

## **UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND** **CONFLICT**

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### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

1. To understand stress and conflict
2. To understand causes of stress and conflict in individual and society
3. To explain agents of socialization
4. To understand the role of ethics and prejudices in developing the individual
5. To examine the contribution of human values in individual development
6. To study aggression and violence as its public display.

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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Today, life has become very fast and hence, tensions, frustrations, conflicts, stress are common things of daily life. Therefore we must learn in detail about the origin, causes, effects and controlling measures for frustration, conflicts and stress. This will give us an insight to see towards life with positive approach and make us able to cope with these physical and psychological problems.

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## 12.2 DEFINITION AND MEANING OF STRESS

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Regardless of the season, regardless of the person, everyone will, at some point in time, simply feel stressed. This stress can come at any time and it can be either powerful or more moderate. When we encounter stress, we all have our own ways of dealing with it an attempting to get over it.

The term "stress", as it is currently used was coined by Hans Selye in 1936, who defined it as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change". Selye had noted in numerous experiments that laboratory animals subjected to acute but different noxious physical and emotional stimuli (blaring light, deafening noise, extremes of heat or cold, perpetual frustration) all exhibited the same pathologic changes of stomach ulcerations, shrinkage of lymphoid tissue and enlargement of the adrenals. He later demonstrated that persistent stress could cause these animals to develop various diseases similar to those seen in humans, such as heart attacks, stroke, kidney disease and rheumatoid arthritis. At the time, it was believed that most diseases were caused by specific but different pathogens. Tuberculosis was due to the tubercle bacillus, anthrax by the anthrax bacillus, syphilis by a spirochete, etc.

Conflicts, demands, fear, assumptions, expectations, time pressures, pain, rejection, these are only a few of the components linked to our stress.

### 12.2.1 The Body and Stress:-

Stress can be physical, chemical, or even an emotional influence that causes bodily or mental tension and anxious feelings. It certainly causes a sense of conflict and a buildup of physical and mental strain. Our bodies actually have a survival mechanism called stress response or startle response controlled by part of our brain which introduces chemicals to prepare us for action, especially in threatening circumstances. Many of the body's system

are impacted: digestive, cardiovascular, respiratory, muscular and immunological. Our mind also goes to work in order to help us cope up with all types of issues including loss, conflict, failure, rejection, abuse and even our human limitations. So you can see our bodies are well suited and adapted for handling stress.

Most would agree that stress can be both productive and non-productive. Dan McGee says productive stress is what we experience as we go through the daily demands of our lives, as we reach and attempt to achieve our goals and even what we feel as we look forward to success. But non-productive stress happens when our emotions are overly burdened, our bodies are strained beyond limits, our actions or behaviors are defeating and when our relationships are highly conflicted and at risk.

Stress Reaction:-

Recent psychological and medical research has given us two important insights about stress reactions. These are:

1. We react to stress as a whole. That is, stress usually produces both psychological and physiological reactions.
2. Whether the stress is physical or psychological, our physiological and bodily reactions to stress are highly similar.

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### 12.3 STRESS AND GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME (GAS)

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Canadian medical researcher Hans Selye first gave us insight into stress reactions more than fifty years ago. Irrespective of the source of stress, the body mobilizes its defenses to deal with the threat in a certain pattern. Selye referred to this pattern as the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS).

The GAS consists of three stages. Selye called these the alarm stage, the stage of resistance, and the stage of exhaustion

1. The alarm reaction:

The alarm reaction consists of two phases. These are:

- I) Shock phase and,
- II) A counter-shock phase.

During the shock phase, the body automatically tries to defend itself. The defence involves both the autonomic nervous system and the endocrine system. The sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system becomes energized. It increases heart rate and blood pressure, diverts blood away from digestive organs

and into the skeletal muscles, and increases perspiration. The endocrine system goes into emergency action. The adrenal glands especially show significant changes. The adrenal cortex becomes enlarged, and produces large amount of stress hormone epinephrine. It also releases its stored-up supply of the hormones known as steroids. These hormones aid the action of the autonomic nervous system and increase levels of blood sugar. In the counter-shock phase, the body temporarily recovers from the symptoms.

