3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:
- define Stress;
- explain the importance of stress in adolescence;
- identify various stressors in adolescents;
- discuss the effects of stress on the body; and
- describe various ways to manage stress.
3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous unit dealt with the influence of peers on adolescents. You learnt that peer influence affects the life of an adolescent in several ways. On one hand, it helps to shape his/her personality and on the other, it can also be very demanding to adopt and conform to certain norms. There are many such factors which put the adolescent under pressure and cause turbulence in his life. Whether it is the process of growing up, environment, competition in schools and colleges or the relationships, they all challenge the capacity of an adolescent. This state is generally known as stress. If not managed properly, it can lead to poor performance, bad health and conditions like depression and suicides. In the present unit we will deal with stress in adolescence and how to manage it.

The unit starts with a definition and meaning of stress and differentiating between eustress (beneficial stress) and distress (harmful stress). Various factors leading to stress (stressors) in adolescence are described. The unit progresses with describing response of our body to stress and its consequences. At the end, it describes how we can manage stress. You will find various learning activities and self-assessment tools throughout the unit to check your progress and enable you to prepare your assignments.

3.2 DEFINITION AND MEANING OF STRESS

You must be remembering various situations in your life like winning a game, preparation for the exams, getting punishment without explanation or falling in love. In such situations you must have felt high or low depending upon whether you enjoyed or had difficult times. This excitement or tension is an essential part of our life which not only makes us perform better but sometimes also makes our life miserable. It is commonly described as stress. Let us learn what stress is and how it helps or hampers our achievements.

3.2.1 Definition of Stress

Throughout our life we all have to adjust ourselves to the environment in which we live. Mostly this process is smooth but it can be challenging, causing conflicts and disharmony. Then we have to work beyond our capacity. It helps us perform better and achieve our goals. However, after a limit, it causes irritability, tiredness and exhaustion. You must have realized this in many situations in your life. This, in common language is called stress.

The word stress is derived from Latin word ‘stringere’ which means “hardship”. Stress can be defined as “Any physical or psychological event that is perceived as a threat to physical or emotional well being” (Oliver et. al. 1999). The “threat” mentioned here can be any factor or stimulus which is actual or perceived. Our body system responds to counteract the threat and this disturbs the normal equilibrium of the body. Our body tries to bring back the normal state of equilibrium once the threat is over. Scientists have found an increased level of a hormone called cortisol during stressed or agitated states and it is called “stress hormone.”

Thus, stress is a normal, natural and ongoing process in life as we adjust to our environment. It is an internal alarm system that prepares our body to take action.
**Activity 1**
Discuss with your peers what the word “stress” means to them.

### 3.2.2 Useful and Harmful Stress

Stress is an essential part of our life. No one can live without stress. Here you may ask, “Is stress always harmful?” The answer is “no”. Stress can be beneficial as well as harmful. Let us learn what is beneficial stress, when it is harmful and how it is important for adolescents.

Stress as a positive influence adds excitement and hope while as a negative influence it can result in destructive feelings, anger and depression. Accordingly, stress has been divided into “Beneficial stress” and “Harmful stress.”

Beneficial stress is called as “Eustress.” It can motivate to attain goals, perform better and complete tasks. Eustress arises from situations that are inspiring, exciting or enjoyable such as getting a gift, passing with good grades, getting a trophy etc.

Harmful or negative stress is called as “Distress.” Generally speaking, people refer to distress when they talk about stress. Distress can lead to physical or psychological overload (breakdown), if it continues for long. Distress can arise in various situations like accidents, financial loss, loss of parents, failure in examinations etc. It can lead to health problems. Let us take an example.

Think of a paper you were writing in the Board examination few years back. Last fifteen minutes were left and two questions still left!! You were so panicky. Your heart started thumping, the brain worked fast and you started writing so rapidly. Ultimately, you finished writing both the questions!! Another example can be the punishment your teacher gave you in the class. You did not know why you were punished and you could not sleep the whole night! It took several days for you to recover from the shock. In both the situations, the body and mind worked beyond the normal capacity. In the 1st situation the stress (eustress) enabled you to complete a task that seemed impossible and in the 2nd situation you were so disturbed (distressed) that it took some time to recover and come to normal state.

Whether a stressor will produce eustress or distress depends upon the quality of stressor, situation and individual response to it. For example, a scolding by a teacher may produce eustress and can enhance the performance of a student while the same scolding can produce distress in another student or the same student if he/she is already depressed.

Both eustress and distress can be acute (one time only) or chronic (repeated over time). A sudden noise of fire alarm can produce acute distress while living in a noisy industrial locality can lead to chronic distress which can be accompanied by physical and emotional problems.

**Activity 2**
Discuss with your peers various instances wherein stress increased or decreased their performance.
3.2.3 Importance of Stress in Adolescence

Adolescents have altogether a different world than that of adults. They may have the same situations or circumstances like adults but they respond very differently and the consequences are very different for them. Even their perception of stress is different. One of the teens described his stress as “a great deal of pain that’s inside your body that you can’t get out...and makes you feel bad.” Another stated that stress was characterized by “worrying, keeping secrets, gray hair; problems, anger; being tense.” What is normally eustress for adults, can act like a distress for them.

Let us see a page of the diary of Ranjana, a 14 year old adolescent:

“Some of my friends are so queer! My friend Reena is depressed all the time. She secretly told me that she thinks about running away from home as her parents are fighting all the time. I want to tell someone, but she told me not to. Mohini is so thin... She is always counting her calories as she wants to go to Bollywood. Everybody bullies Meenu for her small breasts and small height. But she is my best friend and I always fight for her. I want to help them all but my own problems keep on haunting me all the time. I feel tired most of the time and can’t concentrate. Our family doctor told that I have been suffering from anemia. But swallowing the iron tablets is so bad and I feel like vomiting. The class test yesterday was so horrible. The mind went completely blank....but... the heart ran so fast in the last few minutes. Why can’t they do away with these exams? Mummy always keeps on scolding me for talking to boys. What is wrong in that? I don’t know what to do.”

