

**Developing Soft Skills and Personality**  
**Prof. T. Ravichandran**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur**

**Lecture - 11**  
**Types of Stress: Self-Awareness about Stress**

Hello everyone! Welcome back to NPTEL-MOOC course on *Developing Soft Skills and Personality*. I am Ravichandran I am giving you the course. We are on the second week of this course, and then this week, there are last two lectures. And then in the last two lectures I thought that we will have continuity from conflict resolution skills. What else? other than managing stress, relating stress in continuation with conflict resolution skills. In the next two lectures we will look at stress and then how we can actually regulate, how we can use stress to develop the personality and even developing soft skills.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:57)



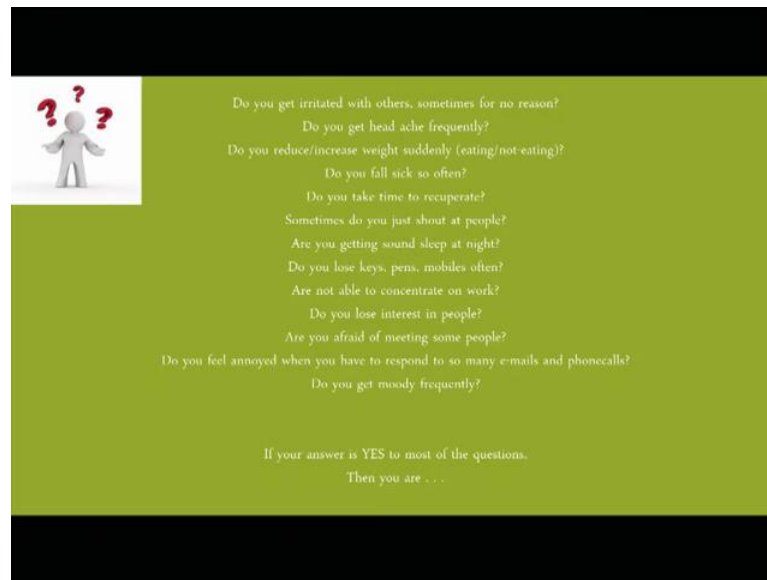
Now before I start I would like to quickly recapture what we did in the previous lecture. In the last lecture, I discussed other ways of resolving conflicts. In the previous ones, I have talked about general ways of solving conflicts, particularly the other way I talked about emphasized need instead of demanding solution. Then I also talked about the types of conflicts that is intra interpersonal and intragroup conflicts. And I emphasized the fact that the toughest of all is the intrapersonal bond. The conflicts within are the most difficult ones to conquer, difficult ones to resolve.

Later, I discussed why do we see conflicts rather in a negative perspective, and why should you see conflict in a positive perspective. And then, I suggested that if we are able to develop this positive perspective to conflict so you will realize that it is actually essential for high level of productivity, it sort of facilitates intimacy in relationships and then it fosters growth for yourself. Now some of the resolving types with had a very quick discussion like avoiding, accommodating, attacking, collaborating, competing and then compromising. The best one is of course, if you are trying to collaborate, it is perhaps the best one, but then I also said that depending on the context in situation sometimes you have to be accommodative, sometimes you may have to be compromising, especially, in terms of family relations and then friendship, sometimes you sacrifice so that the conflict is resolved.

Towards the end, I said that you should try to become an expert in resolving conflicts. I suggested that try to embrace conflicts, test your abilities and then try to resolve them. Why? Conflicts are finally hidden opportunities to strengthen your personality and conflicts help you to develop harmonious relationships. And these 2 aspects are actually important for your personal as well as professional success. If your employer is looking for one excellent quality in you that quality alone he can give you lot of importance in terms of selecting you for the job that could be conflict resolution skills.

Now along with that, if you are good in conflict resolution he would also expect that you don't get stressed out whenever you are given more work or additional work or there is a new kind of work that is given to you. So he would also expect that you have some soft skills to deal with stress. So in this, as well as in the next one, we will try to understand first and then try to tackle what is stress?

(Refer Slide Time: 03:54)



Now towards a kind of self-awareness about stress, many people think that *oh! I don't have a stress* and some people think that *I am too stressed*. And some people ask, *what is stress? Maybe I am partly stressed, but I am not sure about it*. Now let me ask you some questions and then you see how you are responding to that, and depending on your response you can note the frequency. For example, how many times like you have this kind of symptoms and then you will be able to gauge whether you are highly stressed, lowly stressed or not at all that much stressed. Now what are those questions which will cause you self awareness about stress?