2. The stage of resistance:-

If the stressor persists, people move into the next stage of the GAS. Selye called this the stage of resistance. The adrenal glands return to their normal size. The glucose and salt levels of the blood are restored.

During the second stage of the GAS, the body's resources have been fully mobilized, and resistance is costly. If an individual is faced with a new stress psychological or physical-his body is less able to deal with it.

3. The stage of exhaustion:-

The stage of resistance does not last indefinitely. If the stressor continues for a long time, the body's resources may not be sufficient to deal with it. In that case, the body enters the phase of exhaustion. Once again, the adrenal glands become enlarged, the kidneys get damaged, and serious physical changes may occur in the brain. The result is illness.

If the person faces a second stressor when he has already entered the GAS, the progress towards the stage of exhaustion is much more rapid.

Check Your Progress

1. What is meant by productive stress?
2. Name the syndrome referred to by Selye
3. What happens in the counter shock phase?
4. Define the stage of exhaustion.

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## 12.4 CAUSES OF STRESS AND CONFLICT IN INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY

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The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship. However, anything that puts high demands on you or forces you to adjust can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, going to college, or receiving a promotion...

Common external causes of stress:-

Not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be self-generated:

Major life changes	Financial problems
Work	Being too busy
Relationship difficulties	Children and family

Common internal causes of stress:-

Not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be self-generated:-

Inability to accept uncertainty	Unrealistic expectations
Pessimism	Perfectionism
Negative self-talk	Lack of assertiveness

Effects of Chronic Stress:-

The body doesn't distinguish between physical and psychological threats. When you're stressed over a busy schedule, an argument with a friend, a traffic jam, or a mountain of bills, your body reacts just as strongly as if you were facing a life-or-death situation. If you have a lot of responsibilities and worries, your emergency stress response may be "on" most of the time. The more your body's stress system is activated, the easier it is to trip and the harder it is to shut off.

Long-term exposure to stress can lead to serious health problems. Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body. It can raise blood pressure, suppress the immune system, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, contribute to infertility, and speed up the aging process. Long-term stress can even rewire the brain, leaving you more vulnerable to anxiety and depression.

Many health problems are caused or exacerbated by stress, including:

Pain of any kind	Depression
Heart disease	Obesity
Digestive problems	Autoimmune diseases
Sleep problems	Skin conditions, such as eczema

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## 12.5 AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION

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Agents of socialization are categorized into two as primary and secondary. Primary agents familiarize a child to the society and family is a crucial primary agent of socialization. Secondary agents or agencies familiarize a child to an organized place or institution and it is more systematic than primary agents of socialization. The best example is none other than the school wherein there is a particular set of rules and regulations to be followed. Family, school, peer groups, mass media, education institutions, work places, religion and politics are key agents of socialization.

Family:

Family is the most important and crucial institution of socializing a child. Soon after the birth, a child has to be with the mother and the child learns particular behavioral patterns from her. Of course, this is a crucial experience in his life. Subsequently he learns to interact with other members/individuals in the family. Activities such as sucking milk, smiling, carefulness and tottering are important in primary socialization. The infant gets fulfilled all physical and psychological needs within the family itself. Child rearing practices such as nutrition, sleeping and use of toilets are to be trained at home. However, all these practices keep changing from society to society. Eg. In Asian countries these practices are experienced with simplicity and relaxation on the contrary rigid practices are followed in western countries. Since in western countries the mother is not with the child for a long period of time. However, Asian mother stays with child for a long period in comparison to western mother. In addition to child rearing practices, rewarding, threatening, punishing, bargaining and pleading help to socialize a particular child. Intention of all these methods is to make the child conformed to the society.

