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“STRESS MANGEMENT”

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Abstract:

The condition of Stress has two components : Physical involving direct material or bodily challenge, and psychological, involving how individuals perceive circumstances in their lives (Lovallo, 2005). These components can be examined in three ways. One approach focuses on the environment : Stress is seen as a stimulus, as when we have a demanding job or experience severe pain from arthritis or a death in the family.

KEYWORDS:

Stress Mangement ,condition of Stress ,psychologically challenging .

INTRODUCTION

Physically or psychologically challenging events or circumstances are called stressors. The second approach treats stress as a response, focusing on people's reactions to stressors. The psychological and physiological response to a stressor is called strain.

The third approach describes stress as a process that includes stressors and strains, but adds an important dimensions : The relationship between the person and environment (Lazarus, 1999). This process involves continuous interactions and adjustments – called transactions with the person and environment each affecting and being affected by the other. According to this view, stress is not just a stimulus or a response, but rather a process in which the person is an active agent who can influence the impact of a stressor through behavioral, cognitive and emotional strategies.

REDUCING STRESS REACTIONS : STRESS MANAGEMENT :-

People acquire coping skills through their experiences, which may involve strategies they have tried in the past or methods they have seen others use. But sometimes the skills they have learned are not adequate for a current stressor because it is so strong, novel, or unrelenting. When people can not cope effectively, they need help in learning new and adaptive ways of managing stress. The term Stress Management refers to any program of behavioral and cognitive techniques that is designed to reduce psychological and physical reactions to stress. Sometimes people use pharmaceutical approaches under medical supervision to reduce emotions, such as anxiety, that accompany stress.

MEDICATION :-

One of the many types of drugs doctors prescribe to help patients manage stress, we will be consider two : benzodiazepines and beta – blockers, both of which reduce physiological arousal and feelings of anxiety (AMA, 2003). Benzodiazepines, which include drugs with the trade names Valium and

Xanax, activate a neurotransmitter that decreases neural transmission in the central nervous system. Beta – blockers, such as Inderal, are used to reduce anxiety and blood pressure. They block the activity stimulated by adrenaline and noradrenaline in the peripheral nervous system. Beta – blockers cause less drowsiness than benzodiazepines, probably because they act on the peripheral rather than central nervous system. Although many people use drugs for long term control of stress and emotions, using drugs for stress should be a temporary measure. For instance, they might be used during an acute crisis, such as in the week or two following the death of a loved one, or while the patient learns new psychological methods for coping.

BEHAVIORAL AND COGNITIVE METHODS :-

Psychologists have developed methods they can train people to use in coping with stress. Some of these techniques focus mainly on the person’s behavior, and some emphasize the person’s thinking processes. People who use these methods usually find them helpful.

(a) Relaxation :-

The opposite of arousal is relaxation – so relaxing should be a good way to reduce stress. Actually, relaxing when under stress is not so hard to do when you know how. One way people can learn to control their feelings of tension is called progressive muscle relaxation, in which they focus their attention on specific muscle groups while alternately tightening and relaxing these muscles (Sarafino, 2001).

The idea of teaching people to relax their skeletal muscles to reduce psychological stress was introduced many years ago by Edmund Jacobson (1938). He found that muscle tension could be reduced much more if individuals were taught to pay attention to the sensations as they tense and relax individual groups of muscles.

Although today there are various versions of the progressive muscle relaxation technique, they each outline a sequence of muscle groups for the person to follow. For example, the sequence might begin with the person relaxing the hands, then the forehead, followed by the lower face, the neck, the stomach and finally the legs. For each muscle group, the person first tenses the muscles for 7 – 10 seconds, and then relaxes them for about 15 seconds, paying attention to how the muscles feel. This is usually repeated for the same muscle group two or three times in a relaxation session, which generally lasts 20 or 30 minutes. The tensing action is mainly important while the person is being trained and can be eliminated after he or she has mastered the technique (Sarafino, 2001). Relaxation works besting a quiet, non-distracting setting with the person lying down or sitting on comfortable furniture.