Now look at some questions I am not asked so many questions, but some of the questions which are common like: Ask yourself whether you get irritated with others, sometimes for no reason. Just you get up in the morning and then the first person you come across you just snub him or her. You are very irritated and then you annoy the person and the people around you wonder what is wrong with you. Do you get headache frequently? So, headache comes occasionally to all human beings and it is a normal one, but then do you get headache, and then, do you get this splitting headache sometimes you find that it is too difficult and then you are not able to concentrate on things, are you getting it?

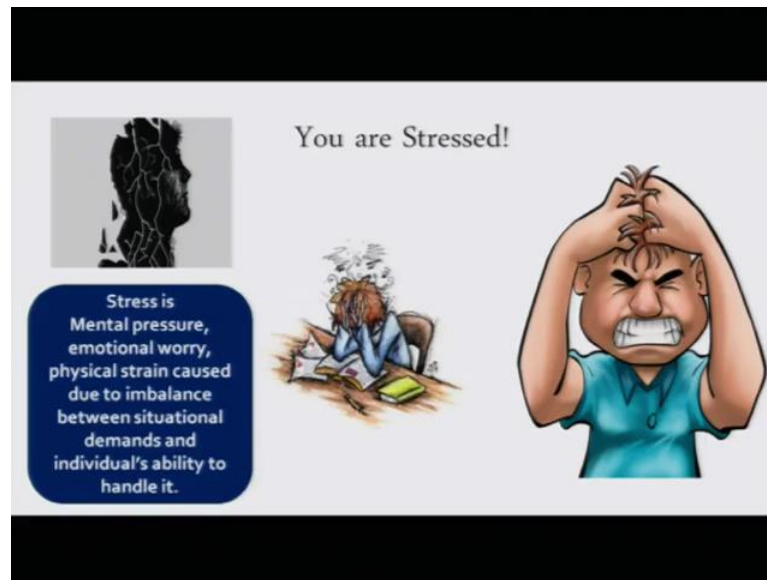
Do you reduce your weight suddenly or do you increase your weights? And both of them are again linked with your eating habit. Suddenly do you start binge eating, that is you

start overeating like anything or suddenly you completely lose interest in eating, and then, you avoid eating and then you eat the minimum or you eat what is called junk food and you try to harm your health. And then do you catch cold so frequently? Do you fall sick so often? And then, even if you fall sick, are you the one who take time to recuperate? You are all the time on the bed and then you are not able to come out of it. And then, even if you come out, you feel tired and then you feel that you are not able to go back with invigorated energy.

Sometimes do you shout at people just like that? And then are you getting sound sleep at night? Do you have problem sleeping at night? You get up suddenly maybe by a nightmare or some kind of disturbing thought? And then, you are not able to sleep at all; or the worst situation, you have problem that even if you try your best, even if you change the surrounding, etc., you are not able to fall into sleep very deeply—it is just troubled interrupted sleep. So are you facing problem? Are you the type of person who loses keys frequently or who misplaces and looks for keys? Pens, for example; very often pens are lost. Mobiles these days—do you misplace your mobiles or do you often lose your mobile? There are people who keep the mobile may be for 10 years: the first one they have purchased. There are others, of course, they change it according to the fashion. But, then there are people who change because they keep losing mobiles, so are you that kind?

And then, in general are you not able to concentrate on any work that you do? Often do you lose interest in people, and sometimes, are you afraid of meeting some people? Do you feel annoyed when you have to respond to so many emails, so many phone calls, so many jobs to attend to at the same time? And then do you get moody frequently when somebody calls you for an outlet, somebody calls even for party you say that I am not in a mood I can't come and enjoy this party. So are you the type you get moody frequently? If your answer is yes to most of the questions and if the depending on the frequency; high frequency, medium frequency, low frequency, you can say that you are actually you are stressed.