(Ranjana, 14 Years)

As you see, virtually everything may cause stress for an adolescent. Emotions easily take over the logic and rationale. Less understanding and control over various situations in life causes confusion and keeps on creating tides in the life of an adolescent. Rapid changes in body and mind are a major cause of concern for them.

Adolescents are full of energy and curiosity. Eustress provides them excitement and motivation for trying new experiments and innovations. But they are also searching for their identity and try to prove it by copying the adults. The resultant experimentation may lead to high risk behaviour like rash driving, substance abuse and unsafe sex with its consequences like unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV and AIDS.

Peers play a more important role in the life of adolescents than adults. They sometimes govern even small things and happenings in their life. Day to day interactions with peers and peer pressure to take certain decisions is very demanding and taxing. These challenges during the process of growing up and forming relationships are a testing time for them. You have already read about them in Unit 1.

Competition and comparison with others in studies, life style and other activities put adolescents under tremendous pressure. Parents are also an important part of the process and they expect their adolescents to be the best and fulfill their dreams and expectations. This results in wrong choice of subjects, conflict and failure to achieve goals. Sometimes, the adolescents take extreme steps like
suicides. The adolescents in difficult situations like street children, orphans, battered, abused and physically and mentally challenged adolescents have more stressful life.

Long standing stress in adolescence has important bearing on adult life. It can lead to diseases like migrainous headache, hypertension, depression etc. which can continue or appear in adult life. It can also lead to Smoking drug abuse behavioural problems, early initiation of sexual behaviour and unsafe sex with multiple sexual partners.

Thus, stress plays an important role in adolescence. It is not always bad or damaging for adolescents. A mild stress may increase performance of the adolescent. However, too much stress can disrupt the performance and if not handled timely and properly, can have grave consequences like suicides.

Activity 3

“Stress is a way of life.” Discuss with the adolescents in your family and neighbourhood.

3.2.4 Factors Causing Stress (Stressors)

Stress is caused by various factors or stimuli known as “stressors.” These can be external – environmental or *internal* – thought processes or the way we perceive things, people or situations. Stressors produce various changes in the body manifested in various actions, emotions and behaviours. Our body attempts to counteract or adapt to these changes to maintain the normal state.

Stressors can be broadly divided into three categories:

a) **A real or actual stressor**

Examples can be a change in the environment like getting a high grade or low grade in an Examination

b) **The anticipation of an event or activity**

Just thinking about a situation can produce stress e.g. worrying about the consequences of a Disease one is suffering from.

c) **Imagined events or actions**

These can evoke emotional responses e.g., dreaming about or fantasizing a situation. Stressors are the triggers that cause stress in a person. These are the circumstances and events that threaten the person and challenge his/her coping abilities. An accident, a lost watch or conflict with friends, all can be stressors. These can be sudden viz., falling down and getting injured or long lasting viz. being ill for a long time.

The level or severity of stress is determined not merely by exposure but the intensity, duration and frequency of stressors. For example, repeated scolding and negative remarks by teacher in class can lower the self esteem of a student and can lead to lower grades. It is also important here to understand that the stressors when keep on building, have cumulative effect and cause greater stress.
Activity 4

Discuss with your peers about what causes stress to them.

Check Your Progress 1

a) Define stress.

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b) What is meant by stressor? Enumerate various types of stressors.

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c) Is stress always harmful? Distinguish between eustress and distress.

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d) Why stress is important in adolescence?

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3.3 STRESSORS IN ADOLESCENCE

There are various factors which cause stress in adolescents. Following is an arbitrary classification of stressors for ease of understanding.

3.3.1 Process of Growing Up

As the adolescents grow up and mature, they face a number of demands and challenges. They may pertain to self or the society. These changes coupled with concerns about their place and roles in the society act as stressors. Let us learn more about these stressors.

The stressors in growing up comprise:

a) Physical growth

The differential growth in height and weight and appearance of secondary sexual characters lead to comparison with their peers and creates tremendous stress in adolescence. This is made complicated by the uneven growth of certain organs.
like breasts. Am I normal? Is the most common question bothering most of the adolescents.

b) **Bullying**

This is teasing by peers mainly on account of physical characteristics like height; weight and secondary sexual characteristics viz., appearance of beard and moustache or size of breasts etc. This can also be due to certain habits like stammering, repeating a particular word quite often (*takia kalaam*) or behaviours like shyness.

c) **Body image and Self-esteem**

Self esteem relates to fulfillment of self and ego needs. They are affected by uneven and differential growth of the body, parents, peers, surroundings, successes and failures. Early in childhood the self image or self concept develops from a variety of family values, attitudes and personal experiences. In adolescence body image is an important factor contributing to self esteem. These factors affect how the adolescent view themselves. A positive body image leads to high self-esteem and better coping with stress.

d) **Social norms**

The social norms and expectations keep on changing with various stages of adolescent development, environmental setting viz., change of residence or school setting and peer groups. The changing acceptance of various norms like dress, mannerism etc. at one or the other time creates confusion and stress in adolescents.

e) **Changing value system**

Adolescence is a phase of changing value system. The adolescents have difficulty to understand the values imposed on them by parents and society. Also they feel that their values are not given importance by family or society. The resultant conflict is a source of tremendous stress.

f) **Setting personal goals**

Too high and unrealistic goals are difficult to achieve while too low goals can demotivate the adolescents and may not realize their potential.

g) **Relationships**

Adolescents experience difficulty in dealing with parents and society. Peers are more important than parents. Emotional relationships, crush, love and heartbreaks further complicate the problem. You will learn more about relationships in Subsection 3.3.4.

