Today's executive is constantly subjected to mental tensions, anxiety, depression and frustration. In other words, stress is an essential accompaniment of executive performance. Increasingly, it is being realized that concern for executive health is vital for organizational well-being.

In this article, D M Pestonjee and Nina Muncherji describe various types of diseases executives are prone to and suggest how HRD interventions can help in promoting the overall health of the executive.

**Introduction**

Human Resource Development (HRD), a phrase that has come into greater currency during this past decade, represents a new world-view which takes a positive view of people and their potential and tries to foster a climate conducive to growth and development.

HRD has gone a long way since the first treatise on the theme was published by Pareek and Rao (1980). There are several publications from Indian scholars available now (Rao, 1987; Nair and Rao, 1990; Rao, 1990; Saiyadain, 1988; Silvera, 1988). HRD is one of the several organizational processes evolved to cope with the changing environment and to maintain the organization at its effective best. The focus is on development rather than on control. HRD is a process by which the employees of an organization are helped in a continuous and planned way (1) to acquire or sharpen capabilities required to perform various functions associated with their present or expected future roles (2) to develop their general capabilities as individuals and discover and exploit their own inner potential for their own and/or organizational development purposes; (3) to develop an organizational culture in which superior-subordinate relationships, team work, and collaboration among sub-units are strong and contribute to the professional well being, motivation and pride of employees (Rao, 1987).

According to Monappa (1985), HRD is:

- A new concept of people based on understanding of their complex and shifting needs.
- A new concept of power based on code termination accepted by management.
- A new concept of human values based on humanistic and democratic ideas.

When HRD activities are based on these assumptions, the entire approach to people in organizations undergoes a sea change. The emphasis shifts from "maximization of performance" and "compensation" towards "employee potential awareness creation" and "employee potential realization" (Joseph, 1987).
HRD and Executive Health

In short, HRD aims at helping people to become more competent in order to be able to perform their functions well and thus leading to a more effective organization. However, an important element in the HRD approach, which is often ignored, is the health dimension. Scattered references to the subject may be tracked back to as early as the year 1567 in Paracelsus' monograph on 'Miners' Sickness and other Miners' Diseases', but the earliest text book seems to have been the 'Disease of Tradesman' by Bernardino Ramazzini (1633-1714). (Source: JAC Brown, 1954). These early scientific treatises clearly indicate a link between health, disease and human resource effectiveness.

Contemporary writings on HRD and HRM focus mainly on the role of individuals in organizations while the individual employee at a more intensely personal level has generally been overlooked. The realization is slowly emerging that care and concern for the health of the individual executive is one of the basic self-imposed requirements of all progressive and forward looking organizations. It has been seen that many ailments from which executives suffer are not purely physiological but could also be psychological or psychosomatic in nature. Their roots may lie in mental anxieties and stresses generated by the happenings in organizations. Ironically, some of the HRD processes themselves may be contributing to health-related problems. Today's executive is often subjected to mental tensions, anxieties, stress, depression, frustrations and so on.

An attempt has been made in this paper to describe various types of diseases executives suffer from in order to make a case for how HRD interventions can help in promoting the physical, mental and social well-being of the executive. The paper is organized along the following lines:

• At the outset, an attempt is made to describe briefly the physiological basis of the capacity of human beings to cope with stress.
• A description of major psychological, psychosomatic and physiological ailments of executives follows.
• Various techniques for coping with stress are evaluated.
• An attempt has also been made to suggest ways and means of integrating concern for health with HRD processes in organizations.

Physiology of Stress

Whenever man is subjected to any severe demand or stress, the entire physiology tries to help him cope in the best possible way by making the required internal adjustments. All these adjustments/changes are under the control of two major systems:

• the autonomic nervous system
• the endocrine system

The Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)

The ANS is that portion of the central nervous system which controls all the involuntary functions of the body. This has two major sub divisions, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic. The sympathetic nervous system has its highest centre in the hypothalamus. This is situated inside the brain almost in the centre covered by large folds of cerebral cortex. The first order relay station is the sympathetic chain with its nuclei arranged on either side of the spinal cord. Whenever there is a demand of any form, the hypothalamus is excited which in turn sends electrical impulses through the sympathetic nerves which activate the functions of various organs like the heart, blood vessels, sweat glands, etc.

The sympathetic nervous system, as the name implies, sympathizes with the person to help him bring about all the necessary physiological changes to cope with the situation.

The parasympathetic nervous system consists of a large nerve, the vagus, with its centre in the brain stem. It descends down the neck, chest and abdomen. Stimulation of this nerve assists the sympathetic nervous system in adaptation (See Box 1/or functions of ANS).

