

Stress Management: An Ayurvedic Insight

A Review Article

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ABSTRACT

Stress: a very common term nowadays. In this wired world people are desperate to “Disconnect to Connect” from outer virtual world to inner real one. Stress has been postulated to be involved in the aetiopathogenesis of a variety of diseases ranging from psychiatric disorders like depression, anxiety, immuno-suppression as well physical disorders like diabetes mellitus, peptic ulcer, hypertension. Stress imparts a negative impression to mental health directly or indirectly. According to the WHO [world health organisation] mental health accounts for global loss of productivity worth \$1 trillion annually. Several studies have explored the connection between stress and entire health.

‘The World Health Organization says stress has become a ‘World Wide Epidemic.’

Westernization, modern and sedentary lifestyle, tech-addiction, cut throat competitions, social media exposure leads young generations more prone to stress. Loneliness can manifest as low self-esteem, lack of motivation, social withdrawal, ultimately shrinks their own presence, dim their own light and identity. Stressed people with loneliness are desperate for conversation with themselves as well their near dear ones. It's not technology but biology too likely for the early onset of puberty, hormonal disbalances, pre-menopause blues that accounts for stress.

From ayurvedic perspective, stress management is focused on relieving the stress from the nervous system to calm and relax the entire body. Ayurveda advocates lifestyle modification like balanced diet, yoga, pranayam, meditation along with various therapies like Panchakarma including oleation with medicated oils, swedan process [fomentation] of expulsion of toxins through steam. Massage rejuvenation through medicated oil, shirodhara nervous destressing through a rhythmic flow of medicated oil on the forehead and other therapies in order to breakout of cocoon of stress. Ayurveda offers a holistic approach for stress management. In process of rejuvenation intake of ‘rasayan’ is to increase the coping capacity of the body enhancing the immunity. Several medicinal value herbs as well rasayan provides stress attenuating effects. Stress deciding factors for a variety of diseases ranging from psychiatric disorders like depression, anxiety, immunosuppression influencing mental health, as well physical disorders like diabetes mellitus, peptic ulcer, hypertension. The emergence of these diseases is an alarming sign for the health sector in the last two decades.

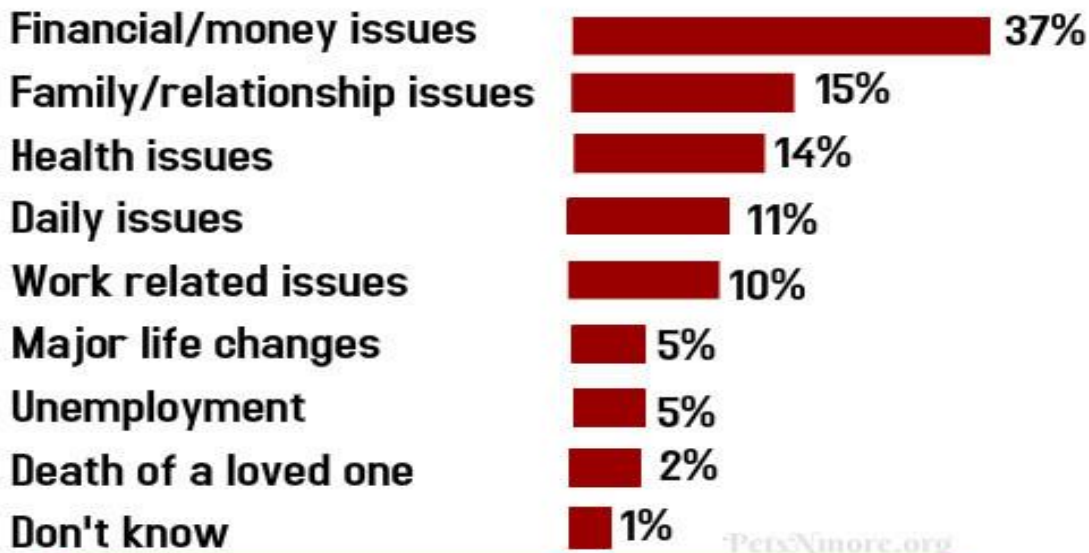
KEY-WORDS: *Stress, Tech- addiction, Ayurveda management, Shirodhara, Rasayan,*

Stress: Scientists speculate that the secret of centenarians is a healthy lifestyle which is the determinant of healthy life span. In medical or biological context stress is a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. In Ayurveda it is known as "sahasa". 'Sahasa' by causing ojakshay (loss of immunity) enhances susceptibility of the body to

various disorders. Recent studies reveal that when there is a surge of stress, we release hormones which in turn suppress our immune system.

