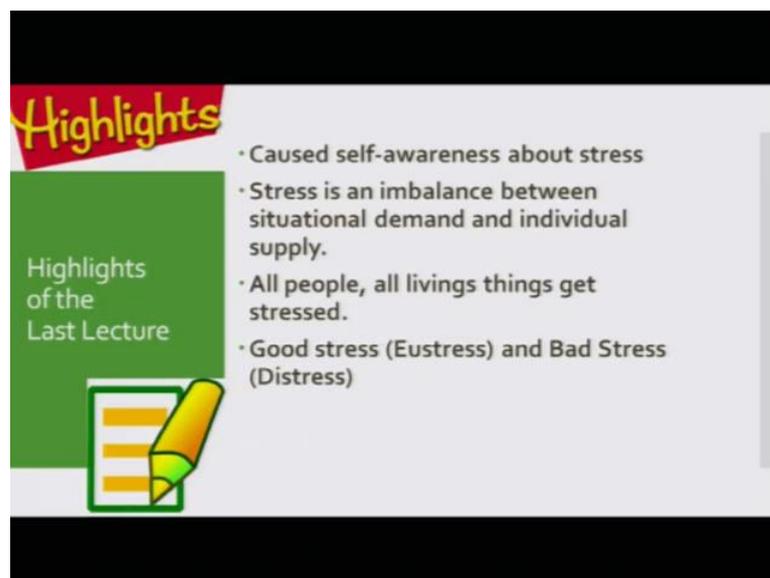


Developing Soft Skills and Personality
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Lecture - 12
Regulating Stress: Making the Best Out of Stress

Hi guys! Welcome back to the last lecture of second week of this course from NPTEL-MOOC on *Developing Soft Skills and Personality*. So, in this week, if you look at it, I have been focusing, the first major part, on conflict resolution, and the second, concluding part, on managing your stress. Now in this lecture, particularly, we are going to look at how you can regulate your stress, then, how we can make the best out of stress.

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Just a quick recap of what I did in the previous lecture. In the previous lecture, I tried to cause self awareness about stress. I tried to tell you that stress actually is nothing but an imbalance between situational demand and individual supply. It is actually a problem of economics, its demand and supply. It is a highly demanding situation and then the supply is not able to meet with the expectations, meet with the demand.

Now to the next question like who gets stressed. Is it that only human beings get stressed? We discussed that no, it is like all living beings will get stressed. And then are there some special types of people who do not get stress at all? To that also, I said no not

like that. If you are a human being you will get stressed, irrespective of the fact whether you are a special type, whether you are an achieving type, whether you are a laid back type, whether you are type A, type B or type AB personality, you will get stressed. The only time you will not get stressed is the time you lie in your coffin, dead. So that is the time you don't get your physical, mental or emotional stress.

Now, I should also tell you briefly like what is this physical stress and what is mental and emotional stress. Physical stress is something that affects your body, particularly. As for example, if your worker and then let's say or take the case of a daily wage worker who is working in a construction site, so he is supposed to carry 5 bricks, okay, from one place to another. Now the supervisor wants the work done much faster, so he says that I will give you more money, but then I want you to carry 10 bricks. Now he tries to carry 8, 9 and when he carries 10, it is straining the body so much, there is so much pain in the neck, there is so much pain in the body itself; now will he be able to do that, for how many times, each day at least 30 rounds are required. Can he survive beyond 20? So, will he be able to do that? It gives him a physical stress?

Now emotional stress: at a simple level your room partner has stopped talking to you. Your close friend has not wished you on your birthday. Now any mild things like this that is making you feel somewhat hurt can also give you some stress. Will the other person talk to you or not? Deep distress can happen to you emotionally during separation or breakage in relationship. Situations like divorce, situations like you thought this person is all the time in an emotional relationship with you, you thought that this person is going to marry you, but then, this person comes and tells you that he or she is going to marry somebody else. So, this can cause you deep emotional situation.

