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UNIT 5 : COPING WITH STRESS*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Definition and Nature of coping
 - 5.2.1 Goals of Coping
- 5.3 Coping styles
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 - 5.3.2 Emotion focused coping and Problem focused coping
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- 5.8 Unit End Questions

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to,

- discuss the nature of coping and explain its goals.
- explain coping styles.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Sania was interested in pursuing a career in dance, but her parents insisted that she gets into a professional course. She joined MBA programme to make her parents happy but was not able to keep pace with demands of the programme. She tried her best to study hard but could not get adequate marks in the examination. With the frustration that she experienced as a result of not able to pursue her interest, pressure from her parents and stress she experienced while pursuing the programme took a toll on her, she started feeling irritable and angry all the time. Her relationship with friends was also getting affected. Ultimately, she decided to talk to her parents and convinced them to let her pursue her interest and took admission at a performing arts institute, where she excelled and was well appreciated by her teachers.

Sharan got the promotion that he long waited for and was on top of the world. But with the promotion came immense responsibilities and work overload. As a result of the stress and burnout that he experienced, he started

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making errors and found himself at the end of blames and criticisms. Soon, Sharan started experiencing symptoms of depression and also had suicidal ideation. A day came when he had to be taken to a clinical psychologist for help in coping with his situation.

Above we discussed two examples. On one hand where Sania was effectively able to cope with stress, Sharan found it difficult to cope and had to seek professional help. As a person experiences stress, he/ she will try to cope and will utilise varied coping strategies. These strategies could be effective or ineffective.

In the present unit, we will explain the concept of coping as well as various coping styles.

5.2 DEFINITION AND NATURE OF COPING

Coping in simple terms can be described as ways in which an individual tries to deal with stress experienced by him/ her. And in this context, the individual may be able to deal effectively with stress if he/ she adopts effective coping skills and he/ she may not be able to deal effectively with stress if the coping skills adopted by him/ her are ineffective.

Coping refers to “the individual’s response to a psychological stressor which is often related to a negative event” (Roncaglia, 2014, pg. 137). Coping can also be described as deliberate efforts that are directed towards decreasing the negative effects, that could be psychological, physical or even social, of the stressful situation.

Coping has been defined by Lazarus and Folkman in 1980 as efforts, both cognitive and behavioural, that are directed towards overcoming, decreasing or enduring the internal and external demands. Thus, there is an effort to deal with the demands that are created on the resources of an individual as a result of stress. Coping in this context could be instrumental or palliative. Instrumental coping is denoted by results of cognitive appraisal or conflicts related to emotions. Palliative coping, on the other hand, is denoted by regulation of emotions as a result of cognitive reappraisal of the stressful event or situation. Thus, either the problem is altered or the emotional regulation is carried out during the coping process (Ghosh, 2015).

Matheny et al. (1986) defined coping as conscious or unconscious, healthy or unhealthy effort that is directed towards either prevention or elimination of stressor or to weaken it or be able to endure its effects in a manner that is least harmful.

Haan (1993) explained coping as an effort directed towards using the resources to overcome the difficulties as the obstacles are encountered.

As described by Bartram and Gardner (2008, pg. 228) “Coping is the process of thoughts and behaviours that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations they appraise as being stressful or exceeding their own resources. Coping efforts seek to manage, master, tolerate, reduce or minimise the demands of a stressful environment”.

From the above definitions it is clear that coping is an effort to deal with a stressor. The coping may aim at dealing with the problem that is the cause of any distress in the individual or to deal with the negative emotions experienced by him/ her. Though coping could either be adaptive or maladaptive.

An adaptive coping not only reduces stress but has long term positive effects. Whereas, maladaptive coping may provide respite from stress for a short period of time but it could have negative impact on physical and psychological health of the individual. Some of the maladaptive coping strategies are consumption of alcohol or drugs, smoking, risky behaviours, isolating oneself, being overcritical of oneself and so on.

Individual differences exist in the way individuals cope with stressful situations. Variations could exist based on personality of an individual, his/ her tolerance level for stimulation, psychological hardiness, the style of attribution, learned helplessness and his/ her sense of coherence. Difference may also exist due to gender (Ghosh, 2015).

Personality not only determines how stress is perceived by an individual but also how he/ she reacts and copes with stress. Individuals having varied personalities will display different coping styles and strategies. Similarly people with high or low need for stimulation will also vary in their coping strategies. Persons with low need for stimulation are not able to cope with stress as do people with high need for stimulation (Ghosh, 2015).

Hardiness and resilience also play a role in determining the coping ability of the individuals. Psychological hardiness can be described as an individual's ability to deal with stressful situations with resilience (Bartone, 1999; Kobasa, 1979). Hardiness can be related with three main aspects, namely, commitment, control and challenge and these can determine the response to stress or coping strategy employed by the individual (Ghosh, 2015).

With reference to the style of attribution, individuals could be optimistic or pessimistic and this can also determine the coping strategy employed by the individuals. Optimistic individuals are likely to cope better with stressful situations when compared with individuals who are pessimistic.

The term learned helplessness was introduced by Seligman. The term is used to "describe the interference with adaptive responding produced by inescapable shock and also as a shorthand to describe the process which we believe underlies the behavior" (Seligman, 1972, pg. 408). The coping process that an individual goes through may differ based on learned helplessness.

Antonovsky, 1987 (as cited in Ghosh, 2015, pg. 169) described sense of coherence as "enduring through dynamic, feeling of confidence that:

- (1) The stimuli deriving from ones internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable and explicable,
- (2) The resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli, and

3. These demands are challenges worthy of investment and engagement”.

Men and women also differ in the way they cope with stress. Women are more likely to employ coping strategies like positive self-talk, seeking support from others, continuously worrying about the stressful event and so on, though they are also more prone to develop learned helplessness. Men on the other hand could engage in maladaptive coping strategies like consumption of alcohol and drugs (Ghosh, 2015). Further, women are more prone to using the coping strategies that target at bringing about change in their emotional reactions to a situation that is stressful and men are more likely to focus on the problem (Endler and Parker, 1990; Matud, 2004; Ptacek et al., 1994). Further, women also experience more psychological distress as well as display symptoms of depression and anxiety when compared with men and this can also be attributed to the coping strategies that are emotion focused that are more frequently used by women when compared with men (Kelly et al, 2008). Coping can also differ or may depend on various external aspects including social support received by the individual.

5.2.1 Goals of Coping

As we now have a clear idea about the meaning and definition of coping, let us now discuss the goals of coping. As was explained earlier, the main goal of coping is dealing with the stressor so that its impact on the individual is minimal. Further, individual differences exist in the coping styles adopted by the persons. Also, different coping strategies may be effective in different situations. Thus, during the coping process either internal resources or external resources are utilized by the individuals (Ghosh, 2015). Some of the major goals of coping are as follows (Ghosh, 2015):

- To enhance the possibility of recovery by decreasing the negative environmental conditions.
- To be able to adjust to the negative situation.
- To maintain a self-image that is positive and maintain emotional balance.
- To ensure positive interpersonal relationship.

Coping is termed as effective when it leads to recovery and when the individual is able to adapt to the stressful situation by means of maintaining a positive image about one's self, emotional balance and has effective interpersonal relationships. Whether a coping has been effective or not can be assessed based on the results of the coping. For instance, physiological and biochemical changes and functioning can be assessed in order ascertain whether the coping has been adaptive or not. An adaptive coping will lead to regulation of various physiological indicators. Besides the physiological measures, if there is decrease in psychological distress displayed by the individual, then the coping strategy can be termed as adaptive. The duration of time taken by individuals to achieve the same state of functioning before they experienced a negative event (for instance, divorce, job loss and so on) or display of an improved state of functioning than before the negative event was experienced can also be an indicator of successful coping.

- 1) Define Coping.

- 2) State any one goal of coping.

5.3 COPING STYLES

As the nature of coping is now clear let us focus on the coping styles and strategies. Coping styles can be categorized as proactive coping, avoidant coping, emotion focused coping and problem focused coping. Proactive coping and avoidant coping are based on the method of coping and the emotion focused coping and problem focused coping are based on the focus of the coping. Let us discuss each of these styles in detail.

5.3.1 Proactive coping and avoidant coping

In proactive coping the individual will directly confront the stressful situation or event. An individual adopting this type of coping will take direct action by developing a better idea about the stress creating situation.

There are various stages of proactive coping (Ghosh, 2015):

Stage 1 Accumulation of resources: In order to be able to deal with the stressful situation, the individual will make attempts to accumulate resources, this could also be in terms of gathering information so as to understand the stressful situation in better manner.

Stage 2 Identifying or anticipating the potential stressor: A potential stressor is anticipated or identified by the individual. For instance, if it is expected that one's superior may ask for a certain report, the employee will anticipate the stressor and start working on the report before hand.

Stage 3 Initial appraisal: Initial appraisal of the stress creating situation is carried out.

Stage 4 Preliminary efforts to cope with the stressful situation: Based on the initial appraisal, preliminary efforts to cope with the stressful situation are carried out. In case these efforts do not show any positive results then, some other action is taken in order to deal with the situation.

Stage 5 Seeking feedback and using the same: Based on the stages three and four, feedback is sought and used so that modifications and changes can be carried out.

In avoidant coping, as the name suggests, the individual will try to avoid the stress creating situation or may give less importance to the stressful event. Thus, the behaviour that is displayed by the individual is directed towards avoiding certain thoughts or feelings that could arise due to the stressful situation. Avoidance coping can result in individuals experiencing not only stress and anxiety but it can have an impact on self-confidence of the individual as well (Boyes, 2013). As stated by Holahan et al. (2005) "Avoidance coping involves cognitive and behavioral efforts oriented toward denying, minimising, or otherwise avoiding, dealing directly with stressful demands and is closely linked to distress and depression. In avoidant coping certain behaviours that may stir up negative memories are avoided". Situations that may stir up negative feelings are also avoided. Individuals who use avoidant coping may not continue pursuing their goal if they experience thoughts that create anxiety (Boyes, 2013).

5.3.2 Emotion focused coping and Problem focused coping

Let us look at the example given below:

Since Sunny was assigned to a new superior, Sunny felt that he has been given more work compared to his colleagues and is also criticised frequently. He is not aware why his superior is doing so, but the work overload and frequent criticisms are taking a toll on him and he feels stressed. He even lost sleep and appetite. Sunny's friends noticed change in Sunny as he would keep to himself and was not his usual self. Some of his friends decided to speak to him. After understanding the issue, one of them, Kabir, suggested that Sunny should directly speak to his superior or the human resource department. Another friend, Kedar, suggested that he needs to accept and adjust with the situation and try to put in his best.

As you can see in the above example, two of the Sunny's friends gave two different suggestions. The suggestion given by Kabir is mainly problem focused where the problem is dealt with in a direct manner. Whereas, the suggestion given by Kedar mainly focuses on managing one's emotions and can be termed emotional coping or emotion focused coping.

Emotion focused coping can be differentiated from problem focused coping as its purpose is to manage emotions that are related with the stressful situation rather than modifying the situation.