Functions of ANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function of Internal Organ</th>
<th>Stimulation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart (a) Pulse Rate</td>
<td>Increases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Blood Pressure</td>
<td>Increases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweating</td>
<td>Increases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eyes (a) Pupils</td>
<td>Dilates</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) Eye Lids</td>
<td>Widely Open</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretion of Digestive Juices</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowel Mobility</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blood Glucose</td>
<td>Increases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lungs Air Passage</td>
<td>Widely Open</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muscle Tone</td>
<td>Increases</td>
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The Endocrine System

The endocrine gland that is chiefly involved in adaptation to stress and other demands is the adrenal gland. The secretions of the thyroid gland also come into the picture. These endocrine glands secrete small quantities of highly potent chemicals called hormones into the blood which can bring about widespread changes similar to sympathetic stimulation. The adrenal glands are situated as caps on top of the kidneys.

The adrenal medulla (the central portion) secretes adrenalin and nor-adrenalin. The adrenal cortex (the outer layer) secretes corticosteroids hormones. The thyroid gland situated in the neck secretes thyroxin. Growth hormones secreted by the pituitary gland in the skull also assist in adaptation.

Increases in the level of these hormones in the blood brings about all changes required for adaptation to stress and hence they are named stress hormones.

The release of corticosteroids and thyroxin by their respective glands are under the control of ACTH (Adreno Corticotrophic Hormone) and STH (Somatotropic Hormones) secreted by the pituitary gland. Further, the secretion of ACTH and STH is under the control of hormones secreted by the hypothalamus. Thus, there is a hierarchy of hormones that control the release of stress hormones. The hypothalamus seems to function as the chief button that controls both the autonomic nervous (electrical) activity and endocrinal (chemical) activity.

The main functions of the hypothalamus are:

• Regulation of blood circulation, digestion, respiration, urine formation and body temperature.
• Control of metabolism of carbohydrates, fats and proteins.
• Regulation of ionic environment (electrolytes) within the body through neurohumoral secretions (Homeostasis).
• Autonomic integration of the bodily activities.
• Regulation of all activities of the endocrine system which plays an important role in the cellular and tissue activity. In addition, it also exerts a stimulatory influence on the cerebral cortex. Similarly, the cerebral cortex, especially the frontal lobe, exerts its influence on the hypothalamus directly and also through the limbic system. In all the problems of stress and its disorders, the hypothalamus plays a significant role.

According to Dr Selye, the body reacts to any stress in three stages which he describes as the "General Adaptation Syndrome" (GAS).

The three stages are:

1. Stage of Alarm Reaction: The first stage includes an initial "shock phase" in which resistance is lowered, and a "countershock phase" in which the defensive mechanism becomes active. There is confusion, disorientation and distortion of realities and resistance is down.
2. Stage of Resistance: Maximum adaptation occurs in this stage; the signs include fatigue, anxiety, tension and irritability. If the stressor persists, or the defensive reaction proves ineffective, the organism deteriorates to the next stage.
3. Stage of Exhaustion: Adaptation energy is exhausted, signs of alarm reactions reappear, and resistance levels begin to decline irreversibly. The organism collapses.

Stress may manifest itself in different forms. It might be useful to discuss executive stress and health under three categories: (i) psychological, (ii) psychosomatic, and (iii) physiological.

Psychological Ailments

Emotional stress is a well known aspect of modern life. It is estimated that 50 per cent of the executives suffer from emotional strain and anxiety as they have to face various organizational problems and sometimes job requirements also produce anxiety. One is usually unaware that headaches, backaches, indigestion, raised blood pressure and fatigue are due to emotional stress. The individual may not have the faintest idea that his unpleasant emotions are responsible for physiological disturbances.

By and large, all emotions can be classified into two groups. The first group of emotions produces the optimal stimulation of the endocrine glands. The individual feels fit and fine. The pleasant emotions are love, tenderness, hope, joy, courage and equanimity. The other group of emotions which produces overstimulation of the endocrine glands are called unpleasant emotions. They are anger, rage, hatred, frustration, failure and aggressiveness. Unpleasant emotions over-stimulate the autonomic nervous system as well as the endocrine glands and produce emotionally induced disorders.

It is the unpleasant emotions like aggressiveness, hatred, rage and jealousy which cause not only all the illnesses but also depression and chronic tiredness because of the excessive production of stress hormones. These are called the ACTH and STH Disorders.

Infections as well as prolonged, unhealthy emotions trigger STH Stress Disorders. In the beginning, the
individual feels tired, lethargic and has muscular aches and pains all over his body. If this prolongs, numerous STH disorders manifest themselves. Bronchial asthma, rheumatoid arthritis and high blood pressure are some examples.