Stressors: defined as a stimulus or event that provokes a stress response in an organism

Main Reasons for Stress in Adults



Financial monetary issues are the most likely cause of general stress for adults. This is particularly true for those aged 35-54 (40%), those with a mortgage (49%) and those with overwhelming debt (69%).

FIGURE 1: STRESSORS

CAUSES:

Stress levels directly or indirectly influenced by our personality, behaviour and Lifestyle in the present scenario.

1. Cumulative effect of various toxic waste products in environment.
2. Emotional stress triggered by 3- A's : Aggression, Anger, Anxiety.
fear ultimately kindles the body's stress response.
3. Westernization and sedentary lifestyle.
4. At the workplace cut throat competitions in corporates, overburden of targets.
5. Tech addiction: excessive use of smartphones and social media exposure leads the younger generation to be more prone to stress.
6. Financial insecurity.

7. Unhealthy diet, excess of alcohol or smoking.
8. Lifestyle choices interrupted sleep, caffeine, nicotine, overloaded schedule.
9. Negative thinking: pessimism, self-criticism, over analysing, unrealistic expectations.
10. Stressful personality traits: perfectionist, workaholic

STRESS STATISTICS:

Statistics and compiled data reveal that stress levels seem to be high in India compared to other countries, both developed and emerging. In India, in a survey about 89% of the population accepted that they are suffering from stress compared to the global average of 86%. Nearly 75% of respondents expressed ignorance about their stress levels. According to the world health organisation(WHO) depression is among the leading causes of disability worldwide. These stress related facts and data are compiled by the association of the global organization for stress management and stress relief. Annual reports of corporates reveal that 80% of workers are experiencing stress at their workplace. According to stress statistics 2019, 23% of them described their stress levels were high, while 6% said their levels of stress were unreasonably high.

Several studies have explored the connection between a person’s workplace and mental health. According to ASSOCHAM, nearly 5% of corporation employees sleep less than 6 hours due to high stress levels. Insatiable quest for more -a kind of inadequacy syndrome responsible for high stress level.

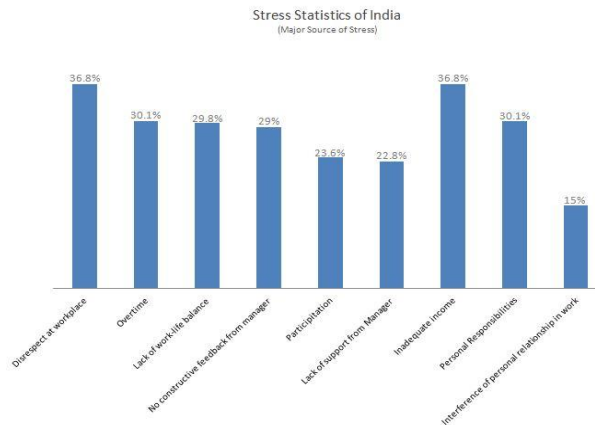


FIGURE 2:STRESS STATISTICS IN INDIA

Study conducted at Brigham young university published a paper for social relationship and mortality risk and found 30% increased risk of having stroke or developing coronary artery disease CAD for persons without strong social bonds.