Emotion focused coping involves management of the emotional reactions towards the events causing stress. "Emotion-focused coping strategies aim to reduce and manage the intensity of the negative and distressing emotions that a stressful situation has caused rather than solving the problematic situation itself" (Galor, 2012). Thus, this coping is directed towards decreasing any unpleasantness that the person experiences as a result of facing the stressful situation. The avoidant coping style that we discussed earlier could be related with this coping style as it involves avoidance of a situation. Though, this coping style also involves positive reappraisal, where,

positive aspects of the situation are focused on keeping in mind one's own benefits and growth. Emotion focused coping are often used when change in the stressful situation is not possible and it is also more likely to be used by women than men (Ghosh, 2015). Using emotion focused coping can help in decreasing the negative effects of the stressor on the individual and will help the individual accept the situation and will thus lead to decrease in the experience of chronic stress. It also helps individuals to think with a clear mind and seek a solution to the problem. It may also lead to contentment in life and bring about positivity. This in turn can lead to enhancement of one's ability to focus on aspects that can be modified or changed. Some of the strategies of emotion focused coping include, listening to music, maintaining a diary, meditation, exercise and so on.

Some of the drawbacks of this coping are that it may not be as effective, as the source of the stress is not dealt with, and, as such no long term solution is sought.

Problem focused coping involves identifying the source of the problem so as to either deal with it or modify it. The proactive coping that we discussed earlier can be closely related with this type of coping. Further, problem focused coping also involves taking control of the stressful situation, seeking information about it and evaluation of positive and negative aspects in a situation (Roncaglia, 2014). In problem focused coping the first step involved is identification of the problem so that the source of stress is clear. And this is important as this coping style can be effective only when there is clarity with regard to the problem. For instance, problem focused coping works well while coping with examinations, interviews, making presentations and so on where one knows what the source of stress is and also stress caused due to such situations can be controlled by the individual. Though, if the source of stress is based on emotions then it is better to use emotion focused coping rather than problem focused coping. For instance, while dealing with loss of a loved one, divorce or breakup and so on. Further, in this style, the obstacles that may arise in the process of dealing with the stressful situation need to be avoided and the focus should be on problem. For instance, if a person has an interview, but could not prepare for it due to paucity of time, he/ she has no other choice but face the interview and do his/ her best. In this case the paucity of time could be termed as a roadblock that need not be focused on as time has already passed and nothing can be done about it. The main limitations of this coping style are that it may not be effective in every stressful situation and as such may not be suitable for all the individuals. Though it is often effective in dealing with stressors and useful in long run.

Various strategies involved in problem solving coping include, management of time, seeking support, seeking help from others, planning and so on.

Yet another coping style was proposed by Carver and Connor-Smith in 2010. It is called appraisal- focussed coping. In this coping style, the assumptions of an individual with regard to his/ her perceptions of the stressor are challenged by the means of a cognitive reappraisal (Roncaglia, 2014).

Coping can also be categorised as combative coping and preventive coping as stated by Folkman et al. (Ghosh, 2015). In combative coping, in order

to deal with the stressor, the individual makes an attempt to remove the stressor by overcoming it. Combative coping involves monitoring of stress, resource accumulation, dealing with the stressor by attacking it directly, tolerance of stress, and decreasing arousal (Ghosh, 2015).

In preventive coping, cognitive restructuring takes place so that the stressor is not threatening any more. Further, one's own potential for resistance is also strengthened so that the stressor can be prevented from occurring. Preventive coping includes adjustments so that the stressors can be avoided. Also demand levels are adjusted, behaviour patterns that lead to stress are modified and coping resources (physiological, psychological, financial and so on) are developed (Ghosh, 2015).

Check Your Progress II

- 1) List the stages of proactive coping.

- 2) What is problem focused coping?

5.4 LET US SUM UP

In the present Unit, we discussed the definition and nature of coping with stress and the coping styles. Coping in simple terms can be described as ways in which an individual tries to deal with stress experienced by him/ her. Coping can also be described as deliberate efforts that are directed towards decreasing the negative effects, that could be psychological, physical or even social, of the stressful situation. Coping could either be adaptive or maladaptive. An adaptive coping style not only reduces stress but has long term effects. Whereas, maladaptive coping may provide respite from stress for a short period of time but it could have negative impacts on physical and psychological health of the individual. Individual differences exist in the way individuals cope with stressful situations. Variations could exist based on personality of individuals, his/ her tolerance level for stimulation, psychological hardiness, the style of attribution, learned helplessness and his/ her sense of coherence. Difference may also exist due to gender. The goals of coping were also discussed in this Unit and some of the major goals of coping include enhancing the possibility of recovery by decreasing

the negative environmental conditions, being able to adjust to the negative situation, maintaining a self-image that is positive and emotional balance and ensuring positive interpersonal relationships. Coping is termed as effective when it leads to recovery and when the individual is able to adapt to the stressful situation by means of maintaining a positive image about one's self, emotional balance and has effective interpersonal relationship.

Coping styles can be categories as proactive coping, avoidant coping, emotion focused coping and problem focused coping. Proactive coping and avoidant coping are based on the method of coping and the emotion focused coping and problem focused coping are based on the focus of the coping. In proactive coping the individual will directly confront the stressful situation or event. An individual adopting this type of coping will take direct action by developing a better idea about the stress creating situation. In avoidant coping style, the individual will try to avoid the stress creating situation or may give less importance to the stressful event. Emotion focused coping involves management of the emotional reactions towards the events causing stress and problem focused coping style involves identifying the source of the problem so as to either deal with it or modify it. Emotion focused coping can be differentiated from the problem focused coping as its purpose is to manage emotions that are related with the stressful situation rather than modifying the situation.

In the next Unit we will discuss about various stress management techniques

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5.6 KEY WORDS

Coping: Coping in simple terms can be described as ways in which an individual tries to deal with stress experienced by him/ her.

Avoidant coping: In avoidant coping, as the name suggests, the individual will try to avoid the stress creating situation or may give less importance to the stressful event.

Emotion focused coping: Emotion focused coping involves management of the emotional reactions towards the events causing stress.

Proactive coping: In proactive coping the individual will directly confront the stressful situation or event. An individual adopting this type of coping will take direct action by developing a better idea about the stress creating situation.

Problem focused coping: Problem focused coping involves identifying the source of the problem so as to either deal with it or modify it.

5.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your progress I

- 1) Define Coping.

Lazarus and Folkman in 1980 defined coping as efforts, both cognitive and behavioural, that are directed towards overcoming, decreasing or enduring the internal and external demands.

- 2) State any one goal of coping.

One of the goals of coping is to enhance the possibility of recovery by decreasing the negative environmental conditions.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) List the stages of proactive coping.

The stages of proactive coping are as follows:

Stage 1 Accumulation of resources

Stage 2 Identifying or anticipating the potential stressor

Stage 3 Initial appraisal

Stage 4 Preliminary efforts to cope with the stressful situation

Stage 5 Seeking feedback and using the same

- 2) What is problem focused coping?

Problem focused coping style involves identifying the source of the problem so as to either deal with it or modify it.

5.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Define coping and discuss its goals.
- 2) Explain the nature of coping.
- 3) Describe the steps involved in proactive coping.
- 4) Discuss proactive and avoidant coping styles.
- 5) Describe emotion focused and problem focused coping.



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UNIT 6 : STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES I*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Relaxation Techniques
- 6.3 Meditation
- 6.4 Yoga
- 6.5 Mindfulness
- 6.6 Biofeedback
- 6.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.8 References
- 6.9 Key Words
- 6.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 6.11 Unit End Questions

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to,

- discuss the techniques of stress management like relaxation technique, meditation, Yoga, mindfulness and biofeedback.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Rahul was a Human Resource Manager in an MNC. He noticed that the performance and effectiveness of the employees of his organization was getting affected due to occupational stress. Therefore, he spoke to his management and arranged for a half an hour meditation session everyday for the employees, that really made a difference.

Neha worked as a counsellor in a school. She noticed that one of her teacher colleagues, Snehal was stressed. She decided to speak to Snehal and found that she was stressed due to some issues that she was facing at home. Neha discussed cognitive restructuring technique with Snehal and asked her to practice the same. Post vacation when Neha met Snehal, Snehal informed that there was a huge difference in the way she approached the problems that she was facing and that her stress had gone down considerably.

Niharika was a home manager. Her friend Sheela lately noticed that Niharika was getting stressed due to her hectic routine. She suggested Niharika to take up Yoga classes so as to help her deal better with the stress that she was experiencing

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In the above cases, we can see that certain stress management techniques have been used (meditation, cognitive restructuring and Yoga). These and many more can be used by individuals to deal effectively with stress.

In the previous Unit, we discussed about coping with stress and covered the definition and nature of coping and also discussed about coping styles.

In the present Unit and the next, we will focus on stress management techniques. There are various stress management techniques that can be used by individuals to deal with stress and as students of psychology, we need to understand these techniques and how they help individuals deal effectively with stress. Stress management techniques ranging from relaxation techniques, meditation, mindfulness, cognitive restructuring and so on can help individual manage stress effectively.

Before we actually start with discussion on various stress management techniques, let us do a simple breathing exercise:

Sit straight and close your eyes before you start with the exercise.

Then, breath in and breath out gently (as you normally do).

Do this for five to ten minutes.

Focus on your thoughts and concentrate on your breathing.

Rub your palms together, put them on your eyes and then slowly open your eyes.

I hope you are feeling refreshed after this exercise and all set to study further about stress management.

The above exercise can be carried out from time to time in a day as required so as to refresh your mind and body. Important point is to do it with all your heart and seriousness.

In Block 1, we discussed about stress, its nature, models and effects. These are very important in order to understand stress management. Individual differences exist in the way stress is perceived and experienced and in a similar manner, the techniques of stress management found to be effective by different individuals will also differ. Some may find Yoga to be more suitable, whereas others may want to go for relaxation techniques.

There are various stress management techniques that will be discussed by us in the present and the next Units.

6.2 RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

As discussed, by us in earlier units there are a number of physiological changes that take place in the individual who is experiencing stress. These could range from rapid breathing to increased heartbeat and pulse rate, tightening of muscles and so on. In such a situation relaxation techniques can be effectively used, especially, to reduce the muscle tension experienced by the individual undergoing stress. Relaxation techniques help not only in relieving stress but they also help in dealing with anxiety, help sleep better, help in regulation of blood pressure, reduce headaches and migraine and so on.

One such relaxation technique is Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation. This technique involves deep muscle relaxation. The main assumption of this technique is that relaxation and tension cannot occur at the same time,

mainly because both are as a result of two different autonomic nervous systems, that is, sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. And these systems cannot be active at the same time as they reciprocally inhibit each other.

The technique mainly involves contracting various body muscles and then relaxing them. The exercise can be carried out for approximately 15 to 20 minutes and could be practiced twice a day. The following needs to be kept in mind before practicing this technique (Ghosh, 2015):

1. It is to be practiced in a place that one finds comfortable.
2. Preferably it needs to be carried out at a time when there are least distractions.
3. It needs to be carried out with belief in one self and should not be hurriedly carried out.
4. Any drugs or medications should not be used for relaxation and those on medication may practice after seeking medical advice.
5. Caution must be maintained by persons suffering from problems like backaches, fractures and other injuries.

The technique mainly starts with breathing in, holding the breath and letting go. It is important to be calm as well as comfortable while practicing this technique. Eyes can be closed during the technique. Breathing exercise could be repeated a few times and that can be followed by tensing and relaxing of different muscles. This technique involves contracting and relaxing 16 muscle groups alternatively. These muscles include arms, hands, shoulders, neck, forehead-eyes-scalp, jaws - mouth, chest - trunk, stomach, lower back, buttocks, thigh, foot-calf (Ghosh 2015). The contracting and relaxing of muscle is to be carried out as follows:

- Bend the arms up to the elbow, hold for few seconds and relax.
- Hands can be clenched in a fist, hold for some time and open.
- Shoulders can be pulled in upward direction, held in this position for a while and then released.
- For relaxing the neck, head can be pushed back for a few seconds and then brought in the original position. Similarly, chin can be brought down towards the chest, for a few seconds and then brought in the original position.
- For chest, deep breaths to be taken, held for few seconds and then relaxed.
- Stomach can be pulled in for a few seconds and then relaxed.
- For thighs, knees can be pulled together for a while and then relaxed by drifting them apart.
- Buttocks can be squeezed together and relaxed.
- For feet, pull your toes up in the direction of your knees, hold this position briefly and then relax by letting go. Heels can be pressed against the ground for a few seconds and the relaxed by letting go.