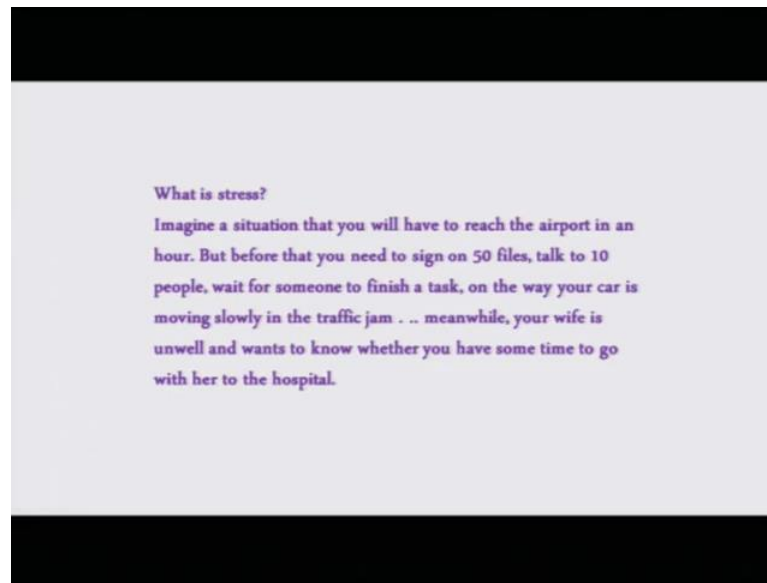
(Refer Slide Time: 08:45)



You are stressed and then you have to now determine depending on how frequently you behave in some of the ways that I asked questions. You know that how much you are stressed; highly stressed, moderately stressed, or low stressed. Now I will also try to clear some misgivings if you may ask me. Do all of us get stressed? Yes of course, and I am going to talk more about this, but before we go to that what is this stress?

Stress is mental pressure; mentally you feel lot of pressure. It is emotional worry; you are so much worried you are anxious. And then physically when this stress attacks you it causes a kind of strain. Now all caused because of imbalance between situational demands, that is, there are demands that is coming to you from the environment and individual's ability to handle it. So you are not able to cope up with the demands which is asking for you to respond to that in a specified, expected manner, then you are stressed.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:08)

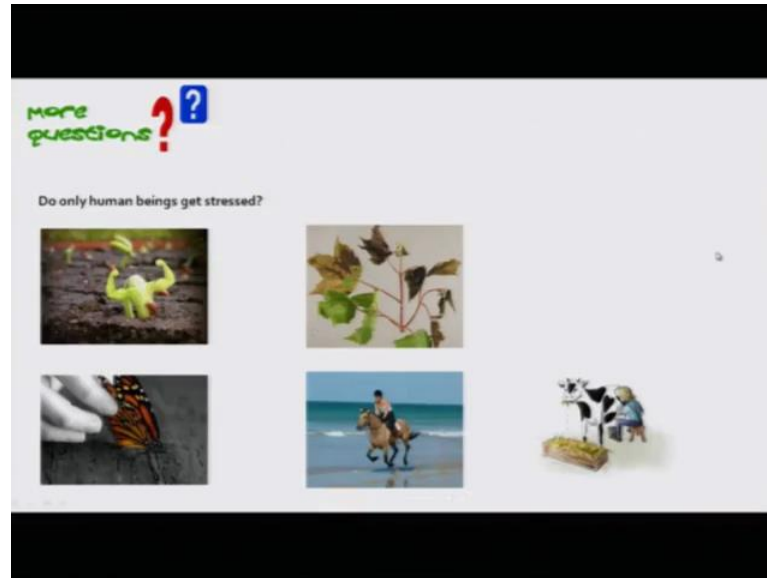


Look at another way of looking at stress. What is stress? Let us imagine a situation that you have to reach the airport in an hour, you have just got one hour time, but before that you need to sign on 50 files in your office, talk to 10 people, tell them what work they have to do in your absence, and there are some people who were doing the task and you have to wait for them to finish the task and then you have to sign on some of them. And then let's say you have finished. Okay in the last minute you have finished all of them. And then you just in the car . . . you are just going, but the car is not going according to the expected speed by which you can reach the airport because there is a traffic jam; so it is moving very slowly, you are caught in the traffic jam. And as you are about to reach the airport there is panic call from your wife she says that she is unwell and she wants know whether you have some time to go with her to the hospital. Because, let us say she is in a new place and then she doesn't know the language that they speak and then she wants you to accompany and then talk to the doctor, she is afraid of going to the hospital.