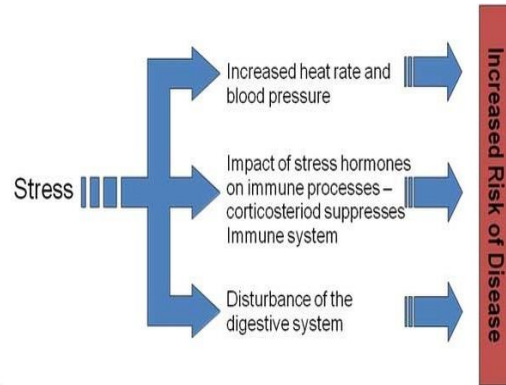


FIGURE3: STRESS INDUCED DISORDERS

STRESS ON FEMALES

Working women feel more stressed due to their multi-tasking lifestyle balancing between personal and professional life. Especially emotional stress due to less attention for their kids and family. There is hardly any gender difference but as per study published in the psychiatry journal, though had demonstrated greater incidence among women.

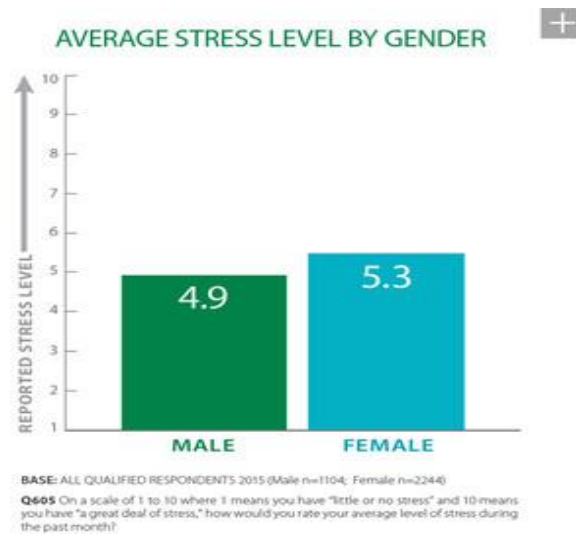


FIGURE 4: STRESS GENDER RATIO

STRESS IN YOUNG GENERATION:

Statistics from various health agencies and a 2016 CSDS-Lokniti survey indicate that around 4 out of 10 youngsters felt regular or occasional depression or stress. Stress in students and young generation is due to Indian education system which is more inclined towards memorization and systematic study hours and no time for recreational activities, and socialization which curbs child development. Fear of failure as well setting goal for results par excellence enhances anxiety among students which has substantial negative effects on their academic and social success. Hostel students are particularly vulnerable to depression due to vacuum created by absence of family.

TECH-ADDICTION:

Exposure to social media also affects stress levels. In society so many screens staring victim suffer from fluctuating stress levels. Researches conducted at Centre for digital health in university of Pennsylvania concluded that Tech-addiction leads to loneliness which can be defined as discrepancy between a person's desired and actual social relationship. Fondness of teenagers for virtual games distracting them from studies as well sedentary life affecting their outdoor lives.

STRESS TYPES:

External:

Environment

Psychological

Social situations

Internal

Illness

Medical procedure.

Management Framework:

“ Expression of depression instead of its suppression “ first mantra towards curing stress. To combat stress at workplace essence lies in limiting your ambitions, need for perfection slows progress and triggers stress so keep checks on beyond limits tasks. Conflict mitigation is an art, conflict avoidance is a potential minefield that can suck away inner peace so skip tough conversation to avoid stress. Communication is key to release stress rather than bottling up feelings confiding in colleagues or family members. Stressed students should express their feelings about examination pressures to their teachers. Parents should shield them from their own unfulfilled dreams as well society norms. At workplace in corporate sector mental health sessions to tackle underperformance and emotional confusions should be conducted regularly to extend compassion. Cut the stigma: availing sick leave, best way to stroll around green eco zones to lift up spirit and improve work environment. Psychiatrist at the National Institute of mental health and neurosciences NIMHANS Bengaluru's researched about interpersonal relationship and psychosomatic symptoms. Emotional trauma culminates into irreparable loss and stress may be due to sudden demise of near dear ones or broken affairs. In such cases stress level are so high that often lack of confidence and desire for life get lost. So, realisation for selflove and self-worth is first n foremost step for speedy recovery.