Post exercise it is important to remain relaxed and not make jerky movements, though you can have a final stretch. Before you open your eyes count backwards from ten to one and then rub your palms together and

put them on your eyes. Then, eyes can be opened slowly and the feeling of being relaxed can be enjoyed.

Box 6.1: Quick method for relief from stress

- 1) Close your eyes.
- 2) Try to relax your arms and shoulders.
- 3) Rotate your head in a circle a few times - first to the right, then to the left.
- 4) Take a deep breath and exhale, repeat this for five to ten minutes.
- 5) Concentrate on your breathing.
- 6) Put aside all stressful thoughts.
- 7) Count backwards from ten to one.
- 8) Rub your palms together and put them on your eyes.
- 9) Slowly open your eyes.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is the main assumption of Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation?

6.3 MEDITATION

Meditation is yet another technique that can be used to deal with stress. Meditation is the English word for Sanskrit term 'Dhyana'. It can be described as a process of "quieting the mind in order to spend time in thought for relaxation with a goal to attain inner state of awareness and intensify personal and spiritual growth" (<https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/4949/meditation>). Meditation also will relax your body and thus the negative impact of stress on the body is reduced. Meditation not only leads to relaxation of body but it also helps in increasing self-awareness. And regular practice of meditation will have long term benefits.

There are different types of meditation (Villines, 2017, Welch, 2019). Some of these are briefly explained as follows:

Mindfulness meditation: This mainly includes becoming aware about one's thoughts. It involves sitting in a place without any distractions and non-judgmentally observing one's thoughts and emotions.

Transcendental meditation: This involves chanting of a 'mantra' / chant or a word repeatedly in certain manner. This again can be done in a quiet place. One can sit straight but comfortably and practice this meditation for 15 to 20 minutes.

Guided meditation: As the name suggests, in this meditation, there is often a guide who will take you through the meditation process. This meditation mainly involves visualisation of certain images that you may find relaxing. It also involves utilising one's senses. The person may be asked to sit in a quiet and calm place with eyes closed and visualise certain images that he/she finds relaxing.

Vipassana meditation: The main aim of this meditation is self-observation in order to transform oneself. It requires attention to be paid to different bodily sensations in order to create a connection between body and mind.

Loving kindness meditation (Metta meditation): This meditation includes directing love and kindness towards others. The individual is required to sit straight but in a comfortable position in a quiet place. He/she is then required to take a few deep breaths and repeat to oneself words that express kindness to self, then to family, friends and other significant people in his/her life and then to everyone.

Chakra (means wheel) meditation: In our body there are different energy centers and power that are spiritual in nature and they are referred to as chakras or wheels. There are a total of seven such chakras that are located in different parts of our body and each chakra is represented by a colour. The main aim of this meditation is to bring about an equilibrium in these chakras.

The benefits of meditation include not only reduction of stress but it can also help in managing anxiety, promoting affective health, enhancing self awareness, increasing the span of attention and so on. Initially it can be practiced once in a day for a few minutes and later on the duration can be increased and it can also be practiced twice a day.

Box 6.2: A simple way to meditate is given as follows:

- You need to sit on a chair comfortably with your back straight. Let your feet touch the floor and do not cross your legs or arms. You can either rest your arms in your lap or keep them on the armrest.
- Then you need to close your eyes.
- Breathe in deeply and breathe out gently and try to relax your body.
- Keep your eyes closed and you can either repeat a mantra, a word to yourself or can have a (prewritten) self dialogue with yourself.
- If you get distracted, repeat the mantra, word or continue with the self dialogue.
- You can do this for 15 to 20 minutes (initially it can be done for smaller time period).
- As you complete the meditation count backwards from ten to one.
- Rub your palms together and put them on your eyes.
- Slowly open your eyes.

Check Your progress II

- 1) What is transcendental meditation?

- 2) What are the benefits of meditation?

6.4 YOGA

You all must be aware that we celebrate International Day of Yoga on 21st June every year. Such is the effectiveness of Yoga that it is now promoted at International level in order to create awareness and promote practice of Yoga amongst the individuals so as to help them enhance their health and wellbeing. Yoga as a practice originated in India and the term Yoga is derived from Sanskrit meaning 'to unite', indicating a union of consciousness and body (<https://www.un.org/en/events/yogaday/>). The main goal of Yoga is self realisation (Balaji, 2012). Yoga finds its mention in Bhagwad Gita, where a whole chapter is devoted to it. Three main types of yoga have been mentioned in this regard.

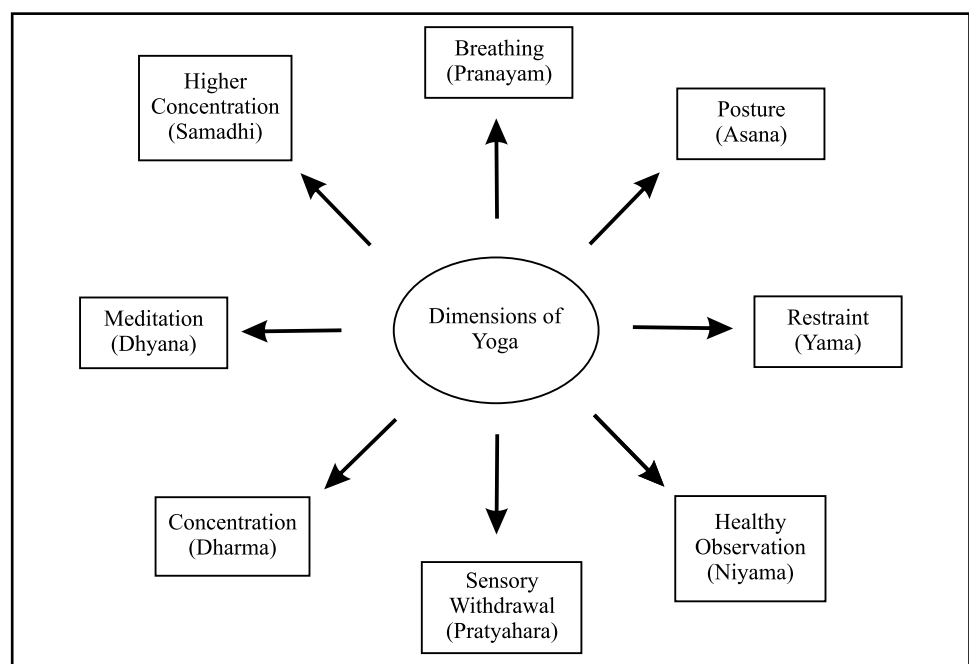
Karma Yoga: That is yoga related to one's actions.

Bhakti Yoga: Yoga related to devotion.

Jnana Yoga: That is Yoga related to knowledge.

There is also a fourth type that was put forth by Patanjali, He introduced Ashtang Yoga, that is, power yoga. This yoga involves a movement or a flow from posture to posture (Balaji, 2012). Figure 6.1 shows various dimensions of Yoga (Balaji, 2012).

Fig 6.1: Dimensions of Yoga



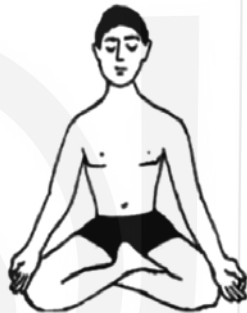
Yoga mainly involves bodily postures (Asanas), breathing exercises and meditation that are to be carried out in a specific manner.

Types of Asanas

There are various types of asanas, some of these have been briefly discussed as follows:

- 1.) **Padmasana:** This is also referred as the lotus pose that can be used during meditation. Padmasana is practiced by sitting straight on the ground with your feet on top of your thighs. This asana is quite difficult and may need practice before one is able to carry it out adequately.
- 2.) **Sukhasana:** This involves sitting cross-legged. This is an easy asana and like Padmasana, it can be used during meditation.
- 3.) **Siddhasana:** This is similar to Padmasana but less difficult. In this, you need to sit with your toes tucked in to your thighs(Figure.6.2).

Fig 6.2 : Siddhasana



4. **Vajrasana:** Vajra is a Sanskrit term that can be translated as 'diamond' (Balaji, 2012). This involves sitting on one's heels by placing palms on the knees. (Figure 6.3).

Fig 6.3 : Vajrasana



- 5.) **Trikonasana:** In this asana, you need to stand on the floor with legs apart and then you need to stretch your body to the left in such a way that spine is straight and your body is facing towards front and your

arms are perpendicular to the floor, with left hand resting on the floor and right hand straight up (Balaji, 2012, pg. 3). Refer to figure 6.4.

Fig 6.4: Trikonasana



6. Bhujangasana: Also referred to as cobra pose, in this the person has to lie face down on the floor, with hands on the floor below the shoulder. Then he/ she has to lift his/ her head and chest slowly. The elbows are to be kept near the body, with neck straight and eyes looking up.

Fig 6.5: Bhujangasana



Pranayam

Pranayam is a breathing exercise that can be carried out for stress relief, though it has number of other health benefits as well. In this you need to put your right thumb on your right nostril and deeply inhale through your left nostril. Then you close your left nostril with your right index finger and hold your breath for a few seconds. Then exhale through your right nostril. The same can be repeated with your left nostril (Balaji, 2012, pg. 3). Refer to figure. 6.6.

Fig 6.6: Pranayam



Yoga has a number of benefits including relief from stress, higher productivity, mindfulness and overall better physical and mental health. But it is important that one develops its understanding and take suitable training before it is practiced.

Note: Figures for Asanas have been taken from Balaji Deekshitulu PV (2012) Stress and Yoga. Journal of Yoga and Physical Therapy, 2:109. doi:10.4172/2157-7595.1000109

Check Your Progress III

1.) What are the three main types of Yoga?

6.5 MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness denotes awareness about ones thinking, the way one feels, physical sensations and one's surrounding in the present moment. It mainly involves becoming non-judgmental in one's awareness about one's thoughts and feelings. It mainly involves paying attention to things that generally we do not notice as we are too occupied with our lives, thinking about future and past and are seldom focusing on present. Mindfulness is often termed as a contrast to automatic pilot mode (or a default mode) where we do things without much thought or attention. Often, we are doing certain activities like driving, household chores or even eating which we may do by not paying our complete attention to the task and most often our attention and thought process may be somewhere else rather than on these activities. Thus, we are in auto pilot mode. Whereas, mindfulness involves becoming aware and focusing our attention on these activities. The main characteristics of mindfulness according to Kabat-Zinn (1990) are being nonjudgmental, cultivating patience, being open minded, having trust, non-striving, acceptance and letting go. In fact Kabat-Zinn was also responsible for starting a programme on Mindfulness- Based Stress Reduction in 1997 at University of Massachusetts Medical School. It is also important that when mindfulness is practiced, one involves in observing one's experiences including thoughts, feelings and physiological sensations. Though when one is focusing at varied experiences, it is to be done one at a time. Besides observation, it also involves description of what is being observed but this is to be done non-judgmentally. Mindfulness also requires complete participation, thus complete attention and focus needs to be provided to the task at hand. While practicing mindfulness, it is possible that one's attention and focus may drift, in which case one needs to gently bring back the focus and attention on observing the experience.

