Kill your stress before it kills you

09 October 2018 | Features | By Amaresh Ojha

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The seemingly dire stress statistics

India is facing an unprecedented crisis in mental health. 56 million Indians suffer from depression and another 38 million suffer from anxiety disorders according to WHO's report of 2017. The government estimates that about 1 in 5 people in the country need either psychological or psychiatric counselling.

The pressures of modern day living has resulted in most urban individuals leading a lifestyle of chasing accomplishments, whether material or otherwise. Alongside, the growth of technology has increased the demands on their time, never allowing them to slow down or switch off.

The Assocham report states that nearly 38.5 of corporate employees sleep less than 6 hours a day causing diseases like depression, hypertension, sugar etc

42.5% of corporate employees in India suffer from depression with the rate for anxiety and depression having spiked by 50% between 2008 and 2015

The human body is naturally built to experience stress as a biological response to a perceived threat and has an inherent capacity to cope with it. However prolonged periods of stress without breaks for relaxation and rejuvenation can prove hazardous.

Simple Stress Management Strategies

Whether the underlying reasons are money worries, relationship issues or work pressure, the numbers point to a great need for immediate attention and remedial measures.

The good news is that the ownership for well being always lies with the individuals, and however out of control a situation might seem, there is always an alternative. When we deliberately regulate our lifestyle, set intentional boundaries and undertake self-care measures, life starts becoming easier to cope with and comes more within our control.

- **Make better lifestyle choices-** When already stressed, sometimes we make unhealthy lifestyle choices that end up doing us more harm than good. For instance smoking, staying up late, drinking alcohol, eating junk food and staying plugged in might seem like instant stress busters. However, these can result in health issues further complicating an already strained situation.
- **Practice Prioritization-** Sometimes, we will all have days when everything simply cannot get done. Cultivate the ability to live by the motto; "Hit the ball that is in front of you." The most productive way to get through the day is to focus solely on the task at hand. When we focus on one task at a time we are guaranteed to produce higher quality work and inducing feelings of confidence and calm. Breaking our responsibilities down takes practice, and we will undoubtedly feel urges to do other things, but we must discipline ourselves to stay focused on the task at hand.
- **Appreciate Time-** Close on the heels of learning to prioritize your tasks is the importance of learning to manage time better. There is nothing more stressful than not being good with time. Wasting time leaves you with lesser duration to get things done and being late can cause tension which kills your productivity, eventually adding to the stress. So manage time well and make being on time a habit.
- **Practice Positivity-** There'll always be things you don't like or find difficult – the key is to change your attitude towards them. Cultivating in ourselves the ability to shift our perspective and reframe our approach towards overwhelming situations, can become an unbeatable life skill strengthening our ability to get back on track and feel more in control of our life.
- **Factor in some me time –** Take a break from the phones and emails and disconnect with work when you reach home. Examine what types of activities calm you down, and start doing more of these things to de-stress. If you are someone who enjoys alone time then you might find reading, taking a relaxing bath, meditating, doing yoga, or writing in a journal therapeutic. Reaching out to friends and loved ones is another powerful way to beat anxiety and loneliness.
- **Stay active and clear-** Healthy brain chemistry is dependent upon being active. Try including some sort of physical activity in your daily life such as walking, jogging, playing a sport, yoga, hiking or hitting the gym. Movement, in any form, is enough to greatly reduce stress as it releases endorphins in the body which are natural pain killers. Meditation is another effective way to clear your mental clutter and increase focus. Start your day with some exercise and meditation that can fuel your mind and body the entire day.

The stress response of different individuals differs depending on their inherent life skills. However the reaction to stress we exhibit, dictates how much impact we are *allowing it* to have on our bodies. Simply put, it's not stress that kills us; it's our reaction to it!

Igniting self care and better understanding on how to center ourselves will make for a more peaceful, healthy and fulfilled life.

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