School:

School is another important and crucial agent of socialization. The child who has been with the family for years

extends his relationship with the outer society through school. The child receives his school education from six to eighteen years. The School is known as micro system and it is an institution where learning takes place and individuals develop. The school provides the intellectual and social experiences from which individuals develop knowledge, skills, customs, beliefs, interest, and attitudes that characterize them and shape their abilities to perform adult roles.

Peer groups:

A peer group is a social group consisting of people who are equal in such respects as age, education, or social class. Friendship groups and age grades are also known as peer groups. In course of child's growth, he is motivated to be with the friends of his age. It is mainly prominent from teen ages to adulthood. The socialization that takes place with peers is different from those of the family and school. Similar tastes, likes, dislikes and ideas influence on the formation of such groups. Those who like sports and music get together and form into groups is such an example. In peer groups, the child acquires a greater understanding in respect of conforming to laws and regulations. The child who does not conform to standard laws and regulations is rejected with ease from the group. Socialization takes place by imitating the individuals who are appreciated by the peer group as well. Things such as accent, fashions, hair styles, ways of behavior, etc, are often imitated.

Mass media:

However, the most important agent of socialization for the development of the child is the mass media. Mass Media are the different processes that facilitate communication between the sender of a message and the receiver of that message. It plays an important role in the socialization of children. In fact, there are many types of media; these include newspapers, magazines, radio, films, CDs, Internet, and television. These kinds of media, especially television, affect children's and adult's behaviour in different ways. Having mass media as one of our major agents of socialization could be very hard on our society today.

Other agencies of socialization:

People are also influenced by other agencies of socialization as well. The other most predominant agent amongst them is religion. Religion or religious conviction forms social and cultural patterns for individuals. The manner the Muslims dress is not the way for other religious groups. Any religion inculcates moral values such as love and compassion for others.

Also, scouts, youth organizations, the military and employment settings are some agents of socialization. In some countries the military training is even given to ordinary youths recruited for some other professions since it helps to produce individuals with discipline.

#### Check Your Progress

1. What is meant by stressor ?
2. Name the few internal and external causes of stress
3. What is the role of secondary agent in the process of socialisation?
4. Do you agree that mass media can act as a major agent of socialisation?

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### 12.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF ETHICS, VALUES AND PREJUDICES IN DEVELOPING THE INDIVIDUAL

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Ethics is a topic often taught in philosophy classes, although there are courses in business ethics, professional ethics, medical ethics, research ethics, environmental ethics, and even bio-ethics offered as well at various colleges and universities. In fact, ethics comes up in almost every course offered in college – ethics is important across the entire academic curriculum.

In essence, ethics is the study and practice of what is good – what is moral – what is best.

Ethics and truth are closely connected. An ethical person follows the path of truth and honesty. Great leaders adopted ethics as a way of life. They preached and practiced great virtue of truth and honesty. Mahatma Gandhi once remarked “God is Truth, and Truth is God”. Abraham Lincoln, a great follower of ethical standards once remarked “You can fool all people for some time, some people all time, but not all people all the time”.

Why Ethics is important?

Ethics play an important role in development of individuals, groups and societies. High ethical standards are vital for personality development of an individual, and also for the wellbeing of groups



and society. The importance of ethics is briefly explained as follows:

1. Dignified Life:-

Ethics enable a person to live with dignity. The general society appreciates a person who follows ethical practices. He attains a distinguished status in the society.

2. Peace of Mind:-

It is said that 'truth makes you free'. A person who follows ethical practices is at peace with himself.

3. Rewards:-

Truth always prevails. Those who are true and honest get rewards such as promotion or monetary incentives. They are held in high esteem by their colleagues, friends, neighbours and others.