Practicing mindfulness can have a positive impact on an individual's body and mind. It not only helps in dealing with certain illnesses by strengthening

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one's immune system but it also helps deal with stress and promote positive mental health. Even memory, attention, problem solving and decision making can improve with the help of mindfulness. It can also enhance one's self esteem and can play a role in building and maintaining positive relationships.

One of the most important activities that we often do mindlessly is eating. We eat so that our body gets the necessary nourishment. But most often we do this activity on an auto pilot mode while we either watch television or browse our mobiles or engage in social networking. Next time you have

your lunch or dinner try to exercise mindfulness eating. Do this by switching off the television, keeping aside the mobile and concentrate on your food. Appreciate your food and pay attention to its taste, colour, sound, texture, aroma and so on (sense it with all your senses) and be non-judgmental in doing so. And even while carrying out other activities as well, try to carry them out in a mindful manner.

Box 6.3: Practicing mindfulness breathing

- You need to sit or lie down (on your back) comfortably. If you sit, ensure that your back is straight.
- Then you need to close your eyes.
- Breath in and breath out naturally.
- Focus on your breathing.
- As you do this there will be thoughts in your mind, you may experience emotions, there will be sensations, you may also hear some sounds. What you need to do is accept these without being judgemental.
- If you get distracted, try to bring back your attention gently on your breathing.

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) What is mindfulness?

- 2) What are the main characteristics of mindfulness according to Kabat-Zinn?

6.6 BIOFEEDBACK

As described by Ghosh (2015, as cited on pg. 179), “biofeedback is a technique of making unconscious or involuntary bodily processes (as heartbeat or brainwaves) perceptible to the senses (as by the use of an oscilloscope) in order to manipulate them by conscious mental control”. It can also be described as a process that is non-invasive in nature and helps in comprehending the effect of stress on one’s body. It helps monitor the bodily changes that take place when stress is experienced and with the help of such a feedback, the bodily reactions can be managed and resilience towards stress can be improved. Thus, the individual will get immediate feedback about varied physiological processes. Biofeedback can be obtained for breathing, blood pressure, heart rate, Galvanic skin response etc. that mainly includes measurement of amount of sweat on skin, temperature of skin, tension in muscles and so on.

When stress is experienced, there are various physiological changes that take place in the individual experiencing stress. When individual becomes aware about these changes with the help of biofeedback, he/ she will be in a better position to manipulate and control them. Thus, the physiological arousal that is experienced during stress can be dealt with by using varied techniques including deep breathing, relaxation and so on. And as the body is relaxed there is no negative effect of stress on health of the individual. Biofeedback can also help an individual identify what he/ she needs to manipulate or control and which technique is more effective while doing so. Accordingly, the individual can effectively manage stress experienced by him/ her. Biofeedback can be obtained by becoming more aware about one’s physical responses. For instance, we can notice our rapid breathing while experiencing stress. Biofeedback can also be obtained by using certain tools like thermometer or weighing scales.

We discussed a few techniques of stress management in this unit and many more will be discussed in the subsequent units. We have to remember that each of us experience and react to stress in different manner and thus the techniques that we may find effective to manage stress will also vary. You need to become aware about your stress, understand it and then select one or more techniques that will help you deal effectively with your stress.

Check Your Progress V

- 1) What is biofeedback?

6.7 LET US SUM UP

To summarise, in the present Unit we discussed various techniques of stress management including relaxation techniques, meditation, Yoga, mindfulness and biofeedback. There are a number of physiological changes take place in the individual who is experiencing stress. This could range from rapid breathing to increased heartbeat and pulse rate, tightening of muscles and so on. In such a situation relaxation techniques can be effectively used especially to reduce the muscle tension experienced by the individual undergoing stress. Relaxation techniques help not only in relieving stress but they also help in dealing with anxiety, help sleep better, help in regulation of blood pressure, reduce headaches and migraine and so on. Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation was also discussed in this context. Meditation is yet another technique that can be used to deal with stress. Meditation will relax your body and thus the negative impact of stress on the body is reduced. Meditation not only leads to relaxation of body but also helps in increasing self-awareness. And regular practice of meditation will have long term benefits. Different types of meditations like mindfulness meditation, transcendental meditation, guided meditation, Vipassana meditation, loving kindness meditation (Metta meditation) and Chakra (means wheel) meditation were also briefly described. With regard to the next technique, Yoga is derived from Sanskrit meaning 'to unite', indicating a union of consciousness and body. The main goal of Yoga is self-realisation. Yoga find its mention in Bhagwad Gita, where a whole chapter is devoted to it. Under this section, various Asanas and Pranayam were explained. Mindfulness was the next technique discussed and it denotes awareness about ones thinking, the way one feels, physical sensations and one's surrounding in the present moment. It mainly involves becoming non-judgemental in one's awareness about one's thoughts and feelings. It mainly involves paying attention to things that we generally don't notice as we are too occupied with our lives, thinking about future and past and thus seldom focusing on present. Lastly, we discussed biofeedback that is a technique of making unconscious or involuntary bodily processes (as heartbeat or brainwaves) perceptible to the senses (as by the use of an oscilloscope) in order to manipulate them by conscious mental control.

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6.9 KEY WORDS

Biofeedback: Biofeedback can be described as a process that is non-invasive in nature and helps in comprehending the effect of stress on one's body.

Meditation: It can be described as a process of quieting the mind in order

to spend time in thought for relaxation with a goal to attain inner state of awareness and intensify personal and spiritual growth.

Mindfulness: Mindfulness denotes awareness about ones thinking, the way one feels, physical sensations and one's surrounding in the present moment.

Yoga: Yoga as a practice originated in India and the term Yoga is derived from Sanskrit meaning 'to unite', indicating a union of consciousness and body. The main goal of Yoga is self realisation. Yoga mainly involves bodily postures (Asanas), breathing exercises and meditation that are to be carried out in a specific manner.

6.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is the main assumption of Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation?

Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation technique involves deep muscle relaxation. The main assumption of this technique is that relaxation and tension cannot occur at the same time, mainly because both are as a result of two different autonomic nervous systems, that is, sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

Check Your progress II

- 1) What is transcendental meditation?

Transcendental meditation involves chanting of a 'mantra'/ chant or a word repeatedly in certain manner.

- 2) What are the benefits of meditation?

The benefits of meditation include not only reduction of stress but it can also help in managing anxiety, promoting affective health, enhancing self-awareness, increasing the span of attention and so on.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) What are the three main types of Yoga?

The three main types of Yoga are

Karma Yoga: That is yoga related to one's actions.

Bhakti Yoga: Yoga related to devotion.

Jnana Yoga: That is Yoga related to knowledge.

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness denotes awareness about ones thinking, the way one feels, physical sensations and one's surrounding in the present moment. It mainly involves becoming non-judgmental in one's awareness about one's thoughts and feelings.

- 2) What are the main characteristics of mindfulness according to Kabat-Zinn?

The main characteristics of mindfulness according to Kabat-Zinn (1990) are being nonjudgmental, cultivating patience, being open minded, having trust, non-striving, acceptance and letting go.

Check Your Progress V

- 1) What is biofeedback?

Biofeedback is a technique of making unconscious or involuntary bodily processes (as heartbeat or brainwaves) perceptible to the senses (as by the use of an oscilloscope) in order to manipulate them by conscious mental control.

6.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss in detail relaxation technique.
- 2) Explain different types of meditation.
- 3) Discuss in detail various types of Asanas in Yoga.
- 4) Describe mindfulness.
- 5) Explain biofeedback as a technique of stress management.



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UNIT 7 : STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES II*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Cognitive Restructuring
- 7.3 Time Management
 - 7.3.1 Time Management Matrix
 - 7.3.2 Techniques of Time Management
- 7.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.4 References
- 7.5 Key Words
- 7.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 7.7 Unit End Questions

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to,

- explain cognitive restructuring.
- discuss time management.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Let us start with an exercise

Rate the state of your mind right now at this instance on the scale given below (you can circle the number):

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Unpleasant					Pleasant					

Some statements have been given below, you need to read each statement and think of how it is applicable to you. You can even remember examples of these statements in form of images.

- I have people around me who support me (remember the people and instances when you received the support).
- I feel satisfied (remember the moments that generate these feelings).
- I have done certain things that make me very happy (remember the moments that generate these feelings).

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- I have done well in life (remember the moments of your success).
- Life seems to be positive and meaningful (remember the moments and people that generate these feelings).
- I have been appreciated many times (remember the moments and events).
- I have done things that make me very happy (remember the moments and events).
- I have helped and supported others in a meaningful manner (remember the moments, events and people).
- I have moments of fun in my life (remember the moments and events).
- I have taken good decisions (remember the moments and events).

Now re-rate the state of your mind right now on the scale below (you can circle the number):										
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Unpleasant					Pleasant					

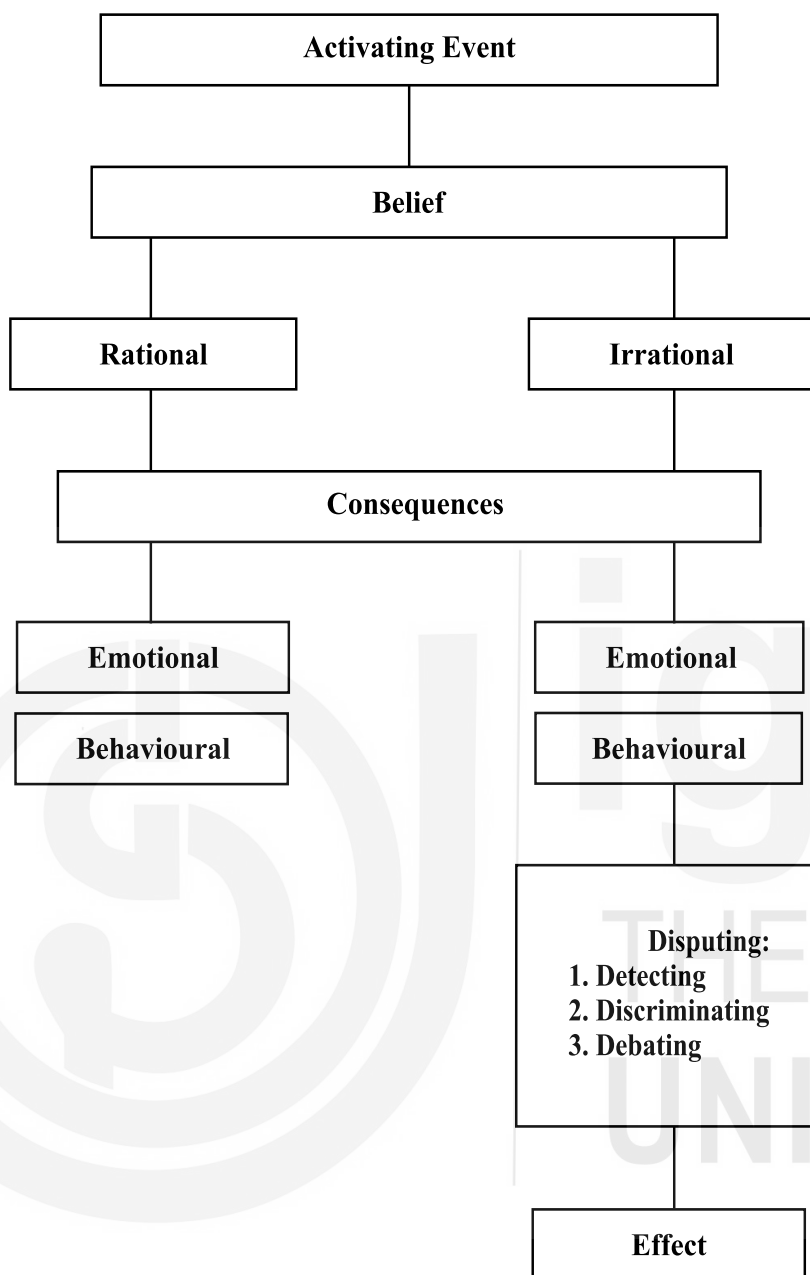
It is more likely that your rating is higher later, that is, after remembering the events based on the statements than before. This happens as you think about all the positive things, events and people in your life. The exercise also reflects the strength of positive thinking and attitude, which again can help individuals deal effectively with stress.