Now what would you do? Would you lose that important trip? Would you go and attend your wife? Will you be able to catch flight managing this one? So all these things, there are solutions, for example you can delegate someone who is close to your wife to attend to that, you can manage something with regard to the flight by going faster, but then at that moment your mind will not think especially when the call is coming and saying that your presence is needed to go to the hospital and then you have to go here, you are in a

emotional dilemma, mental pressure and then you don't know what to do. So, that's the stressful situation. Now different people come across different kinds of stress.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:17)



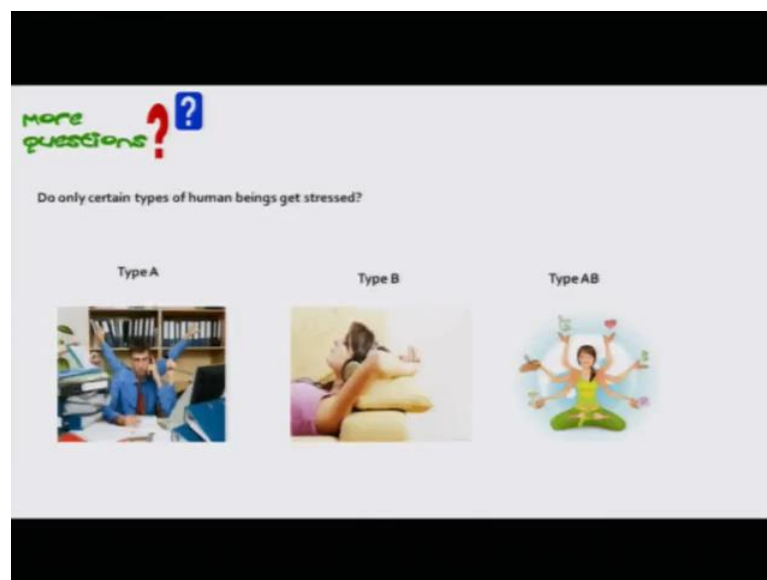
But then let's ask some more questions. The first question that you might be asking is that do only human being is gets stressed; *do only human being gets stressed?* What about for example plants and animals, yes, of course, even plants get stressed. Let us say the seeds are sown and then the surface water is not poured properly or water is poured, but then somebody put some stones or something— the seed is not able to grow, it is on stress. Now enough sun light is not there, enough water is not poured; enough manure is not given; so you are giving stress to the plant. So some of the plants come out and then they survive, but some of the plants die. The leaves wither they lose their vigour they don't grow, they fall down.

Now plants also gets stressed, but *what about animals, what about birds?* Yes all living beings whenever there is a kind of external stimuli that attacks them and then they are they are challenged to respond to that so they are in stress. Even a small thing like when you catch a butterfly or when small kids try to catch and play with them the butterfly is in tremendous stress. It is wondering whether you will leave it, whether it will live after that, whether you will spoil the wings of the butterfly so that it loses its energy for flying, what are you going to do, it is under tremendous stress.

Even a simple sports like horse riding for example for you, the horse is under tremendous stress, maybe it is tired, but then you want the horse to run faster and win the race. It knows that if it doesn't run fast and wins the race you are going to beat you are going to kick, so it is afraid of getting that. You are going to give physical strain, it is under stress.

Look at another simple activity like milking the cow. The cow is also under the stress. Why the cow is under the stress? Because it's thinking that if you take all the milk out so what will it give for the calf? So if you look at that way it is not only human beings all plants, all animals, depending on the pressure, the stimulus that they are getting from the environment they get stressed.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:03)



Now, coming to another question, there is a misgiving about stress. People ask me this question: *Do only certain types of human beings get stressed?* Especially, there is the famous psychological types which is also discussed so much in management that there are type A, type B and type AB personalities. So the type A is the go getter, very aggressive, wants things, and then wants to achieve so many things faster. So there is a kind of thinking that it is the type A person who all the times get into stress. Contrary to that the belief is that type B person is generally, the relaxed, the laid back type the very patient that tolerant type, and they say that the type B person does not get any stress or not that much. The type AB they say that is achiever, but not with stress. The type AB



