

NCERT Solutions Ch 3 Meeting Life Challenges

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Review Questions

1. Explain the concept of stress. Give examples from daily life.

Answer

Stress is derived from Latin word 'strictus' which means tight or narrow. Stress can be described as the pattern of responses an organism makes to stimulus event that disturbs the equilibrium and exceeds a person's ability to cope. All the challenges, problems, and difficult circumstances put us to stress. It gives energy, increases human arousal and affects performance. High stress too can produce unpleasant effects and cause our performance to deteriorate. Conversely, too little stress may cause one to feel somewhat listless and low on motivation which may lead us to perform slowly and less efficiently. It is important to remember that not all stress is inherently bad or destructive.

Examples from daily life:

Attending parties may be stressful for a person who likes to spend quiet evenings at home. If a person gets low marks than his/her expectations, then it may be stressful and a sign of frustration for them.

When someone is forced to choose the job due to family pressure then it may stressful for him afterwards.

2. State the symptoms and sources of stress.

Answer

Symptoms of stress:

Some of us know our pattern of stress response and can gauge the depth of the problem by the nature and severity of our own symptoms or changes in behaviour. These symptoms of stress can be physical, emotional and behavioural. Any of the symptoms can indicate a degree of stress which, if left unresolved, might have serious implications.

Sources of stress:

A wide range of events and conditions can generate stress. Among the most important of these are major stressful life events, such as death of a loved one or personal injury, the annoying frequent hassles of everyday life and traumatic events that affect our lives.

3. Describe the GAS model and illustrate the relevance of this model with the help of an example.

Answer

Selye studied the body when stress is prolonged by subjecting animals to a variety of stressors such as high temperature, X-rays and insulin injections, in the laboratory over a

long period of time. He also observed patients with various injuries and illnesses in hospitals. Selye noticed a similar pattern of bodily response in all of them. He called this pattern the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS). According to him, GAS involves three stages: alarm reaction, resistance, and exhaustion.



(i) Alarm reaction stage: The presence of a noxious stimulus or stressor leads to activation of the adrenal-pituitary-cortex system. This triggers the release of hormones producing the stress response. Now the individual is ready for fight or flight.

(ii) Resistance stage: If stress is prolonged, the resistance stage begins. The para-sympathetic nervous system calls for more cautious use of the body's resources. The organism makes efforts to cope with the threat, as through confrontation.

(iii) Exhaustion stage: Continued exposure to the same stressor or additional stressors drains the body of its resources and leads to the third stage of exhaustion. The physiological systems involved in alarm reaction and resistance become ineffective and susceptibility to stress-related diseases such as high blood pressure becomes more likely.

Selye's model has been criticised for assigning a very limited role to psychological factors in stress. Researchers have reported that the psychological appraisal of events is important for the determination of stress. How people respond to stress is substantially influenced by their perceptions, personalities and biological constitutions.

4. Enumerate the different ways of coping with stress.

Answer

To manage stress we often need to reassess the way we think and learn coping strategies. Different ways of coping with stress are:

(i) Task-oriented Strategy: This involves obtaining information about the stressful situation and about alternative courses of action and their probable outcome. It also involves deciding priorities and acting so as to deal directly with the stressful situation. For example, schedule my time better, or think about how I have solved similar problems.

(ii) Emotion-oriented Strategy: This can involve efforts to maintain hope and to control one's emotions. It can also involve venting feelings of anger and frustration, or deciding that nothing can be done to change things. For example, tell myself that it is not really happening to me, or worry about what I am going to do.

(iii) Avoidance-oriented Strategy: This involves denying or minimising the seriousness of the situation. It also involves conscious suppression of stressful thoughts and their replacement by self-protective thoughts. Examples of this are watching TV, phone up a friend, or try to be with other people.

5. Explain the effect of stress on psychological functioning.

Answer

The effect of stress on psychological functioning:

(i) Emotional Effects: Those who suffer from stress are far more likely to experience mood swings, and show erratic behaviour that may alienate them from family and friends. In some cases this can start a vicious circle of decreasing confidence, leading to more serious emotional problems. Some examples are feelings of anxiety and depression, increased physical tension, increased psychological tension and mood swings.

(ii) Physiological Effects: When the human body is placed under physical or psychological stress, it increases the production of certain hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones produce marked changes in heart rate, blood pressure levels, metabolism and physical activity. Although, this physical reaction will help us to function more effectively when we are under pressure for short periods of time, it can be extremely damaging to the body in the long-term effects. Examples of physiological effects are release of epinephrine and nor-epinephrine, slowing down of the digestive system, expansion of air passages in the lungs, increased heart rate and constriction of blood vessels.

(iii) Cognitive Effects: If pressures due to stress continue, one may suffer from mental overload. This suffering from high level of stress can rapidly cause individuals to lose their ability to make sound decisions. Faulty decisions made at home, in career, or at workplace may lead to arguments, failure, financial loss or even loss of job. Cognitive effects of stress are poor concentration, and reduced short-term memory capacity.

(iv) Behavioural Effects: Stress affects our behaviour in the form of eating less nutritional food, increasing intake of stimulants such as caffeine, excessive consumption of cigarettes, alcohol and other drugs such as tranquillisers etc. Tranquillisers can be addictive and have side effects such as loss of concentration, poor coordination, and dizziness. Some of the typical behavioural effects of stress seen are disrupted sleep patterns, increased absenteeism, and reduced work performance.