In the previous Unit, we discussed about some of the stress management techniques like relaxation, meditation, Yoga and biofeedback. In the present Unit we will discuss some more techniques like cognitive restructuring and time management.

7.2 COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

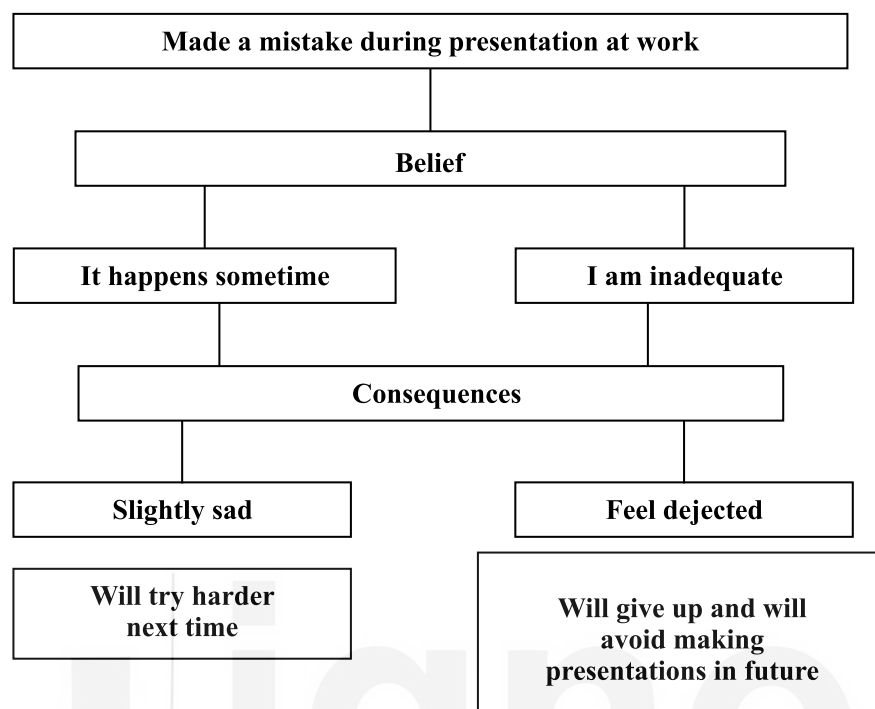
Cognitive restructuring can be described as “a process of replacing stress provoking negative thoughts and beliefs with more constructive and realistic ones which reduce cognitive appraisal of the threat” (Ghosh, 2015 pg. 185). Thus, cognitive restructuring mainly involves changing the thinking process and making it more rational and positive. For instance, if a student gets very low marks in an examination, instead of thinking oneself as a failure, he/ she can take a learning lesson and decide to try harder next time.

Fig. 7.1: ABCDE Technique



In this context, the ABCDE technique of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT), that was proposed by Albert Ellis can be discussed. The ABCDE technique has been given in figure 7.1.

As can be seen in figure 7.1, there is an activating event (A), that is perceived based on one's belief (B) which can be rational or irrational. This in turn will have consequences (C), both emotional and behavioural. If a belief is irrational it can be disputed (D) which includes detecting that the belief is irrational, discriminating it from a rational belief and then debating it in order to develop a rational belief. Lastly there is effect (E), that is nothing but effect of disputing the irrational belief.

Figure 7.2: Example of ABCDE Technique

As can be seen in the above example, the activating event is 'mistake made by an individual during his/ her presentation at work'. To this he/ she can either have a rational or irrational belief. A rational belief to this activating event could be 'It happens sometimes', 'a mistake is not end of the world'. The consequence of a rational belief would be that the individual will feel momentarily sad (emotional consequence), but he/ she will work harder next time to avoid repeating the mistakes (behavioural consequence).

However, the individual could have irrational beliefs towards the activating event like 'I am inadequate', 'I am not good enough', to which the emotional consequence would be that the individual will feel dejected and he/ she would give up and will avoid making presentations in future (behavioural consequence).

It is important that the irrational beliefs are disputed by detecting, discriminating and debating them (as can be seen in figure 7.1). Once the individual is able to dispute the irrational belief, he/ she will develop a more rational outlook towards the activating event, that will be the effect of disputing. In this example, the individual will have to rationalise with one self that just one mistake is not the end of the world and that such mistakes happen sometimes and he/ she has much more potentialities and just this mistake does not mean that he/ she is good for nothing or inadequate.

In our day to day lives as well we will come across numerous activating events that evoke our beliefs. We need to ensure that we have a more rational outlook towards these activating events. This in turn will help us manage stress in an effective manner.

Box 7.1 : Stress Relieving Exercise

- 1) Take it seriously as if your whole life depends on it.
- 2) Look at a particular point in front of you.
- 3) Close your eyes.
- 4) Visualise a pleasant place or a happy moment of your life. Imagine that you are there for a few moments.
- 5) Breathe in deeply and breathe out gently.
- 6) Focus on your breathing.
- 7) Feel your muscles relaxing as the stress goes out of your body.
- 8) Keep doing the breathing exercise for around five to ten minutes.
- 9) Have a positive self dialogue regarding any of your goals or a difficulty or stress that you are facing. Assure yourself that you will be able to achieve the goal you have in mind or will be able to overcome the difficulty that you are facing.
- 10) Visualise the pleasant place or the happy moment of your life (as above). Pretend that you are there for a few moments.
- 11) Count backwards from 25 to one.
- 12) Rub your palms together and put them on your eyes.
- 13) Open your eyes slowly.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is cognitive restructuring?

- 2) State what ABCDE stand for in ABCDE technique.

A: _____

B: _____

C: _____

D: _____

E: _____

7.3 TIME MANAGEMENT

Effective and systematic management of time could be a key to stress management. Time is a precious resource and time management basically involves making the best use of the time that one has. It also includes planning, controlling the waste of time, implementation of various techniques to

manage time as well as carrying out evaluation that can help one improve. Seaward (2014, pg. 147) explains time management as “prioritisation, scheduling and execution of responsibilities to personal satisfaction”.

Main aspects that have been reflected in this definition are prioritisation, scheduling and execution.

Prioritisation: Prioritisation involves listing tasks and responsibilities according to their priority or how important and urgent they are to be carried out. Here the difference needs to be made between what is urgent and what is important. Based on urgency and importance, a time management matrix was proposed by Stephen Covey, that will be discussed later in this section. Also, in order to identify and direct our attention towards urgent tasks, ABC rank order method (that will be discussed under planner system) can be used, where A is assigned to urgent tasks, B to tasks with moderate urgency and C to least urgent tasks.

Scheduling: Scheduling is related to assigning time schedule to each task. It mainly deals with how to get the tasks done at the right time and also how to carry them out. There are various techniques under scheduling that are discussed as follows (Seaward, 2014):

Clustering: In clustering tasks can be grouped together. For example, bank related work, shopping for vegetables and buying a gift for a friend can be clustered together.

Time boxing: In time boxing, a large amount of time in a day, referred as time box, is allotted for certain tasks. For instance, time box can be allotted for writing assignments.

Dismantling: In dismantling, large tasks are broken down in to smaller tasks that are comparatively easy to manage. For example, studying a certain course can be divided based on units in course material/chapters given in a book.

Scheduling is thus important in management of time. And while time mapping (where, certain amount of time is assigned in order to carry out various activities), some time can be allotted to carry out scheouling.

Execution: This has to do with actually carrying out the task as mere planning and scheduling is not enough. Thus, one needs to be motivated enough to carry out the task. One way to motivate one self is by self rewarding one’s self for every completed task. These rewards could be tangible or intangible or big or small. Though, it is a good idea to motivate oneself intrinsically to carry out the task.

7.3.1 Time Management Matrix

In this matrix there are four quadrants based on the Urgency and Importance of the task. When we say that a certain task is urgent, it means that it requires immediate attention and when we refer a task as important, it means the task in a way will contribute to our goals. The time management matrix is given in figure 7.3

Fig. 7.3: Time Management Matrix

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emergencies - Crises or problems - Projects having deadline - Pressing issues 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning - Exercise - Training - Health
NOT IMPORTANT	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interruptions - Some E-Mails and phone calls - Minor issues - Certain meetings 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Junk mail - Tasks that are routine - Time wasters

The first quadrant, is the quadrant that includes tasks that are Urgent and Important. These tasks are absolutely necessary to be carried out. These are the activities that one need to manage with top priority. Such tasks cannot wait. For instance, if there is a medical emergency in an individual's family, immediate action needs to be taken.

The second quadrant is important but not urgent. These activities though not urgent require one's focus as they are important to be carried out. These tasks also need to be focused on because they are significant in terms of goals that are long term. For instance, exercising daily will improve one's health and will have long term benefits.

The third quadrant is urgent but not important. These are the activities that could be avoided or could be delegated. This quadrant is also referred to as quadrant of deception. The forth quadrant is not urgent and not important and could result in waste of time and these again can be avoided.

Time management matrix can help one in one's life to manage time effectively. It is important to focus on the second quadrant that is related to development on long term basis and focusing on this quadrant in a way will help reduce the tasks in the first quadrant.

7.3.2 Techniques of Time Management

Planner System: One of the major techniques of time management is Planner System. This system can help one make most of one's time. This planner system can be in form of a diary or a notebook or any other form that one finds to be convenient. These days planners can be created on the mobile phones or computers as well. In fact, many phone companies today have planners as default apps as well. Once you adopt the planner system, it is important that at least around ten minutes of a day are kept aside to do the planning. Planner can be helpful in various ways. Planning will not only provide clear picture of the activities to be carried out in a day but will also help in preventing one from doing varied activities at wrong time in wrong

ways. Also, it will bring one's focus on the activities that need to be carried out especially on priority basis.

A planner needs the following five things:

- 1) A place where tasks can be listed and priorities can be assigned to them.
- 2) A place where notes and any follow up information can be recorded.
- 3) A place where goals and values can be mentioned.
- 4) A place where frequently referred information like addresses, phone numbers, birthdays etc. can be mentioned.
- 5) The planner needs to be flexible enough to meet one's needs.

As was mentioned earlier, the smart phones these days have the required features to enable us to plan. However, the same needs to be adequately used.