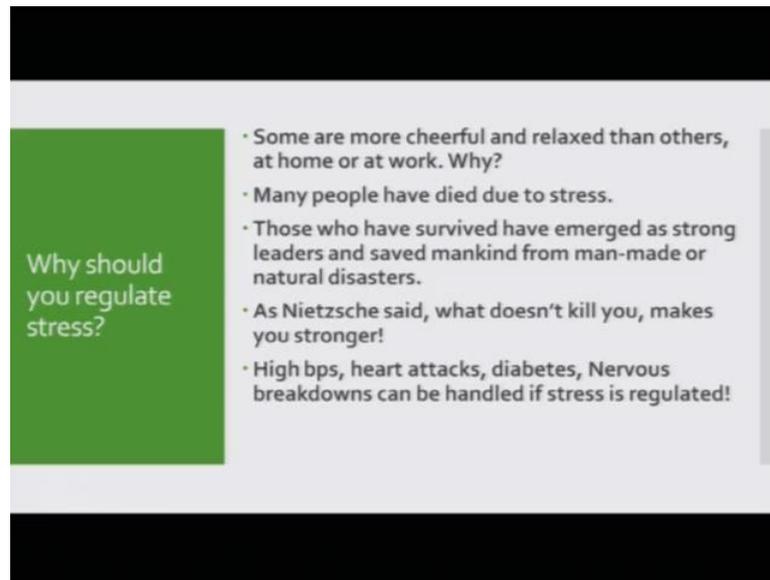
And then, there is also this mental or psychological stress where you take the pressure at mental level. Mostly with regard to for example following deadlines, you have less time and then mentally you perceive that you will not be able to work, you understand that emotionally you cannot commit you will not be able to make your body do the work, your mind itself will not think creatively. And then, psychologically sometimes you get some kind of threat perception, you think that the boss will fire you from the job, you think that you will be reprimanded and you will not be promoted, you feel a fear of humiliation in public. So, you have a psychological threat.

But there are situations where stress itself cannot be separable as physical, mental, emotional or psychological. Take for example; a person in an accident loses his legs. So, this is a physical pain, it is a physical thing that he needs to accept, but apart from the physical trauma that he is undergoing, the pain, the agony, the trauma is also emotional for him because emotionally he has to get used to this kind of pain and then he has to see things like how will he manage his dependents. And then the emotional pain that he sees in others eyes, and then the kind of psychological pressure and the mental pressure that he will be having combined with this.

Take another situation; so the doctor tells the patient that he or she is going to die because of cancer or any terminal disease for instant. Now, for the patient, so it is going to give not only physical pain, but also emotional, mental and psychological stress as how he is going to handle the situation, how he is going to deal with the work, how is he going to balance the life and within the limited span of time. Now, let us say, he has a very lovable daughter, and the daughter is fond of him so much and the daughter comes to know about it. Now the daughter is not going to have the physical pain, but the daughter will feel the emotional pain, there will be psychological pressure in the daughter, there is a psychological fear. Every time she sees her father she wonders like what is going to happen to this guy, will this be the last day, and sometimes when the patient is sleeping, the girl wonders is he sleeping or has he passed away. Now this psychological tension, psychological fear that has started from the physical stress, so that is a kind of complex thing.

But here again, things are inevitable and then we need to not like that stress kill us, because I talked about a very unforeseen traumatic situation which will be really stressful, but then one can even come out of that. Now, let us look at how one can come out that, and before that, in the previous lecture, I also told you that we have basically two types of stress; one is Eustress that is good stress, the other one is bad stress that will cause you distress.

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Why should you regulate stress?

- Some are more cheerful and relaxed than others, at home or at work. Why?
- Many people have died due to stress.
- Those who have survived have emerged as strong leaders and saved mankind from man-made or natural disasters.
- As Nietzsche said, what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger!
- High bps, heart attacks, diabetes, Nervous breakdowns can be handled if stress is regulated!

Now coming back to the question; why should you regulate stress? It is because if you look at some people you know that some people are more cheerful and relaxed than others at home or at work. I was telling you that stress is an inescapable phenomenon; it is part and parcel of life just like conflict. And whenever conflicts are there you will also be stressed. In fact, conflicts and stress go hand in hand, so there is one and then the other is always there. And if you learn to resolve one you also easily try to resolve the other, although the methods are slightly different.

