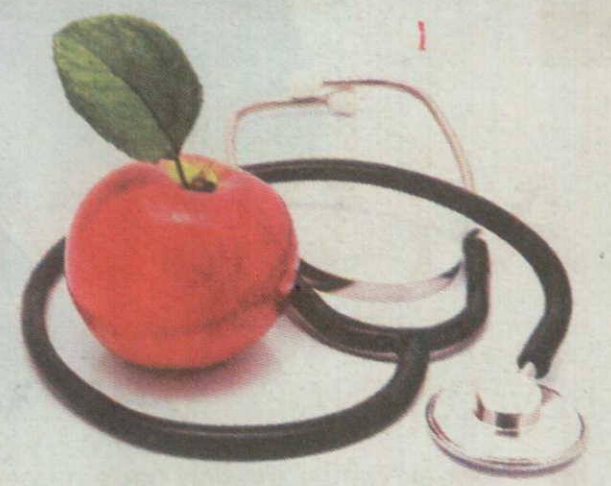




HEALTH MATTERS



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INTENSE STRESS BROUGHT ON BY THE TRIBULATIONS OF MODERN LIVING AND DEMANDING WORK LIFE HAS BECOME A COMMON PHENOMENON THESE DAYS

DE-STRESS THE DISTRESS

BY RADHIKA RAHEJA

Stress is a fact of modern life. Long work hours, bill payments, strained relationships and sometimes even planning a wedding may lead to stress. More often than not, there are multiple reasons that cause stress in our lives; however a stressful work life is the most common one. Even as we remain in a perpetual state of competition and ignore the symptoms, the pressure just keeps on building. Job stress has now been recognised as a determinant of employee health and productivity. While some people may laugh and joke about it, stress has real effects on your health, both physical and emotional.

HOW IT AFFECTS YOUR BODY

It has been reported that 95 per cent of diseases all over the world including premature heart attack, hypertension, stroke (Paralysis), metabolic syndrome, obesity, high cholesterol, diabetes mellitus, anxiety states and even cancers and recurrent infections are caused by faulty lifestyle, which is an expression of imbalance of the mind and body.

"Stress prevents the immune system from functioning properly. Due to stress hormone corticosteroid the effectiveness of the immune system is reduced. That is why we are more susceptible to infections. This decreased functioning may lead to stress-induced diseases. Also, most people are not aware but cancer can be caused by stress. When our lifestyle is too full-to-do lists, and we ignore the demands of our body, we are building a firm ground for cancer to stand on. Late marriages and conception and not breast feeding the baby puts women at a higher risk of developing breast cancer. On top of this increasing amount of work related stress and improper food habits makes your body more susceptible to cancer," informs Dr. Verindra Anand, consultant, internal medicine, Moolchand Medcity.

HOW IT AFFECTS YOUR MIND

We know for a fact that stress can have various adverse effects on person's social behav-

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our. Pulkit Sharma, clinical psychologist at VIMHANS tells us more. "Stress results in a number of changes in our social behaviour. For instance, it can lead to increased aggression. People who are stressed out lose their capacity to tolerate everyday frustration and tend to feel enraged at minor provocations. As a result they are prone to get violent in their personal and social relationships. This triggers episodes of road rage, workplace aggression and domestic violence. Apart from this, stress can also cause isolation and withdrawal. Due to high levels of stress, people tend to gradually withdraw and isolate themselves. They may not feel like being with others and spend less time with their family, friends and colleagues," he informs.

Another aspect of stress that has surfaced is the effect of stress on performance. Some professionals believe that they perform well under pressure. "The relationship between stress and performance is a very complex one and it is a myth that stress enhances performance. The personality of person and the level of stress moderate the relationship be-

tween stress and performance. While some people feel motivated when challenged, others feel scared and hurt. If a person experiences strong negative emotions in response to a stressor their performance is likely to crash down," he said.

TAKING TIME OFF

The situation gets out of hand when one becomes a workaholic and refutes the necessity of taking time off. Dedicated some time to yourself and de-stressing is essential for human beings. This need is aptly validated by most organisations through the provision of leaves. Despite that, demanding work cultures make us believe that spending late evenings in office instead of relaxing at home and not availing leaves would work best for our careers.

Dr. Sarita Nagpal, deputy director general at Confederation of Indian Industry has an interesting opinion to share. "I strongly believe that one should recognize your employees for the efforts and results they get for you and

this recognition should be timely. I try and ensure that whenever work allows some time for a break, my co-workers take time off. I encourage them to de-stress and indulge themselves. Also, when work is at its peak, one must ensure that as a leader you are disciplined so that your team follows you. So I think as a leader one must understand that giving time off is very important, and that one mustn't push people beyond work hours all the time. In our work for instance, we run programs over the weekends many times, so I ensure that I am present with them on the working weekends. On the other hand, I don't call them to work unnecessarily over the non-working weekends, so that they can rest and rejuvenate themselves. We realise that the people who work for us are youngsters who also need to enjoy life," she opined.

Curbing stress may not always be possible in life, but there are ways of controlling it. Dr. Anand mentions a simple tip, "Take adequate amount of rest (at least eight hours of sleep) because human body has limited energy and over working can be stressful."

WAYS TO OVERCOME STRESS

Physical activity



INDULGING in at least one physical activity such as dance or sports can rejuvenate you very well.

Family time



SPENDING time with family and kids makes one forget the worries of office, and that is the precise intent.

Don't over commit



IN PROFESSIONAL life, learn your limits and do not take on more work than you can reasonably handle.

Practice meditation



TECHNIQUES such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing activate the body's relaxation response and a state of restfulness.

Plan a holiday



MONTHS of strenuous work deserves some time off. Don't shy away from booking a short vacation every six months

Snooze time



SLEEPING for at least eight hours is doctor recommended and may work wonders for your health.