The following are the steps in planning:

Step 1: This includes developing a list of tasks that need to be carried out each day. Here all tasks that are not routine could be mentioned. For instance:

- Call Manager of the Bank. (10:30 am)
- Wish Sara on her birthday (7:30 am)
- Buy a gift for Sara. (6:30 pm)
- Meeting with Project Supervisor (11:45 am)
- Get the Assignment ready. (4:30 pm)
- Pay electricity bill (10:00 am)

Step 2: A priority letter is assigned to each task on the list created in the previous step. Here the ABC system could be used to assign priorities, where

- A: Must do items (Items/ activities that must be completed).
B: Should do items (Items/ activities that should be completed).
C: Could do items (Items/ activities that could be completed)

For instance:

- Call Manager of the Bank. (10:30 am) **A**
- Wish Sara on her birthday (7:30 am) **B**
- Buy a gift for Sara. (6:30 pm) **B**
- Meeting with Project Supervisor (11:45 am) **A**
- Get the Assignment ready. (4: 30 pm) **C**
- Pay electricity bill (10:00 am) **A**

Step 3: Now a number is to assigned to the task

For instance:

- Call Manager of the Bank. (10:30 am) **A2**
- Wish Sara on her birthday (7:30 am) **B1**
- Buy a gift for Sara. (6:30 pm) **B2**
- Meeting with Project Supervisor (11:45 am) **A1**
- Get the Assignment ready. (4:30 pm) **C1**
- Pay electricity bill (10: 00 am) **A3**

Step 4: Symbols can be assigned for the status of the tasks.

- (✓) Task has been completed. Colour coding also can be used.
- (→) When task needs to be rescheduled.
- (O) Task delegated to someone else.
- (X) Task that has been deleted.

For instance:

- Call Manager of the Bank. (10:30 am) **A2 ✓**
- Wish Sara on her birthday (7:30 am) **B1 ✓**
- Buy a gift for Sara. (6:30 pm) **B2 O**
- Meeting with Project Supervisor (11: 45 am) **A1 ×**
- Get the Assignment ready. (4: 30 pm) **C1 →**
- Pay electricity bill (10: 00 am) **A3 O**

While creating a planner, it needs to be ensured that one's goals and values are incorporated in it and that one's activities are in sync with them.

Blocking Time Wasters: Yet another way to manage time is by blocking the time wasters. There could be time wasting mails and emails. It is good idea to not let any paper work get piled up. Any time you receive a mail or an email, go through it once thoroughly and then and there decide what is to be done. Thus, they can either be filed, or responded to, passed on to someone else or disposed off if felt unimportant. Sometimes time wasters could also be people, in which case one needs to handle the situation in a delicate manner. The person can be politely and specifically asked to meet again or have a brief conversation without sounding sarcastic or accusing.

Delegation: Delegation can also be used whenever possible to manage time effectively. Delegation is nothing but assigning the task to someone else. For instance, if a manager wants a get together organized for the employees, he/ she may delegate different tasks like arranging for food, arranging for entertainment, sending out invites to the employees, to others. Most often individuals do not delegate because they feel that they will be able to do the

Stress Management

task on their own, or lack confidence in others, or they fear that the person delegated with work will take all the credit and recognition for completion of the task or they lack the skill, time or both in delegating work to others. In order to delegate effectively, one needs to trust others with responsibility. They also need to be given necessary freedom to carry out the task. Though delegation is effective in managing time, it could go wrong when there is a communication gap or blocked communication between the delegator and the delegatee or the delegator fails to follow-up or does not provide enough freedom and authority to the delegatee to complete the task. Delegation could also go wrong if the delegator is not clear in his/ her communication of the task and its requirements.

Dealing with Procrastination: We discussed about procrastination under Unit 3 that dealt with factors contributing to stress proneness. In order to manage time effectively, one also needs to deal with procrastination. Procrastination involves intentional postponement or delaying of task or activities. Some of the valid reasons why one may procrastinate could be because of stress, lack of information, caution and so on. However, one may also procrastinate due to certain inappropriate causes like uncertainty, tasks seems to be difficult to handle, perfectionism and also because one waits for things to happen rather than take the matter in one's hand. Procrastination can be dealt by as follows:

- Certain issues/problems that seem difficult can be tackled at one's body's peak time, when one is fresh in mind and body and thus alert.
- Certain tasks that appear to be difficult can be broken down into smaller tasks.
- Maintain a 'to do' list on daily basis and have a specific goal.
- Avoid perfectionism.
- Seek help from others as and when required.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What is time boxing?

- 2) List the steps in a planner.

7.4 LET US SUM UP

The present Unit is a continuation of the previous one and discusses two more techniques of stress management, namely, cognitive restructuring and time management. Cognitive restructuring can be described as a process of replacing stress provoking negative thoughts and beliefs with more constructive and realistic ones which reduces cognitive appraisal of the threat. Thus, cognitive restructuring mainly involves changing the thinking process and making it more rational and positive. In this context, the ABCDE technique was also discussed with the help of an example. The next technique discussed was time management. Effective and systematic management of time could be a key to stress management. Time is a precious resource and time management basically involves making the best use of the time that one has. It also includes planning, controlling the waste of time, implementation of various techniques to manage time as well as carrying out evaluation that can help one improve. Time management can be explained as “prioritization, scheduling and execution of responsibilities to personal satisfaction”. The time management matrix was also discussed in which there are four quadrants based on the Urgency and Importance of the task. When we say that a certain task is urgent, it means that it requires immediate attention and when we refer a task as important, it means the task in a way will contribute to our goals. Further, various techniques of time management like planner system, blocking time wasters, delegation and dealing with procrastination were also discussed.

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7.6 KEY WORDS

Cognitive restructuring: Cognitive restructuring can be described as a process of replacing stress provoking negative thoughts and beliefs with more constructive and realistic ones which reduce cognitive appraisal of the threat.

Delegation: Delegation is assigning the task to someone else.

Time management: Time management can be explained as prioritisation, scheduling and execution of responsibilities to personal satisfaction.

Time Management Matrix: In time management matrix, there are four quadrants based on the Urgency and Importance of the task.

7.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is cognitive restructuring?

Cognitive restructuring can be described as a process of replacing stress provoking negative thoughts and beliefs with more constructive and realistic ones which reduce cognitive appraisal of the threat.

- 2) State what ABCDE stand for in ABCDE technique.

A: Activating Event

B: Belief

C: Consequence

D: Disputing

E: Effect

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What is time boxing?

In time boxing, a large amount of time in a day, referred as time box, is allotted for certain tasks. For instance, time box can be allotted for writing assignments.

- 2) List the steps in a planner.

Step 1: This includes developing a list of tasks that need to be carried out each day. Here all tasks that are not routine could be mentioned.

Step 2: A priority letter is assigned to each task on the list created in the previous step.

Step 3: Now a number is to assigned to the task.

Step 4: Symbols can be assigned for the status of the tasks.

7.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss cognitive restructuring.
- 2) Explain ABCDE technique with the help of an example.
- 3) Describe time management matrix.
- 4) Discuss various techniques of time management.

UNIT 8: STRESS MANAGEMENT

TECHNIQUES III*

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Interpersonal Skills
 - 8.2.1 Effective Communication
 - 8.2.2 Self Awareness
 - 8.2.3 Emotional Intelligence
 - 8.2.4 Conflict Resolution
- 8.3 Problem Solving
- 8.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.5 References
- 8.6 Key Words
- 8.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 8.8 Unit End Questions

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to,

- describe interpersonal skills.
- discuss problem solving.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

We all carry an invisible baggage with us, baggage of failures, challenges, relationship issues, unfulfilled goals, lost opportunities and so on. With each stressful event/ situation that we experience that elicits stress, the baggage becomes larger and heavier as well. It is important that each of the issue in the baggage is dealt with and coped with at the moment so that the baggage doesn't grow large or become unmanageable. Therefore, we need to practice varied short term and long term stress management techniques that will help us deal effectively with stress so that it remains below the optimal level and does not put pressure on the individuals resources.

In the previous Units, Unit 6 and 7, we discussed about some of the techniques of stress management. In the present Unit we will discuss two more such techniques, namely interpersonal skills and problem solving.

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8.2 INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

In unit four, we discussed about how stress can have an impact on relationships. In this section we will discuss how enhancing interpersonal skills can help us manage stress. Having effective interpersonal skills will help in developing positive relationships with other individuals and this could lead to lesser conflicts and positive communication and interactions. And the outcome of this could be less stress.

The first thing though we need to do here is understand what are interpersonal skills. In simple terms interpersonal skills can be described as the behaviours and qualities that individuals display when they are interacting with others (Kerr, 2019). It is also important to note that interpersonal skills can be learned the way one can learn to swim or ride a bicycle, but they require complete commitment and willingness on the part of the individual.

Let us now discuss some of the interpersonal skills that will help us deal with stress.

8.2.1 Effective Communication

One of the most important aspect of interpersonal skills is developing effective communication. The word communication has been derived from a Latin term '*communis*', meaning common/ sharing (Charlton and Charles 1879). Communication can be described as a process that is continuous in nature and involves give and take of information. There are necessarily two parties in the communication process who have the ability to convey the information as well as listen. Feedback is an integral part of effective communication and the message that is communicated can be verbal (example: written or spoken) or it could be nonverbal (example: by means of symbols, signs or gestures).

Let us now discuss some of the important aspects of effective communication

Active listening: Active listening denotes listening by paying full attention to what the other person has to say. One can be active listener by following the ways given below:

- To be an active listener, you need to stop talking and start listening.
- You need to put the speaker/other person at ease.
- The speaker /other person needs to feel or sense that you are willing to listen and are paying full attention to what he/ she wants to say.
- Empathise with the speaker/other person.
- Display patience.
- Manage your emotions as you listen to what the speaker/other person has to say.
- Ask questions wherever you need to clarify. And use paraphrasing wherever required.

- Ensure mutual understanding.
- Pay attention to the nonverbal behaviour of the speaker/ other person.
- Be nonjudgmental and keep an open mind while listening.
- Be conscious of your own nonverbal behaviour and maintain eye contact and a relaxed posture.

Open to feedback: Communication is a two-way process and unless one is open to feedback, he/ she will not know whether the information/ message communicated by him/ her has actually been received and understood by the other person(s)/ party/ receiver(s). This is an important aspect of effective communication and one needs to be open to feedback in order to ensure effective communication. When interacting with others, it would be a healthy habit to seek and be open to feedback.

Paying attention to nonverbal behaviours: In communication, it is important that we pay attention to nonverbal behaviours of others, as well as, be conscious about our own nonverbal behaviour. Nonverbal behaviour includes expression of feelings, emotions, opinions and so on through facial expressions, gestures or bodily movements. Thus, from maintaining eye contact to the way one stands or folds his/ her arms can all convey some information. Some of the positive nonverbal behaviours include maintaining regular eye contact, nodding one's head when agreeing with what is being said, leaning slightly forward as an indication of paying attention or showing interest in what is being said and so on. Some of the negative nonverbal behaviours include avoiding eye contact, excessive yawning thus denoting lack of interest, slumped shoulders or head down denoting lack of confidence and so on.