As you have learnt that the normal process of growing up poses a number of challenges for the adolescent. The changes in the body and mind, parental expectations, behaviour of the people and relationships - all make the life of an adolescent so stressful.

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<th>Activity 5</th>
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<tr>
<td>“The process of growing up is a stressful experience.” Discuss with the adolescents in your family or neighbourhood.</td>
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3.3.2 Home and Family

Home can be considered as the abode of peace and parents as guardians of happiness. However, the age of adolescence brings parents and adolescents in conflict. This can be due to environment in the family or the situational factors...

The following factors have been associated with stress in childhood and adolescence:

- Generation gap leading to misunderstanding
- Parental expectations to confirm and perform
- Marital disharmony in parents
- Overcrowding and large family
- Criminal behaviour of parents
- Parental illness
- Accidents, injuries or hospitalization of parents
- Family relocation
- Separation from parents
- Addition of a sibling
- Sexual exploitation, harassment and abuse
- Introduction of new parental figures in the family viz., step father/stepmother.

In a study conducted by Chandra and Batada, (2006) the adolescents described family stress as including “worrying about the well being of family members,” “being nagged,” and “conflict over family responsibilities with siblings.” They expressed that family conflicts usually involved doing homework, cleaning their room and doing household chores. Many boys discussed the stress “of being the only male in the household,” and therefore, feeling the need to “defend the home” or to protect the family. The generation gap (which is lack of understanding of each other’s point of view) leads to disharmony in the family. The parents who are ill, have emotional problems or experience marital tensions, tend to be less responsive, less nurturing, less affectionate and more punitive with their children.

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<th>Activity 6</th>
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<tr>
<td>Recollect some experiences in your life wherein you were under stress because of family problems. Share with your peers.</td>
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3.3.3 School and Studies

A considerable part of an adolescent’s time passes in the school. Fear of success or failure, test or performance anxiety and fears associated with the school setting are identified as three main causes of stress associated with school. Let us understand how various factors cause stress in an adolescent.

a) School adjustment

The physical environment of the school and classroom are the potential cause of
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stress. Overcrowding in the class, bullying, teacher’s behaviour, violence are few of the associated causes.

b) The learning process

The individualized way of learning warrants not only individual attention but also the appropriate resources and tools. Realization of self worth, potential and socialization etc. put the adolescent under stress.

c) Home work

Schoolwork has been identified as the most frequent and important source of stress in their lives coupled with worrying about exams and grades.

d) Competition

The degree of competition can produce a sense of success and fulfillment or a feeling of inadequacy or failure.

e) Subject stress

Performance demands with the subject and adolescent’s perception of his/her ability to meet. They can cause Stress. While some stress is a good motivator for productive activity. Performance decreases as stress increases.

f) Examinations

It is said that, “Examinations are formidable even for the most prepared.” Verbal tests are Known to produce greater anxiety than written tests.

g) Relationship with teachers and peers

Poor student teacher relationships affect learning, success in the school and the stress level. Adolescents with low self esteem try to seek acknowledgement and acceptance by peers. Conflicts with peers and peer pressure are well known to cause stress.

h) Learning disabilities

Students with learning disabilities are concerned and stressed. They cannot perform like Normal students and need extra attention and care.

i) Parental involvement

Undue parental pressure to perform and comparison with other adolescents without realizing their potential and abilities can play havoc in their life. The report card is also an important cause of stress.

Thus, not only school setting but also the learning process and relationships are an important source of stress for adolescents.

| Activity 7 |
| Discuss with your peers about some stressful experiences in their school life. |

3.3.4 Relationships

Relationships are the mainstay of our life wherein we share, get experience and experiment with new people and behaviours. Relationships mean so much in
adolescence. There is not only a shift from parents and family to peers but also formation of intimate relationships. This process is never smooth and has many ups and downs in day to day life in many ways. Let us understand how relationships create stress in adolescents.

a) Peer relationships

Peer approval and acceptance is very important in adolescence. However, deviation from the peer norms leads to peer pressure. The conflict between personal ideology and peer norms gives rise to conflict and induces stress. The experiments like unsafe sex, drinking and violence etc. under peer pressure are an additional source of stress.

b) Friendship and love

The influence of peer takes over parental affection and love. Most of the time is passed with peers. Friendships develop, break and new relationships develop. The physical, psycho emotional and sexual changes in adolescence give rise to mood swings, romantic feelings and sexual arousals. There is attraction to opposite sex and desire to be with them and liked by them. The intense feelings may lead to crush, they fall in love and heartbreaks often occur.

c) Relationships with parents

The process of identity formation leads to more autonomy and independence while doing away with parental control. Parental pressure to perform and confirm has negative impact on self esteem of the adolescent. There is conflict even on trivial issues like time for playing, dress code etc. Lack of mutual agreement leads to communication gap with the parents and puts adolescents under stress. Step parents are another cause of stress.

d) Relationships with teachers

Teacher plays an important role in the life of an adolescent as a guide, mentor and friend. However, the personal bias of the teachers based upon caste, creed, religion and gender can make or mar the progress of an adolescent. The adolescent, may, sometimes, have crush on a particular teacher. All these factors cause stress to the adolescent.

e) Relationships with sibling

Relationships between siblings are often competitive and are an important cause of stress both for older as well as younger children. David Levy introduced the term "sibling rivalry" in 1941, claiming that for an older sibling “the aggressive response to the new baby is so typical that it is safe to say it is a common feature of family life.”

Sibling rivalry is a type of competition or animosity among older and younger children. Conflict from sibling rivalry is built into family life as children compete for dominance, parental attention, parental support and household resources. Older child will probably resent the younger child for getting away with more, for being given more and for being allowed to do more than older child was at the younger child’s age. On the other hand, a much younger child will resent the older child for acting like another parent. They need to give each child individual attention,
encourage teamwork, refuse to hold up one child as a role model for the others and avoid favouritism and/or gender bias in case one of the sibling is a female.

