competition. There is no point in trying to score a point with those who matter. Others, do not matter anyway. So why fuss over things and invite stress?

Nowadays we find many people succumbing to stress. You don't have to, if only you know how to handle it.

There may be stress in life

But don't give life to stress

Don't give away life to stress!

What science says....

In a report published by NCBI, USA (National Center for Biotechnology Information), Indian contemplative practices like meditation, yoga, laughing, chanting, singing etc. play a role in reducing stress through better physical, mental and cognitive health. All these contemplatives have one thing in common that is regulated or attentively guided breathing. This respiratory discipline can operate by tonically stimulating the Vagal nerve, also called 'wander nerve' in Latin.

The Vagus nerve, connecting the brain to the body, excites our parasympathetic nervous system. Vagus nerve originates in the brain stem, pass through the neck and ends in abdomen. When this nerve is stimulated, it

tempers down the physiological stress response and make us receive powerful health benefits. It tricks the brain that everything is going good. It is established the world over now that our ancient Indian practices have the power of stimulating the Vagus nerve. Stimulation also

occurs through vocal folds (also called cords in laymen language). The physical vibrational movement of vocal folds activate the Vagus nerve through chanting 'Om', bramari pranayama (belly breath), bhajans, singing loud, laughter, gargling, regular yoga and meditation.

Wrapping the discussion

Feeling stressed is unavoidable in the present style of living due to professional demands, personal obligations, time over runs, shortage of funds, burn out , exhaustion and so on. But one need not loose hope or suffer silently. Many times it is possible to identify triggers of stress with the help of medical professionals or elders or peers. Once triggers are known, it is simple self care practices that matters. This may involve some contemplative practices

mentioned in this newsletter like relaxation, resilience, meditation, exercises so on. Well practiced self care plan brings relief in physical , mental, emotional planes. The power of triggers will automatically fade away. Remember that nobody can take care of your heath better than yourself. Take charge and follow Doctor's advice. Again, any advice is futile unless you follow.



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