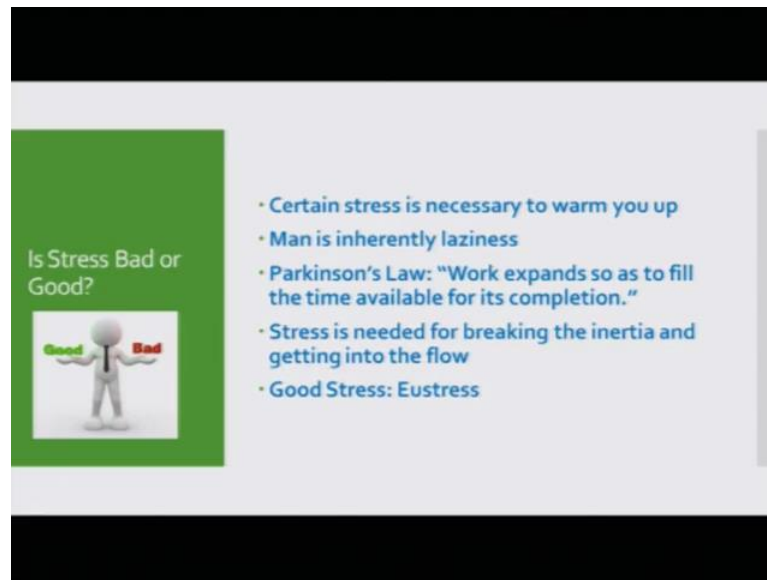
person has learnt how to balance work and life, family along with office work. So this type AB person they say that almost is not getting any stress at all.

Now I would say, you should not believe and then you should not think whether you are a type A person or type B person or type AB person. Now sometimes they say that it's associated with the blood group and then you can easily know what kind of blood group you have and then you can link it with that. I tell you I have seen type A blood group were so lazy, so laid back, so relaxed, and not doing anything. And then type B people more active, more energetic, and more achieving.

So although there may be some substance in what has been said that maybe type A person is the one who will get it, we need to take it this way, maybe the person who is more aggressive, more interested in achieving things at a shorter time is likely to get more stress than others. But even that I will not say that you should believe that much because in today's environment, we are completely bombarded with so many things. Take for example, the information overload that you are getting the emails, the letters that you have to answer to, the phone calls let come and trouble you, the messenger updates that comes to you, Facebook updates that comes to you, and then how many things that you will respond to, and then the homework, the assignments and then the jobs that you have to do, and apart from that the personal things that you have to do.

So all the things, whether you are type A type B or type AB, are going to cause you stress. There is no escape depending on your personality you are not going to have more stress or less stress you are going to get stressed, so be clear about it. Now the next thing is irrespective of the fact whether you are a type A or type B or AB person if you are going to get stress, so how do you handle it?

(Refer Slide Time: 18:21)



Is Stress Bad or Good?

- Certain stress is necessary to warm you up
- Man is inherently laziness
- Parkinson's Law: "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion."
- Stress is needed for breaking the inertia and getting into the flow
- Good Stress: Eustress

And before that, the other question that we need to ask is that is stress bad or good? Some people have this misconception that stress is something that is bad, always, and then people think that how can stress be good at all. Mind you, certain stresses necessary to warm you up. For example, if you have to give a talk, it's normal that sometimes you feel that your throat is getting dried up, sometimes you may feel like going to the bathroom frequently, sometimes you may feel like playing with your pen or and your hands may go and do something in your pocket without your knowledge; you may do something that is not so good in terms of non-verbal communication.

But still, it indicates that you are undergoing mild stress, but that stress is the one that induces in you this *fight or flight response* and it helps you to warm up. If you don't use that stress to warm you up, understand that there is another aspect about human beings that man is inherently lazy. That means human beings, in general, if you don't give any work, if you don't push them they tend to remain lazy. Then you may ask what about those people who are working very hard who are achieving so much who are highly motivated.

Actually, it is true that they are working very hard because they had created a kind of growth mindset they are in their way to self actualize and all that, but let's say if you give them a choice that *I am allowing you to get you all these things without work and then would you like to relax, would you like to remain . . .* so suppose somebody's goal is

just a materialistic goal. For example, I want to buy a car, so you say that I am gifting you this car. If that is the be all and end all in your life, what will you do. Now on such situations man tends to be lazy.

If you don't push after giving that if you say now you are just remaining and not you are doing any work, but if you want a bungalow, you have to work like this, 16 hours in my home doing this work for next 5 years I am going to give a bungalow. So then, you are pushing the person, you are actually making the person to do that. You are also giving a mild stress that you are saying that like he wants to test himself, can I work for 13 to 16 hours, will I be able to do this job, and will I be able to do this within the 5 years. Now there is another tendency about human being which is very nicely said in *Parkinson's Law* which has become a kind of maxim, kind of adage. It says that ***work expands, so as to fill that time available for its completion***, what does it mean?