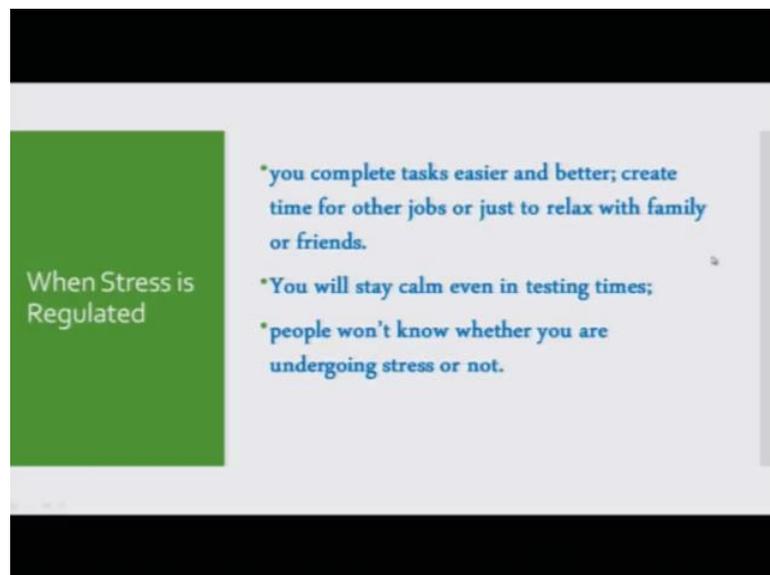
But then you see that when I tell you that stress is such a common thing you see that people throughout the world are not stressed all the time and then there are some people most of the times you see them very cheerful, very inspiring, very encouraging, and very cool, very calm, very collected, and then you wonder whether they get stressed at all, what is happening to these people. So, what is motivating them, what is hidden in them? Now, when you probe them further you will realize that these are people who have learnt how to regulate stress, how to use stress in a positive manner and let it control and guide their life, rather than stress actually causing so much damage and losing control out of their mind-set.

Now, *why you should regulate stress, why you should control it?* While people can live cheerful, people can be very happy if they are able to control it, you also know in the other extreme, many people have died due to stress. Completely, they have lost their life

just because of stress. But to the contrary, those who have survived stress have emerged as strong leaders and saved mankind from manmade or natural disasters. People, who were imprisoned for no reason; take for example, people who are sent to concentration camps. So, people came out of concentration camps, so emerged as huge innovators, either in the entrepreneurial side or in the science side or whatever it is. So, they came out and then they saved another group of people a community or sometimes even the entire mankind because they emerged as strong leaders when they underwent so much stress and they learnt how to cope up with that.

As the famous philosopher Nietzsche said, *what doesn't kill you makes you stronger*. So if you don't let us stress kill you, you will emerge stronger. But if you let it kill you . . . so how will it kill you? So it will give you high BPs, the blood pressure rate will keep on increasing and then it will end up in heart attacks, diabetes. So diabetes again will combine with BP. Nervous breakdowns, you can become hysterical, or you can just collapse. And all these things can be handled and then even something people think as un-handleable like, diabetes or blood pressure all can be handled if one learns how to manage this stress.

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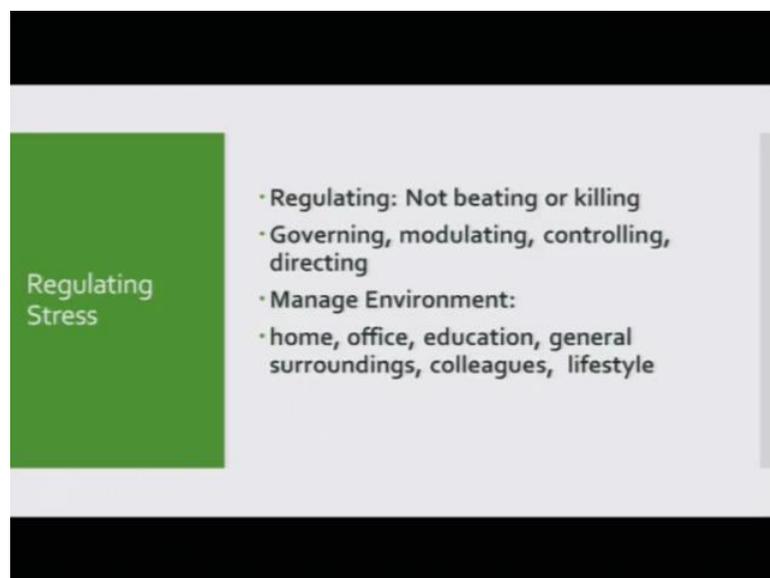
Now, when stress is regulated what is the positive thing about it? You will be able to complete tasks easier and better. Look at a stressed person and look at a person who managed stress, the same work, the same time. The person who can regulate stress can