**ACTH Stress Disorders** are commonly seen in persons with aggressive, unpleasant emotions. They step on the gas constantly; they are subconsciously hostile to other fellow human beings. Duodenal ulcers and heart attacks are frequently found in people who suffer from these disorders. These individuals closely resemble the Type A personality. They are time-conscious, easily upset or hurt, always struggling to do or achieve something without a definite goal in sight.

Another psychological factor that can cause illness is the inability to adapt oneself to new circumstances. Man can only function in a suitable environment and there is a limit to which he can adapt himself to the changing circumstances or environment. Repeated changes in life style disturbs the individual; some individuals adjust and adapt themselves to the changes but others may become tense and anxious and may become more and more prone to sickness.

What John Lobingier of the Connecticut Montreal Life Insurance Corporation calls the three "A's" are the most obvious signs of stress — absenteeism, accidents and alcoholism.

Executive stress lowers managerial efficiency and adversely affects corporate performance. Stress is not just a killer but adds to the loss incurred by the company in terms of lowered efficiency and medical treatment bills.

**Depression** is the emotional state of dejection, gloomy ruminations, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, and usually apprehension. Take the example of an executive who is qualified, experienced, sincere but is deprived of a promotion which is given to a junior only because of his influential contacts. Here the executive may become depressed, lose interest in his job and if it prolongs it may manifest itself in some psychosomatic disorder like bronchial asthma or rheumatoid arthritis, etc. High aspirations and low self-image also cause depression.

Depression can be of two types — endogenous and exogenous. Endogenous depression is self made, largely of one's own making without any apparent reasons, e.g., seeing a colleague prosper, etc., whilst exogenous or reactive depression is due to factors beyond our control such as noise, environment, pollution and so on. Because endogenous depression is within our control, it is easier to take care of it as against exogenous depression, where the factors may be beyond our control.

A study done at California Institute of Technology has revealed that 7 out of 8 men in professional and managerial positions undergo a period of frustration in their mid-thirties, and one in six never fully recover from it, either because they demand too much of themselves or too much is demanded of them (Batlivala, 1990).

Frustration takes the form of depressive feelings, increased irritability, discontent and lack of effort towards improving. Depression in its acute form can even lead to suicide. Depressed people exist passively and without hope, alienated from their families, friends, work as well as themselves. There are several possible reasons for depression such as divorce, marital separation, death of a spouse, retirement, etc., which tend to cause severe depression in some persons.

When depressed, some persons either oversleep or wake up in the middle of the night, while others have difficulty in falling off to sleep. The same is true of appetite. While some tend to overeat, others tend to lose their appetite. Depressed persons are even more inclined to complain of vague aches and pains too.

Anxiety is a state of emotional tension characterized by apprehension, fearfulness, and psychic pain.

Every executive's job has certain aspects which can cause anxiety and he deals with it either by directly attacking the source or escaping from it. Almost all executives, however, escape some job-induced anxiety through a variety of unproductive, often unconscious psychological mechanisms — such as rationalization, blaming, denial and so forth. One of the most prevalent and costly of these mechanisms is what we call "busyness": the escape into time consuming activities that managers find less threatening to perform, than the tough aspects of their jobs (Ashkenas and Schaffer, 1982).

There are basically three job requirements which cause anxiety to the executives:

- constant changes in work patterns and routines
- pressure from superiors for better performance
- dealing with and getting better results from subordinates.

The most common mental component of harmful stress is abnormal anxiety. Short feelings of anxiety are often helpful even though they may seem unpleasant at the time.
The student working for an exam is likely to work harder if he is anxious about doing well. The mother who gets anxious about her son playing on the road will move him to a safer place and thus reduce the risk of an accident. The list is endless; without anxiety all our lives would be poorer. Harmful stress anxiety is so crippling it stops us from doing anything constructive.

A little anxiety is good for us but too much is deadly. Once it gets out of hand, it seems to be with us constantly. Instead of being turned on by demand, it surrounds us like a cloud. When this happens, we cannot say what we are anxious about and make feeble excuses to satisfy others. In reality, every little change is taken as a serious threat. If anxiety continues at this pitch for any length of time we become inefficient shadows of our normal selves.

By teaching mastery of anxiety through relaxation techniques, biofeedback and self-assertion, the ambitious type of people can improve their self-confidence and prevent their surroundings from dictating their actions. They will still be worriers but will no longer be imprisoned by anxiety.

Alcoholism: The problem of alcoholism is not new in the history of mankind. However, only in recent years it has come to be regarded as a psychiatric disorder.

Contrary to popular beliefs, alcohol is not a stimulant but a depressant which attacks and numbs the higher brain centres, thus lessening their inhibiting control. As behavioural restraints decline, more primitive emotional responses appear.

