OVERCOME THE KILLER STRESS

All situations are man-made. Therefore, a solution to one does exist. Accept your situation as it exists and plan afresh. Brace up mentally and take up the challenge.

■ by D. P. Sabharwal

"There is something wrong with Sudhir. He is not his usual self. Instead, he remains lost and aloof. At times, he behaves oddly and most of the time he is jittery. And the worst is, he does not tell me anything," said Renu and then looking directly at me, she, sort of requested, "why don't you have a word with him, Saby?"

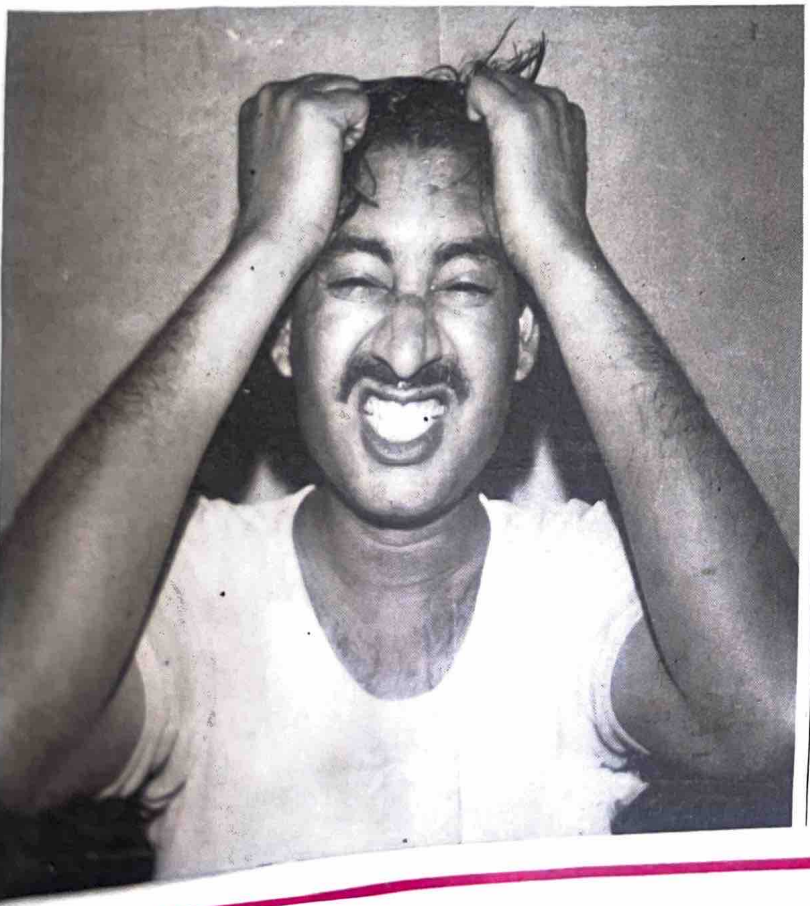
"I will do that. But tell me one thing. Is there any change in his daily routine. I hope he is not tired and fatigued."

"No, not at all. Physically he is maintaining himself. As usual, he goes to bed early, gets up at five, goes for run and never misses his game of badminton at the club. It is something else that is bothering him," replied Renu.

A day later, I got a chance to meet Sudhir. In the course of our talks, I found out the cause of his odd behaviour. Like many others he too was suffering from another type of fatigue called psychological fatigue and normally referred to as stress.

Our general understanding of the term fatigue is often limited to tiredness. This facet of fatigue is termed as physiological fatigue and is related to output. It can be defined as a state of lowered efficiency in the organism, brought about by the expenditure of energy in doing work. During this process, energy-producing material, glycogen, gets consumed. In turn, certain substances like carbon dioxide and lactic acid are produced which are toxic and act as poison to the tissues. Accumulation of these toxic substances in the muscles tend to reduce muscular activity. A person in such a condition is physically fatigued. The natural cure for this is, of course, rest.

There are certain things over which you have no control. And it is never the end of the world for you.



Fatigue, like a coin, however has another side. Anyone who has driven a vehicle for a very long distance to reach a destination knows that the interest in reaching the place is often maintained long after the body feels tired. On the other hand, anyone who has to do a routine and uninteresting mechanical work, feels tired and fatigued very soon, although bodily he is not tired. Well, this is psychological fatigue or so-called stress.

In today's world of competition and fast moving life, almost all of us feel "stressed" sometime or the other. More often than not, it is self-created and its causes can be many and varied like:

(i) Deciding to "do better than others"—come what may;

(ii) Non-attainment of goals that have been set high to start with;

(iii) Fear of reprimand or punishment after something wrong has been done which is not known to others;

(iv) Anxiety of promotion or renewal of business contract, etc.

Basic problem

Now, the basic problem with stress is that there are no precise or well defined measures to ascertain its level in individuals, unlike the techniques available for measuring fatigue. Furthermore, the effects of stress are far more serious. It saps energy, affects morale and generally lowers willpower. In the long run, it can affect an individual's career and his social life. There have been many cases where stress has spoiled or even destroyed happy married lives. In extreme cases, it has led individuals to suicidal tendencies.

There is no denying the fact that stress must be overcome. And this has to be done by the individual concerned. But it is easier said than done. But then, in this world, everything considered insurmountable has been overcome. People past 60 have climbed Mount Everest. All that is required is will power to start with and then small but firm steps forward, taken gradually.

Given below are 7 positive steps which can help one overcome stress successfully.