finish it before time and keep some time for relaxation; he can whistle, he can put a headphone, listen to music and the other guy might be wandering how could you do this. That the person who learns how to handle stress also creates time for other jobs or just to relax with family or friends—which is more important you need to spend qualitative time with family or friends or you need to give time for relaxation.

If you regulate your stress you will stay calm even in testing times. So, you will not show on your face that you are becoming very nervous, people won't know whether you are undergoing stress or not. As I was telling at the beginning, some people you think that are always cheerful, always inspiring, and you wonder how they are able to be like that. The face itself when you look at it, it is so inspiring. So, how is that possible? How are they so calm and collected? It's simply is that they have handled stress and then they know how not to show that on the face, because they are able to keep it under control and use it in a positive manner.

Did you note that I am not saying words like, *beating stress*, *killing stress*, I am saying *regulating stress*.

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Why am I interested in using the word regulating? Regulating gives you the sense of governing stress, modulating stress, controlling stress, directing stress. As you have the regulator on a fan if you want to use stress go for highly challenging one, increase the

speed level and then enjoy high speed performance. And there are times when you do not want to risk that, so you want to low your stress, and then operate at a level where you are able to keep in control fully.

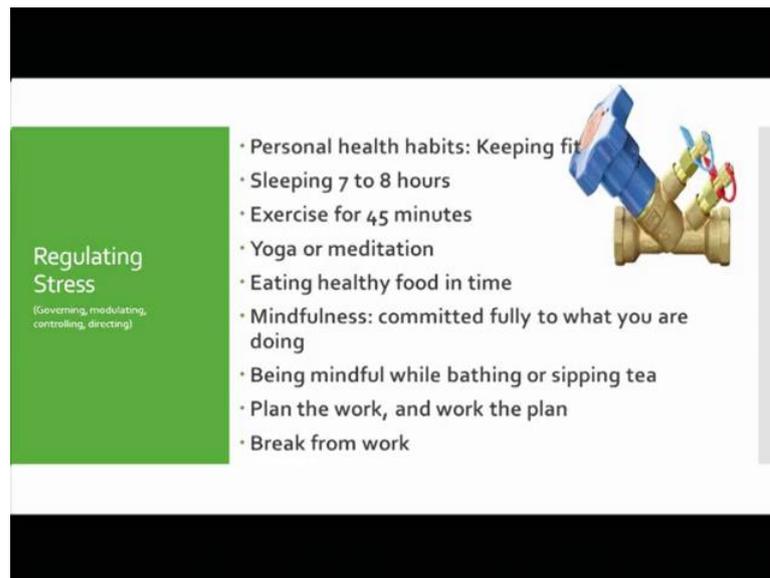
Where is this stress coming from? If you look at this, you will know that stress is coming from mostly the environment, the surroundings. So, the surrounding can mean one thing like it could be your home it could be your office, but it can also be the place where you spend most of your time like, the place where you go for education or for your work or any kind of general surroundings. Like in the entire country, suddenly the enemy country comes and drops some bombs— so again it is a stressful situation. You went to the airport and then you came to know that it is been bombarded by some bombs, so you run away from the place—stress.