Managing communication barriers: There are various barriers to communication that need to be identified and dealt with effectively. These barriers can be categorised into physical, psychological and cultural barriers. Examples of these barriers have been stated in table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Barriers to Communication		
Physical Barriers	Psychological Barriers	Cultural Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distractions/ Disturbance/ Noise • Geographical distance • Poor timing while speaking • Channel of communication is not appropriate. • Information is inadequate • Overload of information • Breakdown of communication network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semantic barriers • Perceptual distortions and biases • Affective state • Words with multiple meanings • Lack of feedback • Preconceived notions • Halo effect • Closed mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Demographic factors like age, gender and so on. • Stereotype • Prejudices

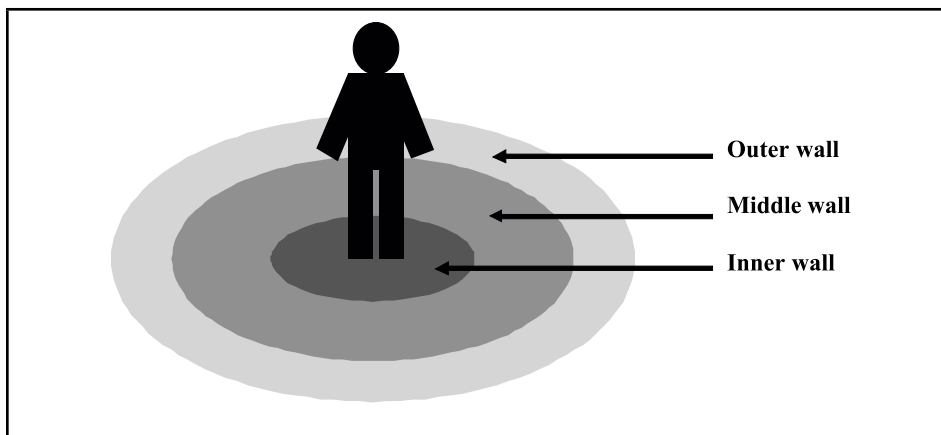
These barriers can be dealt with effectively in following ways:

- Ensure that there are no (or minimum) distractions/ disturbances and noise so that the information can be easily communicated.
- Information communicated needs to be clear, brief as well as precise.
- Simple and meaningful language to be used.
- Avoid any miscommunication by choosing words carefully.
- Improve one's listening skills and also seek feedback.
- Appropriate communication channel needs to be selected.
- Use instruments/ aids for communication that are in good shape and work properly.
- Have the right attitude, avoid any preconceived notions and be nonjudgmental.
- Develop effective speaking and writing skills.
- Improve one's sense of timing while speaking.
- Manage emotions effectively.
- Repeat information as and when required.

For maintaining effective communication, you also need to avoid behaviours like being distracted while listening to others or while communicating with others, not providing any response and adequate feedback, putting others down, interrupting others while they speak, being judgmental and overly critical and so on.

Personal Space: This can be termed as an imaginary bubble around an individual, that denotes the distance that the individual is comfortable when interacting with others. As can be seen in figure 8.1, each one of us will have this imaginary bubble around us. And this bubble has three walls, the inner wall, the middle wall and the outer wall. As and when we interact with others, we will do so by maintaining certain distance with them and this distance will depend on the relationship that we have with these people. For instance, when we are interacting with our family member, we may do so within our internal wall (intimate zone), as shown in figure 8.2 (a). Where as when interacting with our colleagues, whom we know quite well, we may do so within the middle wall, but outside the inner wall (personal zone), as shown in figure 8.2 (b) and when we are having a formal interaction, say with a stranger, then we will do so in outer wall, outside the middle wall (business zone), as shown in figure 8.2 (c). Personal space may vary not only on the basis of formality of relationship, but also on the basis of age, gender, and other aspects of the other person as well as on the situation. Further, culture can also have an impact on personal space of an individual. We naturally tend to maintain this personal bubble as and when we interact with others. Therefore, it is important to be aware of one's own personal space as well as that of others when engaging in communication with others as any intrusion in personal space can make the other person uncomfortable and communication can get hindered.

Fig. 8.1: Personal Space



8.2.2 Self Awareness

Self awareness is yet another relevant aspect in order to enhance one's interpersonal skills. Before we look outside, we need to look within us and be aware about one's potentialities and weaknesses. Crisp and Turner (2010, pg. 2) define self awareness as "realisation of oneself as an individual entity". In simple terms it can be described as the extent of awareness about one's own feelings, thoughts and behaviours. It is very important that one is aware not only about one's strengths and weakness but also opportunities and threats.

In the context of self awareness, we can discuss about the JOHARI window (refer to figure 8.3).

Fig.: 8.2: Different Zones of Personal Space

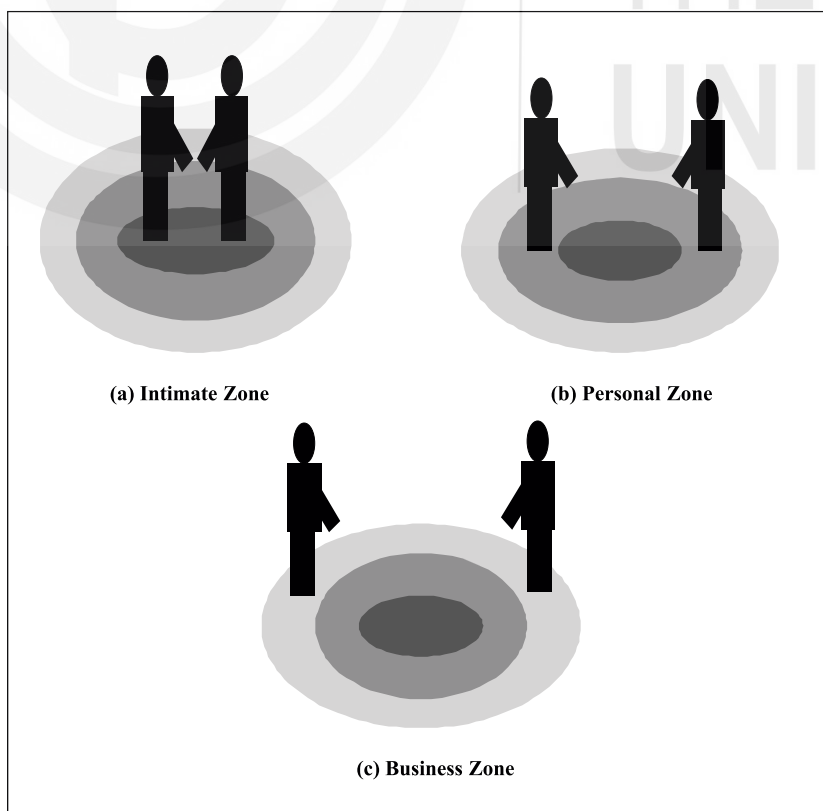
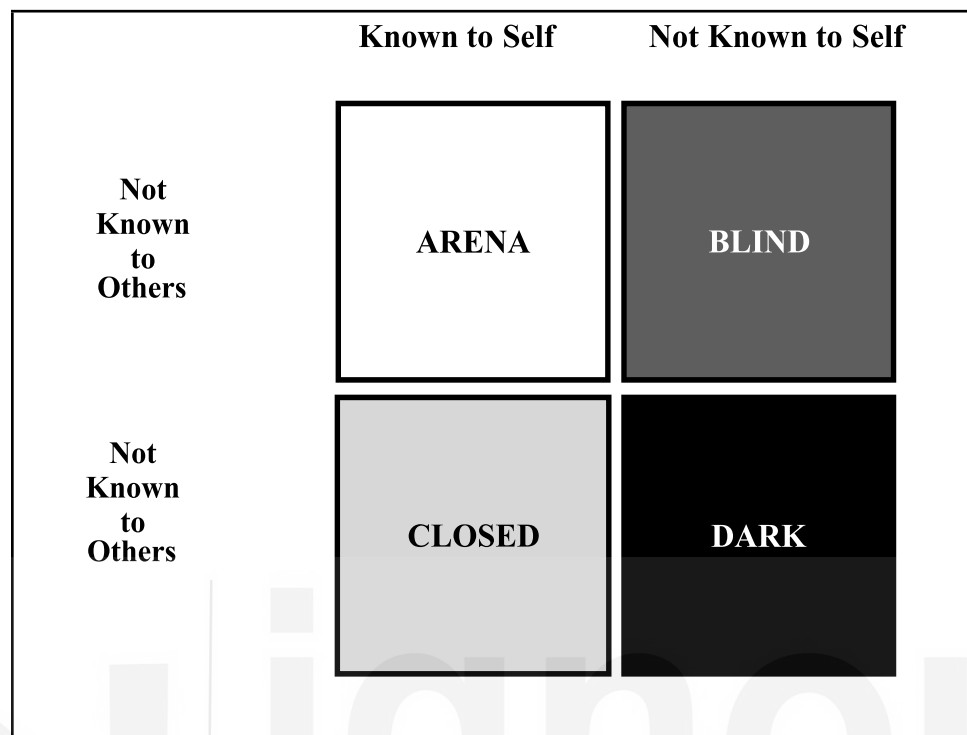


Fig. 8.3: JOHARI Window



Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham were two American Psychologists who developed JOHARI window. The name of this window is in fact a combination of their names Joe and Harry. It is also referred to as Disclosure/ Feedback Model of Self Awareness. The window can be used to see how an individual represents his/ her feelings, views, attitudes and so on in relation to others. As can be seen in the figure 8.3, there are four windows. The first window is 'Arena' that represents, information, views, attitudes, feelings that are known to self as well as known to others. The second window is 'Closed' that represents, information, views, attitudes, feelings that are known to self but not known to others. The third window is 'Blind' that represents, information, views, attitudes, feelings that are not known to self but known to others. And the fourth window is 'Dark' represents, information, views, attitudes, feelings that are not known to self as well as not known to others. Though in the figure 8.3, all the windows are of equal size, in reality they may not be equal and there could be some individuals with larger Arena window than other windows and there could be others with larger Closed window and so on. You may have come across persons who may not share much about self, such people will have larger Closed window. On the other hand, there could be individuals who may not be aware about his/ her own behaviour as others do about them and such individuals will have larger Blind window.

In order to have positive interpersonal relationships we need to not only develop self awareness but suitably engage in appropriate self disclosure.

Self awareness with reference to one's stress is also important and one needs to be aware or needs to be able to identify what is causing stress in him/ her, the effect of stress and so on.

Box 8.1: Exercise: Questions to cultivate self awareness about your stress

- 1) What event (s)/ situation (s) causes stress in you?

- 2) What is the source of stress experienced by you (frustration, conflict of motives, pressure)?

- 3) What are the symptoms experienced by you?

- 4) What are the beliefs displayed by you when experiencing stress? Are these rational or irrational?

- 5) What coping strategy/ies do you think you adopt?

- 6) What stress management techniques do you find effective while dealing with your stress?

8.2.3 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence can also be termed as an aspect of interpersonal skills that can help in dealing with stress. Emotional intelligence can be described as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, pg. 189). In 1997, the definition was modified and emotional intelligence was defined as “the ability to (a) perceive emotions, (b) use emotions to facilitate thought, (c) understand emotions, and (d) manage emotions” (Brackett and Salovey, 2006, pg. 34). Emotional intelligence can simply be explained as a process that involves recognising, using, understanding and managing one’s own emotions as well as those of others (Brackett and Salovey, 2006). Though the concept of emotional intelligence was developed by Salovey and Mayer, it mainly gained popularity when the book “Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ” was published by Goleman in 1995. Goleman stated five main components of emotional intelligence that are discussed as follows:

Self awareness: We discussed earlier about self awareness. This is one of the components of emotional intelligence that can help an individual identify and manage his/ her emotions effectively.

Self regulation: This mainly denotes the self control that an individual has in expressing one’s emotions. This is important as when we are not able to control our emotions, it can lead to impaired reasoning and the outcome can be detrimental.

Self motivation: Individuals need to be driven by internal forces rather than external forces as when an individual is self motivated he/ she will pursue the goal with much more enthusiasm, energy and passion.

Empathy: We need to empathise with others and by empathy we mean we need to comprehend the emotions and feelings displayed by others.