(b) Systematic Desensitization :-

Systematic Desensitization is useful method for reducing fear and anxiety. This method is based on the view that fears are learned by classical conditioning – that is by associating a situation or object with an unpleasant event. Desensitization is a classical conditioning procedure that reverses this learning by pairing the feared object or situation with either pleasant or neutral events. According to Joseph Wolpe (1958, 1973), an originator of the desensitization method, the reversal comes about through the process of counter conditioning, whereby the “Calm” response gradually replaces the “Fear” response.

An important feature of the systematic desensitization method is that it uses a stimulus hierarchy – a graded sequence of approximations to the conditioned stimulus, the feared situation. The purpose of these approximations is to bring the person gradually in contact with the source of fear in about 10 or 15 steps. The person would follow the instructions in each of the 14 steps. Some of the feared situation and some do not.

Two types of non – real life contacts, of varying degrees, can be included. One type uses imaginable situations, such as having the person think about calling the dentist. The other involves symbolic contacts, such as by showing pictures, films or models of the feared situation.

The systematic desensitization procedure starts by having the person do relaxation exercises. Then the steps in a hierarchy are presented individually, while the person is relaxed and comfortable (Sarafino, 2001). The steps follow a sequence from the least to the most fearful for the individual. Each step may elicit some wariness or fear behavior, but the person is calm, the next step in the hierarchy can be introduced. Completing an entire stimulus hierarchy and reducing a fairly strong fear can be achieved fairly quickly – it is likely to take several hours, divided into several separate sessions.

(c) Biofeedback :-

Biofeedback is a technique in which an electronically device monitors the status of a person’s physiological processes, such as heart rate or muscle tension, and immediately reports that information back to the individual. The information enables the person to gain voluntary control over these processes through operant conditioning. If for instance, the person is trying to reduce neck – muscle tension and the device reports that the tension has just decreased, this information reinforces whatever efforts the individual made to accomplish this decrease.

Biofeedback has been used successfully in treating stress – related health problems. For example, an experiment found that patients suffering from chronic headaches who were given biofeedback regarding muscle tension in their foreheads later showed less tension in those muscles and reported having fewer headaches than subjects in control groups. These benefits continued at a follow-up after 3 months. Biofeedback and progressive muscle relaxation are effective for treating headache and many other stress – related disorders.

(d) Modeling :-

People learn not just by doing, but also by observing. They see what others do and the consequences of the behavior these models perform. As a result, this kind of learning is called modeling, and some times “Observational” or “Social” learning. People can learn fear and other stress – related behavior by observing fearful behavior in other individuals. In one study, children (with their parent’s permission) learned to fear a Mickey Mouse figure by watching a short film showing a 5 years old boy’s fear reaction to plastic figures of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck (Venn & Short, 1973). This learned fear reaction was pronounced initially but declined a day or two later.

Since people can learn stressful reactions by observing these behaviors in others, modeling should be effective in reversing this learning and helping people cope with stressor too. A large body of research has confirmed that it is effective (Sarafino, 2001). The therapeutic use of modeling is similar to the method of desensitization : the person relaxes while watching a model calmly perform a series of activities arranged as a stimulus hierarchy that is, from least to most stressful. The modeling procedure can be presented symbolically, using films or videotapes, or in vivo, with real life models and events. Using symbolic presentations, for example, researchers have shown that modeling procedures can reduce the stress 4 to 17 year old hospitalized children experience and improve their recovery from surgery (Melamed and Siegel, 1975). But the child’s age and prior experience with surgery were also important factors in the results.

Children under the age of 8 who had previous surgery experienced increased anxiety rather than less. These children may benefit from other methods to reduce stress, such as activities that simply distract their attention.

APPROACHES FOCUSING ON COGNITIVE PROCESSES :-

Because stress results from cognitive appraisals that are frequently based on a lack of information, misperceptions, or irrational beliefs, some approaches to modify people’s behavior and thought patterns have been developed to help them cope better with the stress they experience. These methods guide people toward a “Restructuring” of their thought patterns (Lazarus, 1971). Cognitive Restructuring is a process by beliefs are replaced with more constructive or realistic ones that reduce the person’s appraisal of threat or harm.

One technique cognitive therapy uses called hypothesis testing, has the person treat an erroneous belief as a hypothesis and test it by looking for evidence for and against it in his or her everyday life. Research has shown that cognitive therapy id clearly effective in treating depression and appears to be a very promising approach for treating anxieties (Chambless & Gillis, 1993).