Stress can come from the workplace just because of your colleagues. Stress can also come to you just because of life style. How? Suppose you are a spendthrift . . . suppose you are a spendthrift like you spend whatever and then you are shopaholic that whenever you go to the shop you feel like buying things, you enjoy shopping. So, you swipe your credit card and then you spend more than what is required, and then you end up taking lot of credit lot of loan and you are not able to pay it, and then, you are not able to manage your income and expense. So, your life style itself throwing huge parties, giving expensive gifts and then buying very costly dress materials, spending money on things like perfume. So, everything if it is within the income limit that is fine, but if it is exceeding your life style itself can cause a problem.

Colleagues, in the work place; so not all people are alike, some people you feel that even when you see the person coming in front of you . . . so that day starts with high stress. You wonder whether that person is going to pull your legs, whether the person is trying to manipulate and get somethings out of you. Because, in your mind that person is evil, so that person is not good, and maybe, it is true. And then by seeing the person itself it can give you some kind of stress. And then in the general surroundings, as I said anything that will change the environment, and if it breaks your comfort zone, it can cause you stress. In education, when the competition is happening either in the classroom or outside for curricular or extracurricular activities, it will give you some stress.

But most of the times, in education, it should be a positive kind of stress, although we hear some rare exemptions where students are not able to beat stress, not able to cope up with that and then even go to the extent of either falling prey to bad habits, like taking alcohol or any addictive drugs or even going to the extent of becoming emotionally and then mentally weak, and even committing suicide; both are happening unfortunately.

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Now, how can you regulate stress? Look at the picture that I have put. So, you can say that the red one is the bad stress, the blue one is the good stress. Now, you need to regulate both the bad stress as well as the good stress okay. And then you have a weight regulator, so that is there in your mind, that is there in your body, that is there in your soul. So, you keep this and then you try to moderate.

How can you do this? The first and most important thing is developing personal health habits, keeping fit. Now when I say keeping fit I don't mean to say that just try to maintain six packs, spend your entire time in the gym, spend all the time running or jogging. No; at least 45 minutes in a day. It could be walking, it could be jogging, it could be heavy cycling, so it could be playing some games; it could be playing tennis, it could be playing TT or squash or whatever thing that you like, but at least 45 minutes or if you could spend on weekdays, the weekends about 1 and half hours. So, you will keep fit.

Now, apart from that habit which you should do generally in the morning, early hours, preferably, which again, I am presuming that you are waking up early in the morning after sleeping for 7 to 8 hours. If you can regulate your sleep, if you can sleep each night 7 to 8 hours peacefully and then even if there is heavy thunder, lightning nothing will trouble you and then you will sleep peacefully, so that sleep, deep sleep if you can do then get up in the morning, walk for 45 minutes jog or do whatever you want, and then you will be keeping fit.

To this, some people add yoga or meditation or any kind of spiritual experience like even just going to a peaceful place. For some, peaceful place can be temple or a church or a mosque, for some, peaceful place can be just a very calm natural environment where you can just sit and then relax; even sitting before a river, walking around the sea. So, walking around the sea, for example, if you are living near coastal areas, early morning can give you lot of calming effects. They say that even medically also it's proven that our brain itself is tuned to the waves, the sound, and then the sight that you see, it's actually having a kind of soothing effect.

The next thing that you need to do after regulating your sleep and then maintaining a very regular exercise regime which becomes a ritual, the next thing is eating healthy food in time. So as the common sayings goes that you should eat your breakfast and it is compulsory and you should be able to eat that as they say like a prince, so you should eat heavily. And then lunch—moderate. And then as they say that when you come to dinner you eat like a pauper, you eat like somebody who has no money. Then try to finish it by 6 to 7 pm, and then, give some gap before you sleep. Now if you can regulate this, this alone will help you to completely control any kind of stress.