6. Describe how life skills can help meet life's challenges.

Answer

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Our ability to cope depends on how well we are prepared to deal with and counterbalance everyday demands and keep equilibrium in our lives. These life skills can be learned and even improved upon.

Assertiveness, time management, rational thinking, improving relationships, self-care and overcoming unhelpful habits such as perfectionism, procrastination, etc. are some life skills that will help to meet the challenges of life.

7. Discuss the factors that lead to positive health and well-being.

Answer

Various factors have been identified which facilitate the development of positive health. Health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Positive health comprises the following constructs: “a healthy body, high quality of personal relationships, a sense of purpose in life self-regard, mastery of life’s tasks and resilience to stress, trauma, and change”. Specifically, factors that act as stress buffers and facilitate positive health are diet, exercise, positive attitude, positive thinking, and social support.

8. How does stress affect the immune system?

Answer

Stress can cause illness by impairing the workings of the immune system. The immune system guards the body against attackers, both from within and outside.

Psychoneuroimmunology focuses on the links between the mind, the brain and the immune system. It studies the effects of stress on the immune system. How does the immune system work? The white blood cells (leucocytes) within the immune system identify and destroy foreign bodies (antigens) such as viruses. It also leads to the production of antibodies. There are several kinds of white blood cells or leucocytes within the immune system, including T cells, B cells and natural killer cells. T cells destroy invaders, and T-helper cells increase immunological activity. It is these T-helper cells that are attacked by the Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV), the virus causing Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). B cells produce antibodies. Natural killer cells are involved in the fight against both viruses and tumours.

Stress can affect natural killer cell cytotoxicity, which is of major importance in the defence against various infections and cancer. Reduced levels of natural killer cell cytotoxicity have been found in people who are highly stressed, including students facing important examinations, bereaved persons, and those who are severely depressed. Studies reveal that immune functioning is better in individuals receiving social support. Also, changes in the immune system will have more effect on health among those whose immune systems are already weakened.

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9. Give an example of a life event which is likely to be stressful. Suggest reasons why it is likely to cause different degrees of stress to the person experiencing it.

Answer

Changes, both big and small, sudden and gradual affect our life from the moment we are born. We learn to cope with small, everyday changes but major life events can be stressful, because they disturb our routine and cause upheaval. If several of these life events that are

planned (e.g. moving into a new house) or unpredicted (e.g. break-up of a long-term relationship) occur within a short period of time, we find it difficult to cope with them and will be more prone to the symptoms of stress.

Unexpected accident or trauma or death of a close family member are examples of life events which are very stressful for the members, relatives of the family and friends.

The impact of most life events varies from person to person. Factors such as age at which the event was first experienced, frequency of occurrence, duration of the stressful event and social support are the reasons which is likely to cause different degrees of stress to the person experiencing it.

10. Given what you know about coping strategies, what suggestions would you give to your friends to avoid stress in their everyday lives.

Answer

Coping is a dynamic situation-specific reaction to stress. It is a set of concrete responses to stressful situations or events that are intended to resolve the problem and reduce stress. I would suggest my friends to adopt problem-focused strategies and emotion focused strategies. Both are coping strategies which can be used to handle stressful situations. Problem-focused strategies attack the problem itself, with behaviours designed to gain information, to alter the event, and to alter belief and commitments. They increase the person's awareness, level of knowledge, and range of behavioural and cognitive coping options. They can act to reduce the threat value of the event. For example "I made a plan of action and followed it". Emotion-focused strategies call for psychological changes designed primarily to limit the degree of emotional disruption caused by an event, with minimal effort to alter the event itself. For example "I did some things to let it out of my system". While both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping are necessary when facing stressful situations, research suggests that people generally tend to use the former more often than the latter.

11. Reflect on the environmental factors that have (a) a positive impact on the being, and (b) a negative effect.

Answer

(a) Environmental factors that have positive impact on the being are social and public campaign, fair governmental policies, plantation of green plants, medical policies etc.

(b) Environmental factors that have negative impact on the being are unavoidable such as air pollution, crowding, noise, heat of the summer, winter cold, etc. Another group are catastrophic events or disasters such as fire, earthquake, floods, etc.

12. We know that certain lifestyle factors can cause stress and may lead to diseases like cancer and coronary heart disease, yet we are unable to change our behaviour. Explain why?

Answer

Stress can lead to unhealthy lifestyle or health damaging behaviour. Lifestyle is the overall pattern of decisions and behaviours that determine a person's health and quality of life. Stressed individuals may be more likely to expose themselves to pathogens which are agents causing physical illness. People who are stressed have poor nutritional habits, sleep less and are likely to engage in other health risking behaviours like smoking and alcohol abuse. Such health impairing behaviours develop gradually and are accompanied by pleasant experiences temporarily. However, we tend to ignore their long-term damaging effects and underestimate the risk they pose to our lives.

Studies have revealed that health promoting behaviour like balanced diet, regular exercise, family support, etc. play an important role in good health. Adhering to a lifestyle that includes balanced low fat diet, regular exercise and continued activity along with positive thinking enhances health and longevity. The modern lifestyle of excesses in eating, drinking and the so called fast-paced good life has led to violation of basic principles of health in some of us, as to what we eat think or do with our lives.