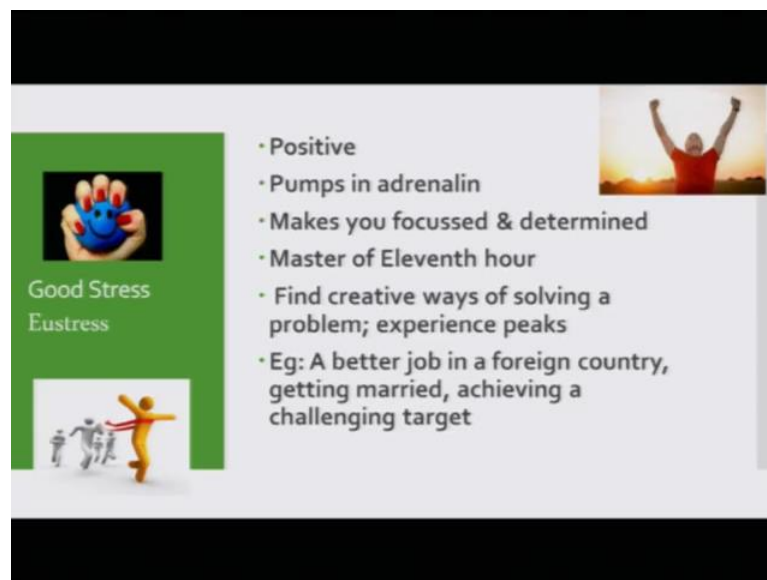
If you are given a deadline, so you are told that the assignment is there, but then you can give it after 15 days. Now the assignment takes hardly 1 hour time, but once you know that you have 15 days' time, the work stretches. You keep on thinking that I will do some part of it today, but I can do it some more part next week and so on, and then, till 14th night or 15th morning, you will be still working on that assignment. So that is what is suggested in Parkinson's Law--That the work that you have will stretch till the time available for its completion. When you say that the time is compressed, so then everything changes.

Like for example, any kind of deadline that is given to you and you know that it is the final deadline, so you will try to squeeze in the work as much as possible. But if you are if you have some kind of thinking that they know me, they will extend the deadline another 15 days can be given, another 1 month can be given then your work will expand according to the time available. Now what I am trying to say by this, what I mean to say is that if the work time is reduced, it will give you some stress; when the work time is expanded, it will not give you that much stress unless you push it till the last minute and then again you pile up some stress.

But on the other hand, if the work time is reduced, it gives you some stress and that stress is positive for you to work in time without that you will not do anything. Even in physics, so you will know that this, a body that is remaining motionless, so that is in a

state of inertia, that will continue to be in a state of inertia, unless some other body comes into collusion, something comes and pushes it. So, stress is needed for breaking the inertia and getting you into the flow. Now this kind of stress that is needed for making you get into the flow is what we call as good stress or Eustress. So “Eu” actually is another prefix for “good” and then it is indicating good stress. So stress can also be good and then it can be positive. As I was saying that whether you are getting stress, good or bad, you will be in a kind of situation where will be confronted with fight or flight kind of situation, whenever you get that stress. So the body either has to react, confront, fight, or it has to run away from the situation.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:43)



The slide features a green vertical bar on the left with the text 'Good Stress Eustress' and two small images: a hand holding a blue ball and a person running. To the right, a list of benefits is presented, followed by an example. A small image of a person with arms raised is in the top right corner.

- Positive
- Pumps in adrenalin
- Makes you focussed & determined
- Master of Eleventh hour
- Find creative ways of solving a problem; experience peaks
- Eg: A better job in a foreign country, getting married, achieving a challenging target

Now, in both cases body will pump in adrenalin. So it secretes that hormone that will generate in your body and gives you extra energy to the task which you would not have otherwise completed. Which means stress is required to make that hormonal secretion that will boost up your energy, either way whether you want to run away from that or you want to do it. So both ways whether you want to fight or flight, both ways, it will help you.