As you see, relationships on one hand help to develop the personality of an adolescent and on the other, often puts them in difficult situations. They are fragile and coupled with unstable and tumultuous nature of adolescence are a major source of stress.

Activity 8

Relationships fill colors in the picture of our life, but wrong choice of colors makes the picture ugly.” Discuss with your peers.

3.3.5 Other Stressors

Other stressors posing threat to adolescents are:

- Discrimination based upon gender, caste, race, community or ethnicity
- Poverty
- Violence
- Drug use
- Diseases and hospitalization
- Disasters and wars
- Geographical relocation of family/school
- Unsafe sex and its consequences (pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections etc)
- Obtaining and or holding a job.

Check Your Progress 2

a) What are various stressors in adolescence?

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3.4 OUR RESPONSE TO STRESS

All of us experience stress at one or the other time. However, the type of response to it differs from person to person and also depends upon the situation and circumstances. In fact, it is a sum total of the number and nature of the stressor, the personality of the individual and various other interrelated factors. In this section, you will learn why and how we respond to stress.

3.4.1 Body’s Reaction to Stress

Whenever a stressor is present, our body reacts to prevent the threat imposed on it. The stress hormone “cortisol” is secreted and it prepares us to challenge
or escape the threat. In the present subsection, you will learn about the response of our body to stress and various changes which occur in a sequential manner.

**Fight or Flight response**

When the body is challenged by a stressor, the body prepares itself for an immediate action or response. This action is either Fight or *Flight* response.

a) **Fight response** i.e., to attack and fight to defend one, is initiated by anger or aggression in defense of personal space or property. It usually results in confrontation or active combat or fight.

b) **Flight response** i.e., to withdraw, run or hide to escape the threat, is triggered by fear and results in fleeing and hiding.

The physical changes in the body are same both in fight as well as flight response.

**General Adaptation Syndrome**

The common effects on body when stressor persists have been grouped by Hans Seyle as *General Adaptation Syndrome*. This has three stages:

i) **Alarm reaction**

The body quickly mobilizes the resources to deal with whatever is threatening. There is increase in respiration, heart rate and blood pressure. Pupils are dilated and there is sweating of the body.

ii) **Resistance**

The body remains activated with its defense mechanisms fully at work to maintain the normal state of equilibrium. This stage persists till the stressor is removed, reduced or the next stage of exhaustion begins.

iii) **Exhaustion**

Here the body can not fulfill demands placed upon it. The fatigue or tiredness sets in. The responses which may have been helpful during short term can now become damaging and cause substantial wear and tear in the body.

If this stage continues, our immune system, which is responsible for fighting the diseases, is disrupted and the body is affected by diseases.

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<tr>
<td>Recollect some recent examples of fight response and flight response in your life.</td>
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**3.4.2 Individuality of Response to Stress**

The response to stress is unique to each individual. The following factors influence the response of children and adolescents to stress:

a) **Type of personality**

There are different type of personality traits like shy or socially active, leader or follower etc. most commonly, the personality types are classified into Type A(ambitious, competitive, aggressive, tense) and Type B ( easy going, relaxed,
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rarely angered). Type A personality is associated with more stress and related diseases.

b) **Experience**

Past experience modifies the response to stressors

c) **Genetics**

We all have different set of genes which control our body functions, actions, behaviour and similarly, our ability to respond to stress.

d) **Culture and environment**

The values, customs and the environment we grow in, make us immune or vulnerable to stress. The cultural differences enable us to identify a stressor as meaningful or insignificant.

e) **Development**

As we mature, we grab more information. However, certain physical and or mental inadequacies viz., eye/ear defects etc. can affect this process. This can be modified by using hearing aids, Eyeglasses or use of computers.

f) **Mental and emotional state**

Our ability to interpret a stressor is greatly influenced by our emotions and the state of our mind. A stressor is likely to cause more harm to a depressed person rather than a happy one!

As we have seen, the attitude, bringing up, experience and situation and state of mind, all contribute to one’s response to stress.

**Activity 10**

Rcollect a recent stressful situation in your life. Discuss with your friend how you dealt it. Ask him if he would have dealt it differently.

### 3.4.3 Signs and Symptoms of stress

Stress affects the individual in totality and the signals can be easily identified by others (the signs) or self (the symptoms). Let us learn them:

A) **Physical**

**Heart and blood vessels**

- Thumping of heart
- Irregular heartbeat
- Chest pain
- Cold sweaty hands
- High blood pressure

**Muscles and Bones**

- Aches and pains
- Twitching of muscles
• Stiff neck
• Headache

**Digestive system**
• Dryness of mouth and throat
• Indigestion
• Excess/ Loss of appetite
• Stomach ache
• Diarrhoea or constipation

**Others**
• Rapid breathing
• Shortness of breath
• Asthma attacks
• Loss of sleep/excessive sleep
• Nightmares
• Excessive sweating

B) **Mental**
• Confusion
• Loss of creativity
• Memory problems
• Low self esteem
• Negative thinking
• Lethargy

C) **Emotional**
• Nervousness
• Unexplained fear
• Restlessness
• Anxiety
• Mood swings
• Impulsive behaviour
• Depression
• Irritability
• Forgetfulness
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- Tearfulness
- Boredom
- Apathy
- Changes in eating, drinking/smoking

D) Relationships
- Loneliness
- Distrust
- Intolerance
- Loss of friends
- Resentment
- Sudden outbursts of anger
- Poor communication

Regarding the above signs and symptoms, it should be remembered that not everyone experiences all of them and they may vary according to mental state of the individual, nature, severity and duration of stressor and situations/circumstances.

Activity 11
Ask one of your peers to share a recent stressful experience and how he reacted to that.