There are certain psychotic reactions which typically develop in individuals who have drunk excessively over long periods. Acute psychotic reactions last only for a short time and consist mainly of confusion, excitement and delirium. Some commonly recognized subtypes are:

(a) Pathological intoxication which occurs in persons whose tolerance to alcohol is very low, or in normal persons whose tolerance to alcohol is temporarily lessened by exhaustion, emotional stress and so on. With even moderate amounts of alcohol, the individual may suddenly become hallucinated and disoriented and may show homicidal rage.

(b) Delirium tremens is a fairly common occurrence among those who have drunk excessively for a long time. Major symptoms are disorientation of time and place, vivid hallucinations, particularly of small, fast moving animals like snakes, rats and cockroaches, acute fear in which these hallucinated animals may change in form, size and colour and terrify the individual, and marked coarse tremors of the hands, tongue and lips. The delirium usually lasts from three to six days and is usually followed by a deep sleep.

(c) Acute alcoholic hallucinosis: The main symptoms are auditory hallucinations. At first the individual typically hears a voice coming from one person and merely making some simple statements. With time, however, the hallucinations usually extend to the voices of several people who become critical and reproachful.

The habitual use of excessive amounts of alcohol as a means of adjusting to life's problems is frequently accompanied by general personality deterioration with a gradual intellectual and moral decline. Often there will be disturbances of memory, judgement, and ability to concentrate. The individual becomes coarse and impulsive in behaviour, takes less and less responsibility, loses pride in personal appearance, neglects his family, becomes touchy and irritable concerning his drinking and will brook no interference. Unfortunately, alcohol consumption is taken as a way of life amongst a large number of executives. The disturbing trend is that a large number of younger executives are falling a prey to this menace.

Burnout Stress Syndrome: Boss

All gainful activities classified as work or job are fraught with some risk of stress. Boss is a debilitating psychological condition brought about by unrelieved work stress. Four types of consequences can arise from it (Veninga and Spradley, 1981):

- depletion of energy reserves
- lowered resistance to illness
- increased dissatisfaction and pessimism
- increased absenteeism and inefficiency at work.

One of the first consequences of unrelieved work stress takes the form of depleted energy reserves. When people talk about burning out, they usually report feelings of exhaustion, weariness and loss of enthusiasm. They feel tired when they go to bed and also when they wake up. When one's energy runs low, it can affect leisure- time activities also.

The second result of the stress that causes job burnout is lowered resistance to illness. The exact manner in which work stress lowers people's resistance to illness and contributes to disease is not fully understood. Yet, scientific studies have shown that stress is
implied in many serious illnesses. A study of NASA personnel working on space flights showed direct relation between coronary-artery disease and stressful jobs (Veninga and Spradley, 1981).

The stress of job burnout also leads to increased dissatisfaction and pessimism. Again and again, it has been found that as people lived with unrelieved stress, the jobs they once enjoyed turned sour. It was also found that when people did learn to cope with work pressures, when they recovered from job burnout, their satisfaction level went up dramatically. For many, dissatisfaction turns to pessimism (Veninga and Spradley, 1981).

Finally, job burnout leads to increased absenteeism and inefficiency at work. This may occur because of actual stress-related illness or simply lowered morale. And when job burnout sets in, even those days on the job are less efficiently spent. Workers under stress take longer coffee breaks, take longer to accomplish the tasks, make more mistakes, and put off tasks that require immediate attention.

**Psychosomatic Ailments**

A normal person is able to discharge emotional tensions through appropriate verbal expression, fantasy or physical activities. However, in psychosomatic disorders, the usual channels of emotional outlet are largely blocked; the tension is discharged instead through the visceral organs which takes place on an unconscious level.

The emotional aspects of conflict can reach a resolution in specific somatic ways.

The tension which comes with anger or resentment can be internalized as a duodenal ulcer or hypertension. It is often difficult to accept that some aches and pains, indigestion, and asthma are due to unpleasant emotions.

Chronic anxiety is found to have adverse results. In psychosomatic disorders, the psychological and physiological variables are intermeshed.

Psycho-emotional tensions can cause a number of organic diseases, and these are on the increase all over the world. Here is an investigator's findings regarding the percentage of times physicians find physical complaints to be emotionally induced in whole or in part:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pain in back or neck</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulcer-like stomach ache</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call-stone like pain</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizziness</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin rash</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatulence</td>
<td>90%</td>
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**Headaches:** Most headaches are due to tension. Ninety-five percent headaches and pain at the back of the neck are due to psychological factors rather than a severe illness or injury.