4. Restricts Corruption:-

Ethical persons do not get involved in corrupt practices. They also discourage others to get involved in corrupt practices. At present, there is rampant corruption in every walk of life- in education, business, politics, defence, judiciary, police, etc. Corruption is a black-mark on the growth and prosperity of a nation. Therefore, we need ethical persons in every field. Teachers, religious leaders, and others can play a good role in developing ethics in the minds of people.

5. Reduces social exploitation:-

Ethics help to reduce social exploitation of workers, and other members of the society..

6. Social Upliftment:-

Ethical people work towards social upliftment of the weaker sections of the society.

What is Value? What is Virtue?

Virtues are personal character traits that embody and express values that are judged desirable or admirable. A virtue is a good value lived.

Values are the ideals or standards that people use to direct their behavior; values are what people strive to realize in their lives. Values are the standards we use in making judgments about what is important in life and what is right or wrong in human behavior. We judge ourselves and others in terms of our values. We may not agree with another person's values, but everyone lives by values.

Virtues are character traits or dispositions in a person that embody and express values that are judged desirable or admirable. A person's virtues define the ethical character of a person. Virtues are values that have become intrinsic to the personal identity and way of life of a person.

The role of values is briefly explained as follows:

1. Personality Development:-

Values develop the overall personality of an individual. Values are generally learnt through parents, religious leaders, teachers and other senior members of the society. "Sometimes great life changing values come to us in brief moments of contact with high potential personalities" wrote Walter Mac Peek.

2. Values generate Love, Peace and Happiness:-

We can say this because the value of respect and concern for others, co-operation, etc., develop a spirit of togetherness. Conflicts can be solved through mutual understanding and as such there can be love, peace and happiness.

3. Values Foster Economic Progress:-

For the progress of the society values are important but at the same time following these values in day to day life and in social life give more benefit for the growth of the country in business, education, politics fair dealing is much more important than anything else. The fair dealings would enable a country to progress, whereas, corrupt practices will keep a nation backward or underdeveloped, as is the case of most of the developing nations. Also the value of excellence, urges people to exploit their potential in order to come out with new and innovative ways.

4. Values Foster Social Development:-

The social development in terms of education, health, and family welfare can get a boost due to the practice of basic human values.eg. Due to the generosity, people may donate money towards setting up schools, colleges, cultural organizations, health

centers, etc., as a result of such generous donations; the social development can take place in the society.

#### 5. Values Facilitate Regional Co-operation:-

Human values such as respect, co-operation and tolerance can help to facilitate regional co-operation. India's foreign policy is based on these values. The regional co-operation among the states of a nation or among different nations can help to improve economic and social development of the entire region.

#### 6. Values Improve Standard of Living:-

Following these basic human value individual can bring upliftment in within himself /herself as well as among society. The value of excellence enable people to develop new products, processes, etc. such innovation enable people to enjoy new and better varieties of goods and services, which add to the standard of living of the people.

#### 7. Values Develops Positive Attitude:-

Values develop positive attitudes towards our thought process, towards society towards life. This positive attitude gives us courage to defeat any worst situation in life. It also gives us attitude to excel far in work etc.

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### 12.7 ROLE OF PREJUDICES AND STEREOTYPES IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

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#### Meaning and Definition of Term Prejudice:-

The English term "prejudice" and its equivalents in many other European languages (French préjugé; German Vornrteil; Portuguese preconceito) refer primarily to a prejudgment or a preconcept reached before the relevant information has been collected or examined and therefore based on inadequate or even imaginary evidence.

#### Effects of Prejudices:-

##### 1. Stereotypes:-

A "stereotype" is a generalization about a person or group of persons. We develop stereotypes when we are unable or unwilling to obtain all of the information we would need to make fair judgments about people or situations.

## 2. Discrimination:-

When we judge people and groups based on our prejudices and stereotypes and treat them differently, we are engaging in discrimination. E.g. - discrimination against Jews women, African-American, in India discrimination against lower caste people.