Check Your Progress 3
a) What are various factors affecting an individual’s response to stress?
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b) What is General adaptation syndrome? Describe its various stages.
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c) Enumerate various signs and symptoms of stress.
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3.5 CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

Stress gives rise to a number of changes in adolescents. The regenerative process is masked and deleterious changes/effects in body and mind are triggered. In this section you will learn various consequences of stress.
3.5.1 Immediate Consequences

These can be:

a) **Physical Changes (the effects on body)**

The physiological changes in body give rise to various diseases e.g., dryness of mouth and Throat, headache, pain in the abdomen, constipation/diarrhoea and increase in Blood Pressure. In adults it is an important risk factor for ulcer, arthritis, high Blood Pressure, Heart disease and Heart Attacks.

b) **Affective Changes (the effects on feelings)**

These are emotional and subjective in nature. They manifest as anger including hostility, Aggression and fear. They are expressed through shouting, fighting, depression or physical abuse.

But physical illness can also result if emotions are suppressed.

c) **Behavioural Changes (the effects on actions)**

It manifest in the following ways:

i) **Escapism**

There is a decline of quantity of work. Slowness in the class or absenteeism in the School/ from work is shown. Eventually, it can result in school dropouts.

ii) **Carelessness and disinterest**

It affects quality of work. Motivation may decrease and apathy, Lethargy and lack of curiosity can develop.

3.5.2 Longstanding Consequences

A) **FRUSTRATION**

When the need(s) of an adolescent go unsatisfied for a long time, it results into frustration - the feeling of insecurity and dissatisfaction arising from unresolved problems and wants.

The mind, either consciously or subconsciously, generally attempts to cause behaviour designed to help the frustrated person adjust to an unresolved situation, a type of behaviour termed an **adjustive reaction** or **defense mechanism**. You have already read about healthy and unhealthy defense mechanisms in the same block under unit-I some of those are being reinforced in the following text:

a) **Rationalization**

The adolescent attempts to justify her undesirable behaviour e.g. “Everybody cheats in the exams. Why shouldn’t I!”

b) **Compensation**

The individuals with feeling of inadequacy—either real or imagined—put extra effort and excel in another way. One of the best examples is Dr. Stephen Hawkins who, despite being totally paralyzed, speechless and wheel-chair bound is considered
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to be the most intelligent scientist after Einstein. His best selling book *A Brief history of Time* is a landmark in Physics.

c) **Negativism**

It is a subconscious resistance to other people or objects.

d) **Resignation**

The state of giving up or withdrawing from one’s involvement with a particular situation e.g. “I’ll better do it tomorrow!”

e) **Repression**

Unknowingly excluding certain experiences or feelings from one’s consciousness e.g. “I’m sorry papa, but I completely forgot to tell you about the electricity bill. The money you gave me, I expend in the party!”

f) **Pseudo stupidity**

Intentionally forgetting something as a mean to avoid it. Everyone around that person is well aware of his absentmindedness (which is his goal) but the catch is that he never forgets the things of his interest e.g., Money/book borrowed from him by Mr. X.

g) **Obsessive Thinking**

Enlarging problems/situations out of all realistic proportions e.g. a sprain, despite assurance from doctor, may be expressed as a fracture.

h) **Displacement**

Redirecting pent-up feelings toward objects other than main source of frustration. The examples are –Scapegoating and blaming others.

i) **Conversion**

Expression of emotional frustrations in bodily symptoms of aches, pains or sickness.

B) **BURN OUT/ EXHAUSTION**

The most important danger of long standing stress is what is called as *burnout-the complete exhausting of an adolescent’s physical and intellectual resources caused by excessive efforts to attain certain unrealistic goals*. It happens with the adolescents with extremely high aspirations.

Burnout is a gradual process that occurs over an extended period of time. It doesn’t happen overnight, but it can creep up on you if you’re not paying attention to the warning signals. The signs and symptoms of burnout are subtle at first, but they get worse and worse as time goes on.

Warning signals of burnout are:

**Physical**

- Feeling tired and drained most of the time
- Lowered immunity, feeling sick a lot
Frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches
Change in appetite or sleep habits

**Emotional**
- Sense of failure and self-doubt
- Feeling helpless, trapped and defeated
- Detachment, feeling alone in the world
- Loss of motivation
- Increasingly cynical and negative outlook
- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment

**Behavioural**
- Withdrawing from responsibilities
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done
- Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope
- Taking out your frustrations on others
- Skipping work or coming in late and leaving early

If not cured in time the burnout may lead to Apathy to responsibilities, social disharmony, drug abuse / alcoholism and many physical/mental diseases.

**C) DISEASES**

Unattended stress and consequent burnout may lead to illnesses. 70-80% of all health related illness and other body changes (such as ulcers) are at least indirectly related to stress wearing down the immune system, which makes people more susceptible to disease.

The diseases may be psychosomatic, physical or mental in nature. The stress related diseases are related to:

i) **Over responsive nervous system:** It produces migraine headaches ulcers and heart diseases, fatal strokes, depressions and suicides

ii) **Dysfunctional immune system:** It leads to allergies, viral infections viz, influenza, common cold and cancers etc.

Many of these diseases also keep on haunting the adolescents in future as depression, high BP and heart diseases etc.

**Activity 12**

Recollect an incidence of your life which caused stress to you. How did you feel?
Psychosocial Issues of Adolescence

Check Your Progress 4

a. What are various consequences of stress?
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b. What is burn out? Describe various signs and symptoms of burnout.
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3.6 MANAGING STRESS

Managing or coping with stress involves recognizing the sources of stress, how it affects and finding the ways to master or control it. Early detection is the key for management of the stress to help the adolescents lead a meaningful and socially productive life. A pragmatic approach in this regards is needed wherein adolescents, parents/teachers, counsellors and community, all have to play a positive and constructive role to avoid the menace of stress and its consequences.