Another cognitive approach is designed to help clients solve problems in their lives. By a “Problem” we mean a life circumstances, such as being stuck in traffic or feeling a worrisome chest pain, that requires a response based on thinking and planning. People experience stress when they face a problem and don’t know what to do it. In problem solving training, clients learn a strategy identifying, discovering, or inventing effective or adaptive ways to address problems in everyday life. They learn to watch for problems that can arise define a problem clearly and concretely, generate a variety of possible solutions, and decide on the best course of action. Evidence indicates that problem solving training reduces anxiety and other negative emotions (D’ Zurilla, 1988).

MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACHES :-

The coping difficulties individuals have are often multidimensional and multifaceted. As a result, one particular technique may not be sufficient in helping a client, and the most effective intervention usually draws upon many techniques. When designing a multidimensional approach, the program for helping an individual cope better with stress would be tailored to the person's specific problems (Sarafino, 2001). The program may make use of any of the methods we have considered, many methods that would take this discussion too far a field, and the methods we are about to examine.

MESSAGE, MEDITATION AND HYPNOSIS :-

Three additional techniques have been used in stress management. The first two we will consider message and meditation are often classified as relaxation methods. The third technique hypnosis – seems to produce an altered state of consciousness in which mental functioning differs from its usual pattern of wakefulness. Some people believe that meditation and message are other ways by which we can alter consciousness.

MESSAGE :-

Message has several forms that vary in the degree of pressure applied. Some forms of message use soothing strokes with light pressure, others involve a rubbing motion with moderate force, and others use a kneading or pounding action. Deep tissue message uses enough pressure to penetrate deeply into muscles and joints. Infants seem to prefer light strokes, but adults tend to prefer more force (Field, 1996). When seeking a message therapist, it is a good idea to ask about licensing and certification.

Message therapy can reduce anxiety and depression (Moyer, Rounds & Hannum, 2004). It also increases the body's production of a hormone called oxytocin that decreases blood pressure and stress hormone levels. And it helps reduce hyper tension, some types of pain, and asthma symptoms, and some evidence indicates that it may bolster immune function (Field, 1996, 1998).

MEDITATION :-

Transcendental meditation is a method in the practice of yoga that was promoted by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi as a means of improving physical and mental health and reducing stress (Benson, 1984, 1991). Individuals using this procedure are instructed to practice it twice a day, sitting upright but comfortably relaxed with eyes closed, and mentally repeating a word or sound (such as “Om”), called mantra, to prevent distracting thoughts from occurring.

The purpose of this procedure is to increase the person's ability in the face of a stressor to make a “Relaxation Response”, which includes reduced physiological activity, as an alternative to a stress response. According to Benson, the relaxation response enhances health, such as by reducing blood pressure, any may be achieved in many different ways. For example, a religious person might find that a meditative prayer is the most effective method for bringing forth the relaxation response.

Although meditation helps people to relax, it has a broaden purpose : to develop a clear and mindful awareness, or “insight” regarding the essence of one's experiences, unencumbered by cognitive or emotional distortions.

HYPNOSIS :-

The modern history of hypnosis began with its being called “animal magnetism” and “mesmerism” in the 18th and 19th Centuries. The Austrian Doctor Franz Anton Mesmer popularized its use in treating patients who had symptoms of physical illness, such as parlay's without a detectable underlying organic disorder. Today, hypnosis is considered to be an altered state at consciousness that induced by special techniques of suggestion and leads to varying degrees of responsiveness to directions for changes in perception, memory, and behavior (Moran, 2004).

Individuals who have been hypnotized usually claim that it is a relaxing experience, researchers have examined whether it can reduce stress. These studies have generally found that hypnosis is helpful in stress management, but not necessarily more effective than other relaxation techniques (Moran, 2004). Other research has revealed that people who received training in and practiced regularly either hypnosis or relaxation showed enhanced immune function weeks later (Kiecolt – Glaser et. al, 2001).

In summary, we have seen that many different behavioral and cognitive methods, message,

meditation and hypnosis offer useful therapeutic approaches for helping people cope with stress. Research is also revealing more and more clearly the important benefits of stress management in preventing illness.

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