The most common headaches are (a) **Tension headaches** caused by the head and neck muscles going into spasm due to prolonged and sustained contraction. The muscle spasm leads to constriction of blood vessels producing pain. The muscle spasm is due to stress, (b) **Psychogenic headaches** are brought on by psychological stress and frustration, either in the home or at the office, (c) **Migraine:** This headache is a half-headache, splitting and throbbing in nature, and occurring periodically — usually after periods of tension. The headache is usually preceded by a short period of tenseness, loss of appetite, etc. This is followed by severe headache with nausea and vomitting. The migraine-prone individual is sensitive, usually a perfectionist, and a constant worrier.

Some remedies for headaches are: analgesics, massage of the head and neck, application of balm. For longer lasting effects, mental relaxation and stress relieving techniques are recommended.

**Backaches:** Homosapiens is the only mammal that walks on two legs. To maintain vertical position, man has powerful back muscles. Modern man, however, hardly walks, especially in the cities, where he always makes use of some mode of transport or the other. This constant inactivity weakens his muscle of the back and calf and may lead to some back problems. Emotional tension also produces a spasm leading to a chronic low backache.

The best remedy for this is yoga and certain exercises which help to strengthen the muscles.

**Tight Colon:** Tense individuals have tight colons. The commonest complaint of a tense executive is incomplete evacuation of the bowels. Thus, the individual should learn to relax. There are many methods like yoga, walking or games which can help.

**Stomach Ulcers:** Ambitious, active individuals with underlying dependency problems often suffer from ulcers. They generally react to problems with anxiety, aggression and anger. These unpleasant aggressive emotions when prolonged are internalized and lead to ulcers.

Among the diseases which afflict executives, peptic ulcers is caused exclusively due to wrong habits. It is now universally accepted that a multitude of factors cause and contribute to the formation of peptic ulcers. The most common cause is hyper-secretion of gastric juice containing acid which is basically corrosive in nature.
Improper food habits also have an important role to play in the formation of ulcers. Regular intake of alcohol and consumption of spicy food also lead to ulcers.

Smoking is yet another habit which causes secretion of excessive acid and formation of ulcers. Ulcers may also run in some families due to unhealthy habits transmitted by social heredity. According to the latest scientific data, it is usually a combination of the above factors which leads to the development of an ulcer.

However, those who do not appreciate the fact that ulcers are a psychosomatic disease do not fully understand the cause of this problem. As with other disease states, there are many contributory factors such as mental attitude, volatile emotional state, diet, etc.

What we eat affects our body directly. It can also affect our body indirectly by influencing how we think and feel. The stomach and duodenum are final shock organs which reflect an imbalance occurring elsewhere in our being. The real problem may be an inability to cope with the job situation, conditions at home, a distorted social life and so on. It is important to know what one is eating but it is equally relevant to know what is eating one.

To focus on the diseased organ while ignoring the causes will never result in a successful cure. All ulcers, whatever the cause, tend to recur in spite of excellent treatment including surgery. The reasons are not difficult to fathom. Most people do not avoid the factors which caused the ulcers in the first place. Regular food habits, adequate mental relaxation, reducing smoking, avoiding pungent food and alcohol and adequate behavioural changes are an integral part of the treatment for this problem.

**Hypertension:** Popularly termed high blood pressure, it is more important as an index of stressful circumstances. It is one of the most important factors predisposing man to heart attack and strokes. It has been seen that 20 percent of the executives had high blood pressure. Intake of salt is also directly connected with blood pressure. High salt content in the diet increases blood pressure.

In most cases it can be controlled by medication, yoga and a better pattern of living.

In a study conducted on Indian executives, 20 percent of the executives between the ages of 40 and 50 had high blood pressure. The Life Insurance Corporation of India records covering millions of people show that for a 35 year old man with blood pressure of 130/90 mms of Hg, life is shortened by 4 years, with a blood pressure of 140/95 mms of Hg life is shortened by 9 years and with a blood pressure of 150/100 mms of Hg life is shortened by 16 years as compared to that of a man of the same age but with normal blood pressure. Heart disease, the number one killer in Western countries, is ranked third in India. Out of 53,000 deaths recorded last year in Bombay, 18,000 were due to heart ailments.

No two people suffer from the same kind of heart disease as the causes can be:

1. Congenital
2. Rheumatic
3. Coronary Artery Disease

Surveys conducted by the Society for Prevention of Heart Diseases and Rehabilitation in Bombay, show that one out of every ten people has high blood pressure. In India, half a million people are born with heart diseases; two and a half million people have rheumatic heart and thirty million people suffer from heart disease.

If you are hypertensive, you are four times more likely to have a heart attack or stroke and twice likely to develop kidney disease. Surveys indicate that 15 percent of the urban population and 10 percent of the rural population run the risk of heart attack or stroke because of high blood pressure. Among executives, 25 percent of all heart attacks are before, during or after a foreign trip. Rights from east to west are less tough than from west to east (Batlivala, 1990).