Let us learn various ways to manage stress in adolescence.

3.6.1 Self Help for Adolescents

The adolescents can help themselves and lead a stress free life by following some simple guidelines:

1) Think positively

Positive thinking improves our ability to process information efficiently and enhances self esteem. It inculcates optimism, giving us a sense that we are controlling our environment. People with an optimistic outlook live 19% longer than those who are pessimistic.

2) Be aware of your self

Accepting you as you are – is the secret of high self-esteem. Do not condemn or have pity on yourself. You are as unique and excellent piece of creation as anybody else. Identify your strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. Work constantly to enhance your strengths and avail opportunities while removing the weaknesses and threats.

3) Share with someone you have faith in

Remember, sharing doubles the joy and halves the problems! Communicate your feelings, worries, tensions and even secrets to someone you can confide in. He/She should be a known and trusted person to maintain confidentiality and avoid exploitation.
4) **Reflect**

Perform a self-analysis of the circumstances/situations and stressors (i.e. the factors causing stress). You need to find out "what pushes your buttons" so as to strive to disconnect these buttons. It can be person, a situation or sometimes even a thought of something!

5) **Recreation must be a rule**

Try to establish a balance between work and leisure activities, which is essential to prevent. Destructive tension. *Plan and enjoy more activities exclusively with your family/friends.* It should be a routine to have some time for a walk, playing games or watching T.V. during your exams too!

6) **Learn how to relax**

One needs to learn to slow down. Remember, *the nature too assists the slowing down process in a stressed individual with diseases, heart attacks and increased accidents!*

Be sure to take adequate rest. *Sleep is nature’s all time treatment to stress and tiredness.* A good Night’s sleep relaxes and helps to prepare for the challenges of tomorrow. Regular vacations with Your family/friends rejuvenate you. Divert your attention from activities/situations causing stress. *Engage yourself in some activity/hobby.* Listening to music, reading a book of jokes/short stories or even having a stroll with your pet dog all have a good relaxing effect.

7) **Make physical activity a routine**

Exercises refreshen and relax the body and mind. They increase blood circulation and increase muscle tone. Walking, bicycling, swimming, jogging and outdoor games, all have been documented to relieve stress.

8) **Yoga and meditation are a great help**

Yoga and meditation provide mind control and hence, the harmony between body and mind. The concentration of mind increases the self-awareness and provides an opportunity to revisit one’s desires, expectations and goals in the realistic rather than expected and dreamy situation.

Yoga, through a combination of breathing, stretching and balancing, tries to achieve a union of body, mind and spirit.

9) **Develop readily attainable goals**

Goals are the statements of what you want to achieve. Successful people always set their goals. These have to be developed step by step. Following is an example:

1. **Long term Goals** - give you a sense of direction
   
   E.g. To become a Doctor

2. **Short Term Goals** - provide periodic feeling of accomplishment
   
   E.g. Getting through the Pre Medical Test
3. **Objectives**— tell you the specific requirement

E.g. Passing 12th class exams (with Biology) with good percentage

It is not the rule that everyone should be at the same level of achievement. The satisfaction is a very personal and subjective matter. You have to create your own limit of satisfaction. The competition need not be a self-killing process. You will be learning about setting and decision making in career planning in unit-5 of this block.

10) **Develop hobbies and learn something new**

Developing hobbies adds flavour to life. *Creating taste and attaining skills in poetry, literature, music, paintings etc.* give you a sense of achievement. Make a plan of self improvement to learn something new in a specified time period.

11) **Be assertive**

Assertiveness is avoiding conflicts by politely exercising your rights while respecting others’ rights too. It avoids undue contradictions and aggression. The basic principle is you have a right to request and other person has an equal right to accept or refuse. You have to learn to say “no” tactfully to new opportunities and requests from others that increase your tensions and anxieties e.g., a friend asks you for smoking and you want to say “no!”

12) **Enroll in personality development workshops**

Such workshops provide such skills which enable you to come out of tight corners and blues in your life.

13) **Learn life skills**

Life Skills are the abilities which inculcate positive and adaptive behaviour in us so as to face the opportunities and challenges of life effectively. Many national and international organizations are conducting workshops in life skills.

14) **Avail Guidance and Counseling Services**

There should be no hesitation in availing these services. They clear the fog of confusion and enable us make healthy decisions. You may refer block-4, Unit-1 of the theory course-II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interact with a group of adolescents and find out how they manage their stress.</td>
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3.6.2 **Role of Parents and Teachers**

The parents and teachers should play complimentary roles in development of an adolescent. When the secrets of adolescence start unfolding in the form of changes, they should help in demystifying them. Providing correct and scientific information about various changes and related issues helps adolescents travel through this turbulent phase of life.

One need not have a sixth sense and third eye while dealing with an adolescent
under stress. A *timely, empathetic and non-judgmental listening* may surpass thousands acts of welfare for them.

Removal of adolescent from the stressor should be the first priority. Be it a situation, a person or any other factor, repeated and or sustained exposure of such a stressor complicates the problem. Some times a rehabilitation of the stressed adolescent is urgently required viz., in sexual exploitation in such cases the teacher can take the help of a non governmental organization or law enforcement agency.

The generation gap should not be a limiting factor while dealing with the sensitive issues like dressing, having girl friend or boy-friend and going out / having parties etc. *There should definitely be some rules and limits but they should be mutually agreeable rather than imposed upon one sidedly.* An increased threshold for tolerance always pays in the long run.

There should not be a break in communication at any cost. The parents and teachers should have an open mind rather than being the slaves of their own prefixed ideas. They need not play the role of a *cruel jailer.* “Don’t do this”, “Why you are...”, “Since I told you, you should have....” are the common phrases to be avoided while talking to adolescents. *Such responses only widen the communication gap and send the adolescents to their cocoons.*

Parents and family are a great support for the adolescent in crisis- be it a failure, a relationship problem or any other concern. There can not be a better counselor than teacher for the adolescents. He/she can help him in taking appropriate decisions and come out of the crisis.