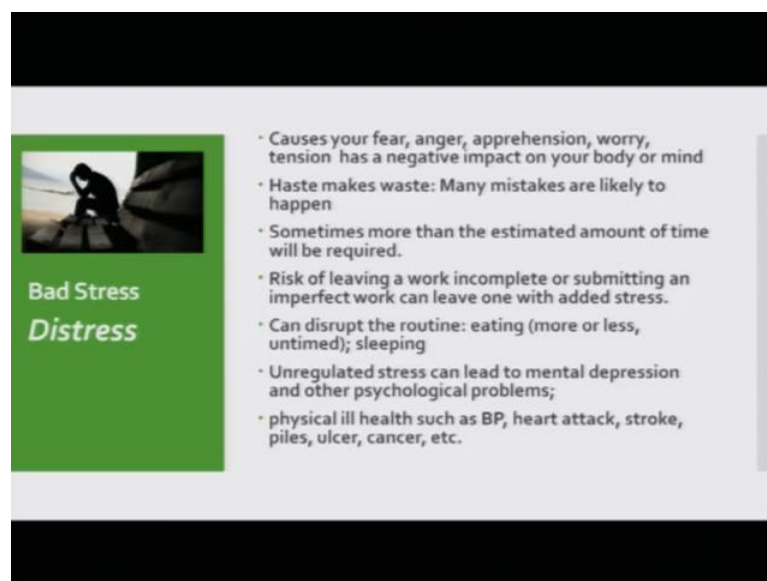
But obviously, you know that you have to choose fight not flight, in this case. Stress will also help you to make you focused on determined in your work, so without that stress you will tend to feel that *oh I can get distracted for some time, I can watch TV for some time*. But when there is stress in terms of finishing a deadline you stay much more

focused and determined. Some of you prove that you can be masters of the 11th hour, what does it mean? 11th hour is the idiom to indicate that working at the last moment. You are masters of 11th hour means you are experts in working at the last minute and still doing the best. And then there are people who work under stress at the last moment and then they want to achieve by putting all their energy, but they all also try to find creative ways of solving a problem even in that duress, even in that stress. And this good stress this Eustress is also helpful in make you experience peaks what we call as peak experience.

For example, what kind of good stress that you experience, take a case like a better job in a foreign country. You been all the time dreaming for a job in UK and then you got it so you are going. Now that will also give you stress, you should get the visa, you should find the good place, you should find good food, you need to learn cooking, you need to make good friends, you need to create a good impression in the new environment, this is stress. But this is Eustress, it is positive. Getting married, it is a positive one but then till the marriage, after the marriage, how will I move with a new person, how will I move in a new environment. So all these things are giving you a kind of stress.

In short, achieving any challenging target will give you some kind of positive stress, and especially, if you have chosen the challenge and then if you have considered that as part of your life and career. Now the bad stress is the one that gives you **distress**.

(Refer Slide Time: 27:27)



The slide features a green header with the text "Bad Stress Distress" and a small image of a person sitting on a bench, looking down. To the right of the image is a list of bullet points describing the negative effects of bad stress.

- Causes your fear, anger, apprehension, worry, tension has a negative impact on your body or mind
- Haste makes waste: Many mistakes are likely to happen
- Sometimes more than the estimated amount of time will be required.
- Risk of leaving a work incomplete or submitting an imperfect work can leave one with added stress.
- Can disrupt the routine: eating (more or less, untimed); sleeping
- Unregulated stress can lead to mental depression and other psychological problems;
- physical ill health such as BP, heart attack, stroke, piles, ulcer, cancer, etc.

Now, what will bad stress do? Bad stress will cause you fear it will give you anger, it will make you feel apprehensive, it will give you worry, it will give you tension and it has a negative impact on your body or mind. Now with bad stress if you work at the last minute as the proverb goes; *haste make waste*, many mistakes are likely to happen. And sometimes more than the estimated amount of time will be required to complete it and especially you get more and more stress.

The risk of leaving a work incomplete or submitting an imperfect work can also give you added stress. And you don't know how to actually act. The brain is not thinking it is just become a kind of reach the kind of impulse. And then this kind of stress can also disturb the routine again as I said you will start eating more or you will be eating untimed manner eating junk food, and then, you will also get lot of disturbance in sleep. Overall unregulated stress can lead to mental depression and other psychological problems, people even commit suicide just because they are too stressed.

Physical ill health, such as increase in blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, piles, ulcer cancer, etc., all can be caused because of bad stress. Now, in the coming lecture will try to see how we can handle this. And before I leave you, I just want to wind up with two good thoughts; one understand that as pointed out by Hans Selye,

(Refer Slide Time: 29:11)



“It is not stress that kills us it is our reaction to it.” So, let us see how we can manage this. And the other idea that “The major cause of stress is the inability of people to discover the real nature” “Discover your gifts, follow them and you will never feel stressed.” Thank you, I will come back and then we will discuss about how we can regulate this and how you can use stress for enhancing our personality in the coming lecture.

Thank you.