**Physiological Ailments**

The modern male is more prone to illness than the female. Good health is hereditary but certain amount of care is also essential like regular check-up, regular exercise, good nutrition, and control over one's emotions. The individual should try to be relaxed, optimistic, less anxious and have pleasant thoughts because continuous depression, anger, jealousy, etc. leads to adverse effects.

**Overweight** About 40 percent of executives are estimated to be overweight. Due to overweight, the risk of death goes up because it leads to many other complications like high blood pressure. The main cause of overweight is overeating, drinking and lack of exercise.

When the energy intake just about balances the energy expenditure, the body neither gains nor loses weight. Minor weight variations (1-2 lb.) from day to day are of little significance and often may be due to fluctuations in the water content of the body.
If the body weight is stagnant over a considerable period of time, it means that the fuel value of the food intake is adjusted naturally so that it is practically equal to the energy requirement.

Overweight or underweight represents disadvantages which usually result in lesser efficiency or poorer health. Insurance companies and health officials urge people to attempt to maintain in later life the weight which is normal at 25 or 30 years of age.

If body weight is persistently, even though slowly, increasing, it indicates that fuel value of the food intake is greater than the energy needs of the body. Usually, overeating of calories is the result of excessive fondness for food of high fuel value (fried foods, sweets and starchy food).

Decreased muscular activity is also often a contributing factor, for instance, the sedentary nature of office work. As one becomes older, there is a tendency for both the basal metabolism and the physical activity to be lessened.

On the other hand, a decrease in food intake of 500 calories daily below the amount that would presumably keep the body weight constant will normally result in "burning off" or melting of fatty tissues of the body to an extent that will reduce the body weight by 1/2 kilo per week.

Obesity is certainly not desirable as it leads to inconvenience in moving about, embarrassment of disfigurement, inefficiency and lack of ambition. Obesity also results in diseases of the heart, circulatory system, kidneys and pancreas (diabetes) and lessened chances of long life. Overweight is prone to develop at 35-45 years of age and is especially disadvantageous after 50 years of age.

For an ordinary overweight individual, by far the most satisfactory way to effect weight reduction is simply to cut down sharply on the concentrated fuel foods (sugar, starch and fats), and keep on with an otherwise well balanced and adequate diet.

Being overweight is unhealthy, but being underweight is no better. Some persons are inclined to leanness, have a poor appetite, or have acquired poor eating habits or faulty health habits that lead to undernutrition. Being underweight has its own disadvantages. Such a person tires easily, is liable to nervousness and indigestion and is more susceptible to infections than one who is more adequately nourished. More rest coupled with increased food intake will lead to an increase in weight usually accompanied by a surprising increase in general vitality and well being.

The chronic overweight syndrome is labelled as obesity. Some experts classify it as a disease entity in its own right. In case of executives as a class, rich food and obesity are relatively common problems. Obesity is not recognized as a disease in many communities. Even in the medical profession, the importance given to obesity differs from physician to physician. What is undesirable, however, is that the obese state makes a person prone to certain well-known diseases.

Several causes have been identified for obesity. In middle-aged executives, it is due to sustained eating of rich foods for years on end. The quantity and quality of food both make a difference in the ultimate weight of an individual. In older persons, reduction in the body's metabolic rate, reduced physical activity and extra time available to enjoy food at leisure also add to the chances of putting on weight.

Another theory of obesity is the role of mind in causing this disorder. It is believed that people who are emotionally deprived of family, friends or success in work take to eating as an alternative source of pleasure. Increased eating is also sometimes due to deep rooted anxiety or depression.

Obesity by itself does not kill, but it provides a foothold to many life threatening diseases. The obese person usually has a high level of fat in his or her blood which deposits in and around the heart leading to 'heart failure.' The obese person also runs the grave risk of suffering from serious respiratory disorders like bronchial asthma.

The bones and joints are also not spared the sins of omission and commission committed by the obese individual. Pain in the knees, ankle and lower part of the back (Osteoarthritis) is invariably due to obesity. Obese persons are also more prone to diabetes.

Overall, the average life expectancy of an obese person is less than that of his normal weighing counterpart.

Diabetes: About 10 per cent of the overweight persons are potential diabetics. Diabetes is the increase of sugar content in the blood and it affects all vital organs of the body like the heart, eyes, brain, kidneys, etc. One per cent of the world's population, especially in developed countries, suffer from diabetes, a multifaceted and complicated disease. Diabetes can be controlled but seldom cured. Constantly elevated blood sugar can occur as a result of repeated sympathetic stimulations. A major stress can unfold the hereditary tendency to show up as the disease. Pregnancy induced diabetes is a typical example of stress induced diabetes mellitus.
The diabetic is usually treated with diet control and drugs. Research shows that with regular walking, symptoms of diabetes often disappear.