During examinations the adolescents should not be pushed too hard. Let them make and follow their own schedule. *Remember, the performance is always the best when one is relaxed.*

The adolescents should be made to set realistic goals for them. However, they need to be taught to accept failures as an integral part of the success process. *A particular examination/test are not a “do or die phenomenon.”* They should be provided with other choices and arenas available for their development.

The adolescent should not be criticized in front of others. *Criticism decreases the self-esteem and gives rise to inferiority complex.* It is better to have a discussion wherein the adolescent should be encouraged to put forward his point view and work upon his/her weak points.

There should be no comparison with others. The performance should only be compared with their performance in the past.

Sexual abuse in adolescents remains an important but not an apparent cause of stress. In more than 80% cases it is done by a known person. *The parents should pay particular attention to the embarrassment/unusual discomfort in the adolescent in presence of a visitor.* The adolescents should be helped to forget the traumatic experience as might have left a deleterious effect on their body and mind. They should be encouraged to engage in hobbies/field of their interest.

*Inculcation of life skills* in adolescents not only helps them inculcate positive and
adaptive behaviour but also manage the difficult situations in life and prevent the stress.

The parents and teachers need to involve and enroll themselves and the adolescents in workshops / orientation programmes to equip them with the knowledge, attitude and skills in adolescent health and development.

**Activity 14**

Discuss with your peers their experiences wherein they have helped an adolescent to come out of stress.

### 3.6.3 Medical Help

**a) Counselling**

Counselling is the most important intervention for management of stress in adolescents. But the process of counselling the adolescents is very fragile and should be handled with utmost tact and care. GATHER approach helps in effective counselling of adolescence:

- **G – Greet the adolescent**
- **A – Ask** “How can I help you?”
- **T – Tell** the relevant information they need
- **H – Help** to make decision
- **E – Explain** any misunderstanding
- **R – Return** for follow up or Referral

The adolescents must be made comfortable in a friendly and harmonious atmosphere. They need to have trust and confidence to open-up and share their problems and secrets. The discussion should be completely confidential. The adolescents should not fall prey to moral teaching and orthodox thinking of generation gap. Empathetic listening without pre-fixed ideas helps more than deliberating facts and preaching. The discussion and advice should be objective and non-judgmental. Above all, the adolescent should be helped to take his own decision rather than imposing the decision by the counsellor.

You will be learning more about counselling in Block 4 Unit 3.

**b) Drugs**

One should always remember the old saying “A stitch in time saves nine!”

The management of stress and most of the stress related illnesses in adolescents can be effectively managed with good counselling. However, drugs are required only when the condition becomes so bad that it can not be controlled by other means such as counselling. **The treatment should be undertaken by a trained physician / psychiatrist.** Such interventions, when needed, should be immediately sought.

### 3.6.4 Role of Social/ Educational Organizations

The social / educational organizations can play a pivotal role not only in generating awareness but also providing a dais for common understanding and exchange of experiences regarding stress and related health issues of adolescence. They can help by:
### Formation of Self-help Groups for Adolescents

Here adolescents can interact, share and exchange their views and discuss their problems.

### Arranging Capacity building Activities

- Community-based Awareness/Sensitization Programmes in Adolescent Health
- Skill based Training Programmes for Teachers/Parents
- Workshops for Adolescents in Stress management (envisaging relaxation techniques, yoga and meditation)
- Seminars and Symposia ensuring involvement of experts from all walks of life to exchange views and experiences on adolescent issues

### Provision of financial/legal help to adolescents

This is especially relevant in case of juvenile delinquency, victims of child labour and cases of rape.

### Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is required for adolescents suffering from diseases like HIV and AIDS, victims of battering (beating) and violence, sexual abuse and natural disasters.

#### Activity 15

Social and educational organizations can play a vital role in keeping the adolescents stress free. Discuss.

#### Check Your Progress 5

a) Describe various tips for adolescents to manage their stress.

b) What is GATHER approach in counselling?

c) How can social/educational organizations help to promote a stress free adolescence?

#### 3.7 LET US SUM UP

Stress is important in our life not only to live but also to motivate action. The beneficial stress is called as eustress and the harmful stress (usually referred to as...
stress) is called as distress. Both cause physical, mental and behavioural changes. Stressors are the stimuli which produce stress. They may be produced either externally i.e., from environment or internally (from thought processes). However, the response to stress is individual and is linked with the genes one inherits from the parents as well as environmental factors.

Stress is not only a leading cause of increasing morbidity in adolescents but it also adversely affects their later life. Behaviour modification through relaxation and meditation techniques not only prevents the stress in the life of an adolescent but also the serious after effects and miseries. While a timely and effective counselling enables adolescent manage their stress, sometimes medical help becomes important. The parents and society need to be sensitive and aware about special needs of the adolescents and need for a platform for adolescents to share their problems, experiences and joys. The unit has given you an overall view of stress and its management.

Teachers are in a special position to bring out our adolescents out of their blues of stress and help them lead a meaningful and socially productive life. They can identify the sources and warning signals of stress in adolescents and through an empathetic listening, trust, confidence, positive support and guidance, can help adolescents manage their stress. They can also identify the distressed adolescents and refer them for a professional counselling and or a medical help.