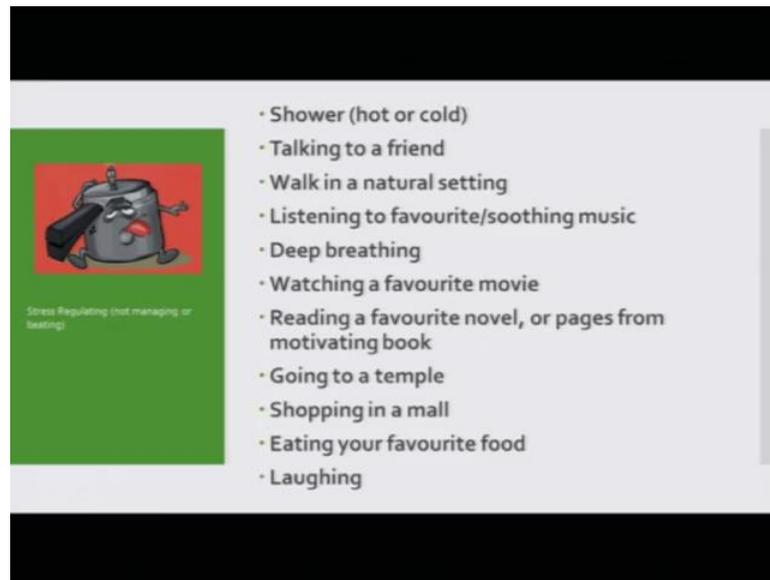
Now most of the times what happens your work will creep into your sleep, your work will affect your regular eating habit, your family stress will affect your exercise. Now the moment you lose balance; exercise is gone, sleep is gone. And then, any kind of other activity associated with like yoga or meditation is completely destructed. And eating healthy food is gone, because you are not able to eat in time. So you eat junk food available on the road, so you spoil your health. Everything can go if you break this cycle; eat, sleep, and then, exercise. If this is broken you are actually contributing to stress. So, don't do that.

Then being mindful; so, both in terms of, for example, if you are bathing or even sipping tea you should be able to be mindful. Now what do I mean by that. For example, we say mindfulness, so mindfulness implies that you are committed fully to what you are doing. Apply this even when you are bathing; feel fully alive to the water that is getting sprinkled through the showers on your body. Even when you sip tea your entire mind is just enjoying the aroma, the fragrance of the tea, and then, enjoying the taste of the tea instead of thinking *oh what I have to do today? What is there waiting for me?* So, do not think all the thing. Focus, be mindful. Do completely fully the task that you are doing even if it is a very small thing: drinking water—enjoy drinking that!

The next thing that will help you regulate stress is ***you should plan the work and then work the plan***. Thus, no way you can stop your stress without planning your work and then trying to work the plan, execute it in time. I will talk more about this maybe in the coming lectures, as how you can actually regulate this work plan and then how you can achieve your targets without getting stressed. But at this stage, enough to tell you that you need to plan, and then, you need to plan that you finish before the deadline, and then have some free time, and then take break from work. Sometimes don't work at a stretch, take break, just go out for a cup of tea, and talk to your friend talk to your colleague.

Or even if you have been working for 2, 3 years continuously without taking any leave any vocation, it is high time that you take a long break from work. So, go to some mountains like, in India you can go to the Himalayas. So just breathe, just feel, just experience the mountain so that itself will give you some kind of refreshing feeling. Even looking at the snow they say that it is kind of invigorating experience. . . . Take a break from your work that is again important.

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Now, for a quick remedy like if you want to quickly get relief from stress, they say that there are some very tiny things like you can take a shower, some people like hot shower, especially, in winter or cold shower some people like. So, whatever it is, it is just going to reduce your stress, but you should enjoy the shower, you should be mindful. Talking to your friend; a very close friend somebody whom you lose touch for quite some time calling and talking and surprising the friend, and even sharing with the friend that you are stressed for this particular reason *oh the friend will just tell you so many things and tell you that oh you are such a resourceful person and you shouldn't be worried about it*, that reassurance will again make you feel invigorated and go back to your work. Walking in a natural setting, like if you are inside the room, just come out even if there is a lawn space, just go and take a small walk in the lawn; that will reduce the stress.