## 3. Racism:-

Anthropologists, scientists who study humans and their origins, generally accept that human species can be categorized into races based on physical and genetic makeup. For example, many, but certainly not all African-Americans have physical differences from Caucasians beyond their dark skin, such as wiry hair. Virtually all scientists accept the fact that there is no credible scientific evidence that one race is culturally or psychologically different from any other, or that one race is superior to another.

## 4. Sexism:-

The concept of equal rights for women is as old as the ancient Greeks. The Greek philosopher Plato advocated for equality between the sexes in his Republic.

## 5. Minority Persecution and Genocide:-

A minority group may be victimized by a more powerful majority which is insensitive to the needs and aspirations of that minority. Minority groups may be subjected to dehumanization experiences made to feel powerless by being subjected to degrading and humiliating experiences based on prejudice.

## 6. Scapegoating:-

Scapegoating is the practice of blaming an individual or group for a real or perceived failure of others.

## 7. Demagogues and Propaganda:-

Some prejudice has been passed down from generation to generation. Prejudice against Jews, called anti-Semitism, has been known for more than two thousand years. It is usually the case, however, that the passions of hatred against minorities by members of the majority are stirred up by charismatic leaders who exploit latent hatreds for their own political ends. These leaders are called

"demagogues," and they depend upon propaganda and disinformation to achieve their ends. Propaganda is a form of communication that is aimed at influencing the attitude of a community toward some cause or position. Propaganda is usually repeated and dispersed over a wide variety of media in order to create the desired result in audience attitudes.

Definition of Stereotypes:

Beliefs to the effect that all members of specific social groups share certain traits or characteristics. Stereotypes are cognitive frameworks that strongly influence the processing of incoming social information. For instance, when activated, they lead us to form tacit inferences about others that then make information that is inconsistent with stereotypes seem to be consistent with them.

Techniques For Reducing Prejudice:-

Prejudice is an all too common part of social life, but most social psychologists believe that it can be reduced. It is not inevitable. Here are some techniques that seem to work.

1. Teaching children Tolerance instead of bigotry
2. Increased Intergroup Contact or merely knowledge that it occurs
3. Recategorization
4. Undermining Stereotypes
5. Cognitive Technique
6. Reductions in Prejudice
7. Social Influence also help to reduce Prejudice

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## 12.8 AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE AS THE PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF CONFLICTS IN SOCIETY

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Definition and Meaning:-

Aggression is behaviour directed toward the goal of harming another living being who is motivated to avoid such treatment.

Theories of Aggression:-

1. Drive Theories:- Motive to Harm Others
2. General Affective Aggression Model (GAAM):- A wide range of input variables influences cognitions, affect, and arousal and these internal states plus other factors determine whether, and in what form, aggression occurs.

### Causes of Aggression:-

Research findings indicate that aggression stems from a wide range of variables social factors, personal characteristics, and situational factors. Here is an overview of the most important factors.

#### **Social Determinants of Aggression:-**

1. Frustration
2. Direct Provocation
3. Exposure to Media Violence
4. Extreme example of arousal

#### **Personal Determinants of Aggression:-**

1. Type A behavior Pattern: - A pattern consisting primarily of high levels of competitiveness, time urgency, and hostility.  
Hostile attribution bias: - hostile intentions or motives in others actions are ambiguous.
2. Gender: - Males are more aggressive overall than females, but this differences in the context of strong provocation.
- 3.

#### **Situational Determinants of Aggression:-**

1. High Temperatures,
2. Alcohol
3. Cultural Beliefs and Values
4. Aggression in Long-Term Relationships:  
Workplace Violence.

### Technique for prevention and control of Aggression:-

1. Punishment: - Punishment can be effective in reducing aggression, but only when it is delivered under certain conditions.
2. Apologies: - Aggression can be reduced by apologies. Admissions of wrongdoing that include a request for forgiveness and by engaging in activities that distract attention away from causes of anger.