**3.8 KEY WORDS**

**Stress** : Any physical or psychological event that is perceived as a threat to physical or emotional well being

**Eustress** : Beneficial stress

**Distress** : Harmful stress

**Stressor** : Various factors or stimuli known to cause stress

**HIV** : Human Immunodeficiency virus

**AIDS** : Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

**3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

Check Your Progress 1

a) The word stress is derived from Latin word ‘stringere’ which means “hardship”. Stress is defined as “*Any physical or psychological event that is perceived as a threat to physical or emotional well being* (Oliver et al 1999).” The “threat” mentioned here can be any factor or stimulus which is actual or perceived.

b) Stressors are various factors or stimuli known as “stressors.” These can be external – environmental or internal – thought processes or the way we perceive things, people or situations. Stressors produce various changes in the body manifested in various actions, emotions and behaviours.
Various types of stressors are:

- A real or actual stressor
- The anticipation of an event or activity
- Imagined events or actions

c) Stress is an important part of our life. It can be useful as well as harmful. Beneficial or positive stress is called as “Eustress.” It can motivate to attain goals, perform better and complete tasks.

Harmful or negative stress is called as “Distress.” Generally speaking, people refer to distress when they talk about stress. Distress can lead to physical or psychological overload (breakdown), if it continues for long distress can lead to health problems.

d) Stress is important in adolescence because:

Adolescents are more prone to stress due to

- Coping with the changes in the process of growing up
- Uncontrolled emotions which may blunt the logic and rationale
- Lack of understanding and control over situations
- Competition and comparison with others
- Parental expectations and pressure to perform
- Peer influence

Proving the identity and curiosity lead to experimentation causing high risk behaviour like rash driving, substance abuse and unsafe sex.

Peer pressure may lead to certain decisions which can affect the life in the long run viz., use of drugs.

Adolescents in difficult situations like street children, orphans, battered and abused adolescents, physically and mentally challenged have more stressful life.

Uncontrolled stress may lead to various health problems and behavioural problems

Stress in adolescence has important bearing in the health and well being in adult life. The diseases like depression, hypertension etc. may continue or appear later in adult life.

Check Your Progress 2

a) Various stressors in adolescence are:

- Process of growing up
- Home and family
- School and studies
- Relationships
Psychosocial Issues of Adolescence

- Others like discrimination, poverty, violence, drug use, Diseases and hospitalization, disasters and wars, geographical relocation of family/school, unsafe sex and its Consequences of obtaining and or holding a job etc.

Check Your Progress 3

a) Various factors affecting an individual’s individual response to stress are:
   - Type of personality
   - Experience
   - Genetic factors
   - Culture and environment
   - Developmental factors
   - Mental and emotional state

b) General adaptation syndrome comprises the common effects on body when a stressor persists. This has three stages:
   - i) Alarm reaction
   - ii) Resistance
   - iii) Exhaustion

c) Some of the signs and symptoms of stress are:

A) Physical
   - Thumping of heart
   - Cold sweaty hands
   - High blood pressure
   - Aches and pains
   - Stiff neck
   - Headache
   - Dryness of mouth and throat
   - Indigestion
   - Excess/ Loss of appetite

B) Mental
   - Confusion
   - Loss of creativity
   - Memory problems
   - Low self esteem
   - Negative thinking
● Lethargy

C) Emotional
● Restlessness
● Mood swings
● Depression
● Irritability
● Tearfulness
● Apathy
● Changes in eating, drinking/smoking

D) Relationships
● Distrust
● Intolerance
● Sudden outbursts of anger and Resentment
● Poor communication.

Check Your Progress 4

a) Stress has immediate and long term consequences

I) Immediate consequences

Physical Changes (the effects on body)

The physiological changes in body give rise to various diseases e.g., dryness of mouth and throat, headache, pain in the abdomen etc. Affective Changes (the effects on feelings). These are emotional and subjective in nature and manifest as anger including hostility, aggression and fear Behavioural Changes (the effects on actions) It manifest in Escapism and Carelessness and disinterest.

II) Longstanding consequences

i) Frustration

ii) Burnout/ Exhaustion

iii) Physical and mental diseases like ulcers, migrainous headache, stroke, asthma, high blood Pressure, depression, heart diseases

b) Burn out is the complete exhausting of an adolescent’s physical and intellectual resources caused by excessive efforts to attain certain unrealistic goals. It happens with the adolescents with extremely high aspirations.

Various signs and symptoms of burnout are:
● Loss of sense of humor
● Withdrawal from family / loved one
Psychosocial Issues of Adolescence

- Frequent complains of headache, pains / aches
- Passing most of the time with friends
- Apathy to the responsibilities
- Complain of loss of appetite/Frequent missing of meals
- Sadness / Irritability
- Feeling uncomfortable/ uneasy with a family friend/ relative
- Feeling of tiredness most of the time
- Low performance / failures in exam.
- Lack of sleep or excessive sleepiness
- Drug addiction / alcoholism.

Check Your Progress 5

a) **Various tips for adolescents to manage their stress are:**

- Think positively
- Be aware of yourself
- Share with someone you have faith in
- Reflect
- Recreation must be a rule
- Learn how to relax
- Make physical activity a routine
- Yoga and meditation are a great help
- Develop readily attainable goals
- Develop hobbies and learn something new
- Be assertive
- Enroll in Personality Development Workshops
- Learn Life Skills
- Avail Guidance and Counselling Services

b) **The GATHER approach in counselling of adolescence has the following components:**

**G** – Greet the adolescent

**A** – Ask “How can I help you?”

**T** – Tell the relevant information they need

**H** – Help to make decision
E – Explain any misunderstanding

R – Return for follow up or Referral

c. Social and educational organizations can help to promote a stress free adolescence by:

   i) Formation of Self-help Groups for Adolescents to promote interaction, sharing and Exchange of their views and discuss their problems.

   ii) Arranging Capacity building Activities for adolescents, Teachers, Parents and the Community.

   iii) Provision of financial/ legal help to juvenile delinquents, victims of child labor, cases of Rape etc.

   iv) Rehabilitation for adolescents suffering from diseases like HIV and AIDS, victims of Battering (beating) and violence, sexual abuse and natural disasters.

3.10 REFERENCES


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