**Urogenital:** It has been found that 40 per cent of the executives have sexual problems which are mainly due to emotional tension, excessive drinking, overweight, and a very demanding life partner.

The most common sexual problem is impotency and most of the time it is psychogenic in origin. In today's space age, where man is always fighting against time, it is the physical and emotional tiredness which causes impotency in most cases. Sometimes just the fear of impotency may produce symptoms of impotency.

Another common urogenital problem is urinary infection which requires prompt but prolonged treatment by drugs and adequate fluid intake. Otherwise it is likely to lead to kidney damage.

**Liver:** The three common liver complaints are: (i) feeling of "liverishness" especially after drinks leading to nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite, (ii) infectious hepatitis and (iii) amoebic hepatitis.

Distaste for alcohol or inability to tolerate it even in small quantities in an individual used to it is a very early and sure sign of a liver disorder. It has been found that six per cent of the executives suffer from acute infectious hepatitis and three per cent have incipient amoebic hepatitis which is often unidentified due to lack of definite symptoms.

**Need for Complete Medical Check-up**

We live in a health-conscious world today. Medical science has progressed rapidly to an extent that an average physician can now foretell the occurrence of disease much before its actual occurrence. The latest craze among executives and office-goers is to undertake a 'complete medical check-up.'

A complete medical check-up attempts to discover diseases or disorders which are obvious or in sub-clinical form. Its great role, however, is to detect the signs and possibility of certain diseases like heart disorder and kidney malfunction at an early stage, so that preventive treatment or suitable alteration in the person's life style can significantly change the course of the disease.

A complete medical check-up can test each and every organ in the human body. In Table 1, we have reproduced the results of periodic check-up on 4,000 executives in India (Dastoor, 1986).

**Table 1: Findings of Periodic Check-up on 4,000 Senior Indian Executives (38-58 years) (1973-1984)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Stress and Anxiety</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10 to 30 Excess above Normal Systolic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>above 140 Diastolic 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Blood Pressure</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Heart Attack 1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Attacks and Strokes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Strokes 0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised Serum Uric Acid</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>Between 5.6 and 6.5 mg/100 ml.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stomach and Intestines:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Functional</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Dysentery 5%, Ulcer 2%, Rest1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Organic</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urogenital:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Sexual</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Premature ejaculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Infection</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Impotence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Urinary Crystals</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Kidney stone</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Infectious Hepatitis</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jaundice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Amoebic Hepatitis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unexplained low fever, pain on the lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>side of chest, nausea and loss of appetite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lungs:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Chronic obstructive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Asthma, chronic bronchitis and emphysema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Virus Pneumonitis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Errors of refraction</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Corrected by glasses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Cataract (independent)</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>75% were diabetic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Coping with Stress and Related Ailments

Although there are no simple solutions for coping with stress, there are certain attitudes, skills and behaviours that a person can develop and use.

There are basically two methods of coping with stress (1) Drug therapy (2) Non-drug method.

In today's space age where one is always faced with various problems and tensions it is not advisable to use drugs continuously to cope with stress related ailments like headaches, backaches, etc.

The non-drug method of coping is more advantageous and safer. We will discuss here a few of the non-drug methods like walking, exercises, acupuncture, etc.

One method of counteracting the harmful effects of the physiologic response to stress is the possibility of regular elicitation of relaxation response. The relaxation response is an innate, integrated set of physiological changes opposite to that of the fight-or-flight response. It can be elicited by psychological means. Until recently, the relaxation response has been elicited primarily by meditational techniques.

Herbert Benson's Relaxation Response

This technique is useful for decreasing body metabolism, oxygen consumption, carbon dioxide elimination and rate of breathing. You need a quiet, calm environment to be free from logical, externally oriented thought by focusing solely on a stimulus which is some mental device. Take a comfortable position, prop up the feet and support the head and arms. The technique should be practised once or twice daily but not before 2 hours after food.

The actual technique is as follows:
1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Deeply relax all your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. Keep them relaxed.
4. Breathe through your nose. As you breathe out, say the word, "one" silently to yourself.
5. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes.

(Source: Batlivala, 1990)

The effect of some of these non-drug techniques is given in Exhibit 1.