Social skills: Social skills can help build and maintain positive interpersonal relationships.

Thus, in order to develop one's emotional intelligence, one needs to focus on the above components. He/ she will need to enhance his/ her self awareness, cultivate self regulation, motivate oneself, learn to empathise with others and develop social skills.

As you may notice, most of these concepts (like self awareness and empathy) have been discussed earlier in this Unit as well, which indicates the relevance and interconnectedness between these varied concepts. Thus, self awareness in itself is also relevant as it is relevant to enhance one's emotional intelligence and empathy is relevant in the context of communication as well as in emotional intelligence. Developing one's social skills will also enhance overall communication and interaction with others.

8.2.4 Conflict Resolution

Interpersonal relationships can be majorly hindered by interpersonal conflicts. Thus, conflict resolution is relevant when we discuss about interpersonal skills. In simple terms conflict can be explained as some kind of incompatibility between two or more parties. The parties here can be two or more individuals, could be colleagues, couples, groups or even nations. Though our focus in this Unit is mainly on interpersonal conflict that can occur between individuals.

Conflict resolution denotes ways in which conflict can be dealt with or resolved. Some of the conflict resolution strategies include:

Avoiding: This denotes withdrawal from conflict. Though, in this case the actual conflict may not resolve. But individuals may use this when they feel that confrontation or engaging in conflict is not worthwhile and the discomfort that they may experience while in conflict is much more than when they avoid it.

Competing: This is used by individuals who engage in conflict necessarily to win. This is a win- lose situation. Individuals using this may display assertiveness but not cooperation.

Accommodating: In this case, the individual is cooperative and not assertive. Though, this again may not be healthy as one of the parties may just give in and as such the conflict remains unresolved. This is a loose- win strategy.

Collaborating: In this, individuals are assertive as well as cooperative and the parties may come up with an agreed solution to resolve the conflict. This can also be termed as win-win strategy.

Compromising: In this each of the party will compromise in some way. Thus, there is partial cooperation and assertiveness. And though, the parties may not be completely satisfied, they are not dissatisfied as well.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is Communication?

2) List the cultural barriers to communication.

3) State the three walls of personal space or bubble?

4) What is self awareness?

5) List the five components of emotional intelligence.

6) List the conflict resolution strategies

8.3 PROBLEM SOLVING

Yet another technique that can be used to manage stress is problem solving. In simple terms it can be described as a process where we seek solution to a problem at hand.

It can also be explained as a mental process that includes discovery, analysis of the problem in order to find a solution for it (Cherry, 2019). Mayer (2013) described problem solving as a cognitive process that involves attempts to achieve a goal, with no idea about how the goal can be achieved. As per this definition, a problem is faced when an individual comes across an obstacle which he/ she is not able to tackle and thus he/ she cannot reach the goal.

Problems can be categorised into the following:

Routine problems and non-routine problems: Routine problems can be described as problems for which immediate solution is available. Whereas, a non-routine problem is a problem for which solution is not easily or immediately available and thus, analysis needs to be carried out.

Well-defined and ill-defined or poorly defined problems: Well-defined problems have goals that are clear and further the problem can also be divided into sub goals. On the other hand, for ill-defined problems, the goal is not clear and specific.

Problem solving process mainly involves identification of problem, brainstorming for ideas and solutions, selecting a solution and implementing the plan of action and reflecting on the effectiveness of the solution. And these can also be termed as steps in problem solving that are discussed as follows:

Step 1 - Identification of problem: This is the first step involved in problem solving, where the problem needs to be identified and defined. At this stage focus should also be on what actually is causing the problem. The situation is thus diagnosed and the focus is not just on the symptoms. One can devote some time to this process and even a description about the problem can be written down. Individual can also ask certain questions to himself/ herself, like, what exactly is the problem? when does it take place? and where? Can any situation or person (though blaming needs to be avoided) be identified who may be associated with the problem? what is his/ her thinking pattern, emotions and feelings as a result of experiencing the problem? This step helps the individual become more and more aware about the problem.

Step 2 - Brainstorming for ideas and solutions: This is the second step in problem-solving process, where, once the problem is defined (and is thus clear), the individual can now try and identify possible solutions for the problem. While doing so, cues can also be taken from the way the individual sorted his/ her problems effectively in the past and help can also be sought from significant others in the individual's life.

Step 3 - Selecting a solution: Once the individual has possible solutions, he/she can then select a solution that he/ she feels is appropriate to solve the problem. While doing so the individual needs to look at the solution realistically and also think about what feelings and emotions will be generated if particular solutions are used. Further, the possible consequences, both positive and negative, also need to be focused on. It is also important to focus on the individual's resources that may be required to implement the solution along with consideration of any other issues that may arise if the solution is implemented.

Step 4 - Implementing the plan: Once the problem as well as the solution is identified, it is time to implement the solution and work accordingly in direction of solving the problem.

Step 5 - Reflecting on the effectiveness of the solution: During this the individual needs to reflect on whether the solution selected by him/ her has given positive results or not and whether the problem was resolved. Further, if any lacunae or loopholes were noticed in the implementation of the solution, the same can also be focused on.

Since the concept of problem solving and the steps in problem solving are clear, let us discuss about the strategies of problem solving as given below:

Trial and error: One way in which problems can be dealt is by trial and error. Here the individual will keep on trying varied solutions till he/ she is able to solve the problem. This strategy can be time consuming.

Heuristics: Heuristics can be explained as rules of thumb that are used in order to obtain easy and fast solutions. Though, the solution derived may not be the most adequate or appropriate to solve the problem. In a way, heuristics can also be referred to as mental shortcuts that minimise the investment of time as well as attention.

Algorithm: This mainly involves stepwise approach to solving the problem. Using this strategy will maximise the chances that the solution selected will be adequate and appropriate. Though, this strategy may be time consuming and may involve numerous steps.

Insight: During problem solving process, individuals may have an insight, where solution may suddenly occur.

Thus, problem solving as well can be used effectively to deal with stress.

In the second block of this course, we discussed about various stress management techniques. Based on the nature of stress experienced by you, you can decide which techniques help you deal with stress effectively. One needs to use both short term and long term techniques to deal with stress.

Besides the various techniques discussed, it is also important to seek adequate social support and ask for help as and when required. Further, it is also important to maintain a healthy lifestyle including healthy food habits, regular exercise and diet. Also unhealthy coping and unhealthy lifestyle need to be avoided. It is also important to pursue one's hobbies and interest and take regular breaks from one's busy schedule for self.

As responsible human beings it is important to be sensitive to stress experienced by others and to lend a listening ear and a helping hand as and when required.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) List the steps in problem solving process.

8.4 LET US SUM UP

To summarise, in the present Unit we discussed about two more stress management techniques, namely, interpersonal skills and problem solving. We discussed how enhancing interpersonal skills can help us manage stress. Having effective interpersonal skills will help in developing positive relationship with other individuals and this could lead to lesser conflicts and positive communication and interactions. And the outcome of this could be less stress. In simple terms interpersonal skills can be described as the

behaviours and qualities that individuals display when they are interacting with others. Various interpersonal skills that could help us deal with effectively stress were discussed including effective communication, self awareness, emotional intelligence and conflict resolution. Communication can be described as a process that is continuous in nature and involves give and take of information. There are necessarily two parties in the communication process who have the ability to convey the information as well as listen. Some of the relevant aspects of effective communication include active listening, open to feedback, paying attention to non verbal behaviour, managing communication barriers and personal space. These were also discussed in detail in the present Unit. The second skill discussed was self awareness. Before we look outside, we need to look within us and be aware about one's potentialities and weaknesses. In simple terms it can be described as the extent of awareness about one's own feelings, thoughts and behaviours. In this context the JOHARI window was also discussed with the help of a figure. The next skill that was discussed was emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence can also be termed as an aspect of interpersonal skill that can help in dealing with stress. Emotional intelligence can simply be explained as a process that involves recognising, using, understanding and managing one's own emotions as well as those of others. Goleman stated five main components of emotional intelligence, namely, self awareness, self regulation, self motivation, empathy and social skills. The last skill discussed under interpersonal skills was conflict resolution. Interpersonal relationships can be majorly hindered by interpersonal conflicts. Thus, conflict resolution is relevant when we discuss about interpersonal skills. Conflict can be explained as some kind of incompatibility between two or more parties. And conflict resolution denotes ways in which conflict can be dealt with or resolved. Some of the conflict resolution strategies include avoiding, competing, accommodating, collaborating and compromising. Yet another technique of stress management that was discussed in this Unit was problem solving. Problem solving can be described as a process where we seek solution to a problem at hand. It can also be explained as a mental process that includes discovery, analysis of the problem in order to find a solution for it. Problems can be categorised into routine and non-routine problems and well-defined and ill-defined or poorly defined problems. The steps in problem solving include identification of problem, brainstorming for ideas and solutions, selecting a solution and implementing the plan of action and reflecting on the effectiveness of the solution. Strategies of problem solving, namely, trial and error, heuristics, algorithm and insight were also briefly discussed.

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8.6 KEYWORDS

Active listening: Active listening denotes listening by paying full attention to what the other person has to say.

Communication: Communication can be described as a process that is continuous in nature and involves give and take of information.

Conflict: Conflict can be explained as some kind of incompatibility between two or more parties. The parties here can be two or more individuals, could be colleagues, couples, groups or even nations.

Conflict resolution: Conflict resolution denotes ways in which conflict can be dealt with or resolved.

Emotional Intelligence: Emotional intelligence can be described as the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.

Interpersonal Skills: Interpersonal skills can be described as the behaviours and qualities that individuals display when they are interacting with others.

Nonverbal behaviour: Nonverbal behaviour includes expression of feelings, emotions, opinions and so on through facial expressions, gestures or bodily movements.

Personal Space: This can be termed as an imaginary bubble around an individual, that denotes the distance that the individual is comfortable when interacting with others.

Problem solving: Problem solving is a mental process that includes discovery, analysis of the problem in order to find a solution for it.

Self awareness: Self awareness can be described as the extent of awareness about one's own feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

8.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) What is Communication?

Communication can be described as a process that is continuous in nature and involves give and take of information.

- 2) List the cultural barriers to communication.

The cultural barriers to communication are:

- Language
- Demographic factors like age, gender and so on.
- Stereotype
- Prejudices

- 3) State the three walls of personal space or bubble?

The three walls of personal space or bubble are, inner wall, the middle wall and the outer wall.

- 4) What is self awareness?

Self awareness can be described as the extent of awareness about one's own feelings, thoughts and behaviours.

- 5) List the five components of emotional intelligence.

The five components of emotional intelligence are:

- Self awareness
- Self regulation
- Self motivation
- Empathy
- Social skills

6) List the conflict resolution strategies.

The conflict resolution strategies are:

- Avoiding
- Competing
- Accommodating
- Collaboration
- Compromising

Check Your progress II

1) List the steps in problem solving process.

Step 1 Identification of problem

Step 2 Brainstorming for ideas and solutions

Step 3 Selecting a solution

Step 4 Implementing the plan

Step 5 Reflecting on the effectiveness of the solution

8.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss in detail communication as a component of interpersonal skills.
- 2) Explain personal bubble.
- 3) Discuss self awareness with a focus on JOHARI window.
- 4) Define emotional intelligence and discuss its five components.
- 5) Describe conflict resolution strategies.
- 6) Explain problem solving with a focus on its steps and strategies.

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MPDD/IGNOU/P.O. 10K/January, 2021



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ISBN : 978-93-90773-49-7