Management through Ayurveda;

From ayurvedic perspective stress management is focused on relieving the stress from the nervous system, calm and relax the entire body by regulating vata dosh. Ayurveda reveals its infinite dimensions by advocating to embrace the concept of complete regime in which lifestyle modification like balanced diet, yoga, pranayama, meditation, immunity boosters, stress reduction technique or various therapies like panchakarma helps in extending the stress free average lifespan .Ideal way is to enhance coping capacity and the immunity level of the body as well as avoiding stress rationally the best approach is to hit at the root cause, and this is particularly ideal strategy in stress-management. Ayurveda offers a holistic approach which triggers production of stress fighting hormones. In the process of rejuvenation, intake of "rasayan" enhances the coping capacity of the body enhancing the immunity. Several medicinal value herbs like ashwagandha, Brahmi, shatavari, amrita,

shankhpushpi, haritaki, jatamansi provides stress attenuating effects by reducing oxidative stress as well by regulation of cardio-respiratory, soothing nervous system, improve the endocrine glands / hormonal balance, which are closely connected to emotional balance in the mind. "rasayan" as stress reducing agent have antioxidant, immunomodulator, hepatoprotective, antidepressant and anxiolytic effects in various experimental and clinical studies.

THERAPIES IN STRESS MANAGEMENT;

Panchkarma

SHIRODHARA

Nervous de-stressing through a rhythmic flow of medicated oil on the forehead is effective for anxiety neurosis, insomnia and depression.

ABHYANG: massage and rejuvenation through medicated oil local application and provides soothing effect and relaxation.

SWEDAN is a procedure which expels out toxins through herbal steam. A kind of overall detoxification process to make the body cool and calm. There are so many other procedures especially in the south in well-equipped clinics and panchakarma centres for stress management.

Surya namaskar

[sun salutation]

Sun– the ultimate source of life and energy. One such practice is the yogic sequence surya namaskar constituting of 12 postures, it is a form of expressing gratitude to the ultimate source of all life on earth. All the asanas carried out in surya namaskar focus on different muscle groups and nerve centres called chakras. This helps tone almost all your body . ultimate asana with multifaceted benefits...

1. Ensures entire physical as well mental fitness.
2. Provides deep conscious relaxation to the body and mind.
3. Enhances skin radiance.
4. Metabolism regulation.
5. Complete detoxification.
6. Ensures digestive system as well regular menstrual cycle.
7. Regulation of blood sugar level.
8. Lowers the stress level
9. Regulate anxiety level combat with insomnia.

Meditation

Meditation in simple terms means a one-point focus. either focusing on your breath, one single thought, chanting mantra, or silence or our body movement. explore different kinds of meditation. Meditation requires staying still for extended periods of time. The main purpose of any spiritual practices or meditation to cultivate self-awareness to a deeper level and has the potential to connect you with your inner self. Science-based benefits of meditation that rewire your brain.

1. Reduces stress: meditation is the best way to reduce stress.
2. Controls anxiety: less stress translates to less anxiety.
3. Promotes emotional health.
4. Enhances self-awareness.
5. Lengthens attention span. enhances longevity.
6. May reduce age-related memory loss like dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Many renowned personalities owed their success to a few minutes of meditation. Eminent personalities when ever felt depressed due to ups and downs in career expressed the positive views about meditation. Various researches reveal science-backed benefits of meditation. Meditation concerns about the psychological and physiological effects of meditation. It's an in-built intelligence of our body that directs us to eat, digest, absorb, assimilate, sleep, secrete hormones at a specific time of the day. Meditation helps in maintaining circadian rhythm.

CONCLUSION

In present scenario in various diseases oxidative stress are implicated in the etiopathogenesis, Ayurveda it's medicinal value herbs therapies as well rasayana have excellent results by promoting serotonin level which provides feeling of long-term happiness and contentment. In scientific terminology, rasayana are known to have antioxidant, immunomodulator, antidepressant, anxiolytic, antiulcer activity, According to Ayurveda

"prasasta-dhatu-jana katwe sat Jara-vyadhi-nivarttakatwam rasayanatwam-iti laksanam.

According to Ayurveda rasayan provides stress free mental status, sharp memory, intellectual functioning, perseverance, ability to proceed steadfastly against all odds. Compilation of proper scientific evidence and extensive research according to literature mentioned in ancient text are still required for their widespread acceptance.

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