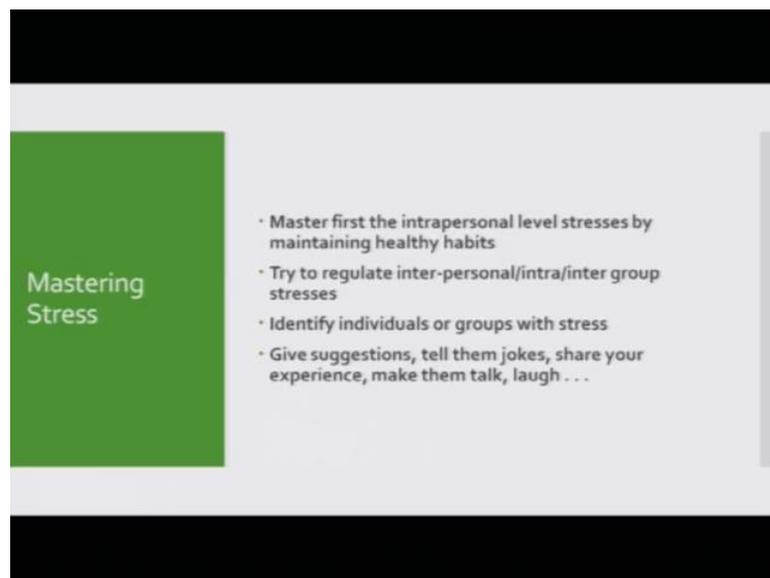
Listening to your favorite music or any soothing music that is again going to reduce it; why? Because music itself appeals your all senses, it appeals to your emotion, it also touches your spirit. And then, here if you ask me what should be the kind of music, I will say just your favorite music. Some of you may be fond of some favorite singers, go for your favorite singers. Some likes some ghazals and all that, but some would enjoy rock music no problem. Listen to your favorite one, the most popular ones.

Then some times for quick thing do deep breathing, so inhale and exhale very deeply. Especially, they say that before giving an interview before going for a talk. So, this deep

breathing, or even your manager has called to shout at you just outside, take some deep breathing, it is going to help you. For some people, watching a favorite movie, so that also helps to regulate the stress. For many others, reading a favorite novel or even pages from motivating books. So, some people even go to the religious scripts like *Bible*, *Quran* or *Gita*, so that they can look at that. Some people go to temple or mosque or church. For some, even going for shopping in a mall that also helps them to regulate stress and there are some people who enjoy eating good food.

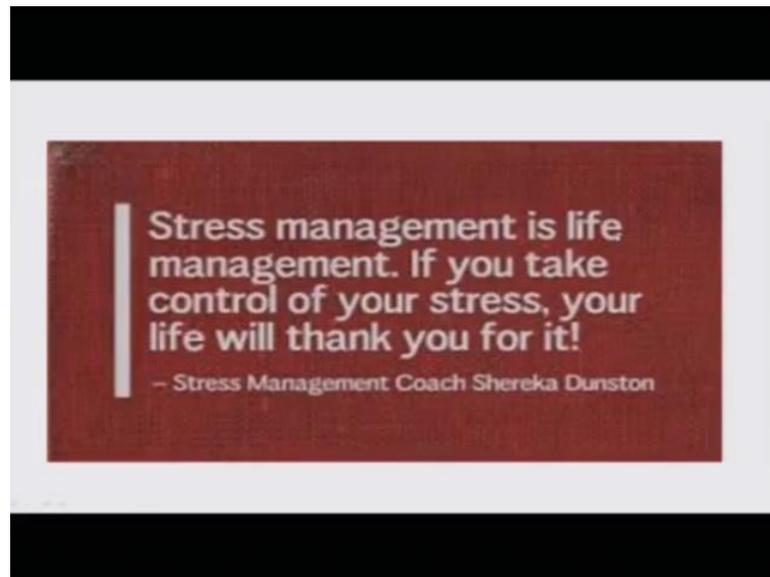
Last, but not the least laughing. So, that can actually give you so much of relaxation from stress. Watch your favorite comic movies or just even any comic books reading that will also help you. Now finally, I would suggest that you should also become an expert in handling stress.

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Master the stress, first at the intrapersonal level, and then, by maintaining healthy habits. But then, go to the intrapersonal and then inter group stresses level later. Identify people with stress. Go, help them, give suggestions, tell them jokes, share your experience, make them talk, make them laugh.

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And as a last concluding thought I want to share this from a Coach this Shereka Dunston who says that, “Stress management is actually life management, if you take control of your stress, your life will thank you for it”. Thank you for listening to this and I hope you will use these tips to control stress and live a very grateful life.

Thank you.