In our society, it is often heard that "a man should share his joy and not sorrow." Well, it is true to some extent but the statement does not represent the absolute truth. All it implies is that a man should not start crying in front of all and sundry. There is no harm in speaking to

someone very close to your heart—say your wife if you are married or your brother, sister, mother or father in case you are a bachelor. A close friend can be a good substitute. By speaking to someone, you are likely to let off a lot of accumulated stress and feel relieved. In addition, you may get some suggestion which may help you solve the problem that is causing worry and consequently tension and stress.

There are certain stress-creating situations about which one cannot or does not want to talk to others. In such cases, it would be worthwhile to find some funny angle to it and then laugh it out.

In this regard I remember a play I had seen long back. It was about a man who was troubled at home by his nagging wife and at office by his burly boss. The two, acting independently, were driving him to madness. Then he devised a plan to overcome this. On his way home from office, he started spending an hour in a secluded place. There he would take out the photographs of his wife and boss and place them side by side. He would then snide, sneer and mock at them. He would create and enact imaginary fights between the two and then giggle and laugh. This brought back cheerfulness to him.

Learn to relax

A tailor once gave this advice: "To keep your clothes in good condition, empty your pockets every night." This is a good advice for all of us in a figurative sense. To keep the stress away, we should always remember to empty our minds of fear, worry, bitterness and enmity. Even when under stress, we should try to relax and try to push the problems out of our mind by thinking of something else. It is quite probable that in doing so we might hit upon the solution to the problem causing us stress.

When the going becomes tough, take a break. This will undoubtedly break the chain of events that is causing the stress. If the problem is at office, stay away from it. Spend your time at home. But if the problem is at home, go out for a few days and take your family with you even if the root cause of the problem is your spouse. A change of place, different environment and a different set-up will do wonders for you. Your attitude, your behavioral pattern, your thinking and your perspective about everything will change for the better. The only thing you will lose in the bargain will be your stress.

When under stress, start a hobby. This will definitely take you away from worries. In addition, it will leave you fresh to go back to the problem with a fresh mind. One need not confine oneself to conventional hobbies like stamp or coin collection, etc. One should use ingenuity, since hobby means "a favourite pursuit followed as an amusement."

A businessman friend of mine had developed a unique hobby. Whenever he was under tension or stress he sat down with a foolscap paper to tear it into 128 bits of equal size. He used to get so engrossed in this exercise that almost always he forgot his worries.

No problem, causing a lot of stress can be overcome instantly. Try to see if the problem is due to some extraneous factors. If so, stop worrying and learn to live with it.

For example, if torrential rain has interrupted your planned business, you just cannot do anything about it except building up pressure, creating tension and causing stress to yourself. On such occasions one should keep in mind this saying: "God, give me the strength to change those things that can be changed, the patience to accept those that cannot be changed, and the wisdom to know the difference."

A friend of mine was superseded. Being diligent and hard-working, he was absolutely sure of being promoted. Thus when he came to know of his supersession, he had a shock. In the ensuing months, he turned from a jolly, fun-loving and highly sociable man into a dejected, withdrawn and short-tempered person. No amount of talk or advice helped him. Then suddenly I noticed a positive change in his behaviour and attitude. He was back to his earlier happy state of mind. When I asked him the secret of his recovery, he said, "Well, I have accepted the fact that there are certain things over which I have no control. So what is the use of fretting and fuming over it? In any case, the roof has not fallen over my head and it is definitely not the end of the world for me."

Marcus Cicero has said, "If a man aspires to the highest place, it is no dishonour to him to halt at the second, or even at the third."

Thus when you are up against a wall or come across unexpected insurmountable obstacles, sit back and review your goals rather than get into depression and a state of mental tension and stress. Accept the situation as it exists and plan afresh. Be modest with your aim and goals this time. You will find that you not only feel better but your ability to perform also improves.

All situations are man-made. Therefore, a solution to each one, however tricky it may be, does exist. If you ever get into a tight spot, do not lie there fuming and fretting. Be brave, brace up mentally and decide to take on the challenge. And before you actually move, you will find the stress has vanished. □□

COMMON CAUSES OF BLINDNESS

Glaucoma (which can come on very slowly or very suddenly) and cataract (a slowly developing cloudiness of vision) are 2 important causes of blindness.

This group of eye disorders is caused by a build-up of pressure of fluid inside your eyeball. The fluid secreted in the eye is always at a fairly high pressure so that the eyeballs do not collapse, but excess pressure squeezes the tiny blood vessels in the eye that carry blood to the nerve cells at the back of the eyeball, resulting in patches of blindness in the field of vision.

Nobody knows what causes the build-up of pressure inside the eyeball in chronic, simple glaucoma, which usually affects people above 40, especially the elderly. However, it has been found that the tendency for this disease runs in families, and is common among people with diabetes or high blood pressure.

When defective drainage of fluid secreted inside the eyeball occurs, this can be improved by drops or tablets prescribed by the doctor. These have to be taken for life. Sometimes, surgery is also resorted to.

Glaucoma cannot be prevented, but it can be discovered and controlled early by regular eye check-ups for people over 40, especially those with a family history of glaucoma, and those suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure.

The other major cause of blindness, especially among the elderly, is cataract, with its gradual cloudiness of vision, going from a slight halo around bright lights to the point where reading and sewing are impossible without glasses.

The commonest cause of cataracts is simply the ageing factor: the gradual breakdown in the production of special proteins (collagens), and not much can be done to prevent its onset.

A cataract can be treated very effectively by a simple operation to remove the cloudy lens (for that is what cataract is). A tiny incision is made at the side of the cornea and the lens is gently pulled out. Afterwards, the patient wears a spectacle lens or contact lens to replace the one that has been removed. By this simple procedure the near-blind can see quite well again. □□