Acupuncture as a Relaxation Response

Stress leads to psychosomatic disorders, since emotional states are often expressed in bodily reactions. The common manifestations observed due to distress are depression, anxiety, cardio-vascular accidents, muscular aches and pains, insomnia, gastrointestinal ulcers, sexual dysfunction, allergies and mental derangements. Acupuncture does help in tranquilization and psychic

Exhibit 1: Comparison of Methods for Inducing Relaxation Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Oxygen Consumption</th>
<th>Respiratory Rate</th>
<th>Heart Rate</th>
<th>Alpha Waves</th>
<th>Blood Pressure</th>
<th>Muscle Tension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcendental Meditation</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Increases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zen and Yoga</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Increases</td>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autogenic Training</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Increases</td>
<td>Inconclusive Results</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Relaxation Hypnosis with Suggested Deep Relaxation</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
<td>Inconclusive Results</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentic Cycles</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Decreases</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
<td>Not Measured</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Benson, 1974.
relaxation and allows one to relax. In the science of acupuncture, liver is the organ associated with depression. Besides being a drugless, safe, simple, economical and yet effective therapy with hardly any side effects, acupuncture has demonstrated by its clinical success that it is effective in coping with stress (Table 2).

**Exercise**

Physical exercise is necessary in order to keep the body healthy physically and mentally and is the best antidote for stress. It provides recreation and mental relaxation. Exercise produces physiological changes which may have a direct bearing on emotional factors thereby providing a degree of protection against emotional stress by conditioning the body's stress adaptation mechanism.

Emotional strength and self-confidence are major by-products of regular exercise. Data also suggest that exercise causes chemical changes in the brain which actually alter thinking. Exercise eases nervous tension and anxiety by providing an outlet for pent-up feelings of aggression and hostility. The advantages of overcoming stress with exercise are almost limitless. One of the best exercises is walking.

Walking. Today after some 2000 years, modern medical researchers are demonstrating that Hippocrates, "the father of medicine" was right in suggesting that walking is man's best medicine.

Walking is the most "efficient" form of exercise and the only one you can follow all the years of your life. Sufficient walking is as important to the circulation of blood as sufficient motion is to a stream of water. Deprived of activity both become stagnant. Sufficient walking helps protect one from the complications of atherosclerosis, the disease of the arteries, which is the greatest cause of heart attacks, strokes or sudden death in executives who are in their prime. Walking is a new and vital treatment for men who have survived a heart attack. Also, with regular walking, symptoms of diabetes mellitus often disappear, particularly those who develop light or moderate cases of the disease in middle age.

Walking is the only sensible way to lose weight and stay slender for the rest of one's life. Stress and strain can be counter-acted and even prevented by regular vigorous walking.

Yoga. *Hatha* yoga is unisex yoga. In the West, it is the best known and most popular yoga. Yoga means the union or fusion of *Jiwatma* and *Paramatma*. It involves various *asanas* or body postures and breathing exercises. Among these, *Shavasana* or the corpse pose is the best. It brings not only mental calm and relief from stress but better health, more vigour and a more alert mind.

Yogic curriculum consists of both mental and physical exercises. *Yamas* and *Niyamas* are mental exercises whereas *asanas* are physical exercises.

Nagendra and Nagarathna (1988) have dealt with stress management in their book titled "New Perspectives in Stress Management." According to them, the

**Table 2: Results of Acupuncture in Stress Related Diseases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Related Diseases</th>
<th>Cure Rate</th>
<th>Failure Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Depression</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Anxiety</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Backache</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Difficulty in falling off to sleep</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Insomnia</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Epigastric pain and discomfort</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Sexual dysfunction and functional impotency</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bativala, 1990.
ancient Indian science of yoga holds the key to combat this modern menace of stress. Some modern methods of stress management and their limitations and the management of stress by yoga are delineated in this book, for example, SMET (Self Management of Executive Tension) technique, QRT (Quick Relaxation Technique), and IRT (Instant Relaxation Technique). These are some of the programmes developed by the Vivekananda Kendra for management of stress and have been found to be useful for executives.

SMET. The target set in the SMET course is the release of stresses and tensions. A harmonious growth with the dual facets of increased sensitivity and expanded awareness takes us from our grosser states of higher stress to subtler states of lower stress. Hence, release of stress is in tune with our growth.

Spiritual Dimension of Health

According to Bisht (1985), the need for a new definition of health as a state beyond the mere absence of disease has been recognized by health professionals in the last few decades. It has progressively been realized that maintenance of health encompasses in addition to treatment of physical disease, coping mechanisms of dealing with psychological stress, prevention through changes in the environment, promotion of healthy life styles and general well-being. Illness is now considered to be physiologically and chemically grounded but socially and culturally conditioned.

Health is perceived as a multi-dimensional process involving the well-being of the whole person in the context of the environment. The perfect functioning approach to health conceptualizes biological health as a state in which every cell and every organ is functioning at optimum capacity and in perfect harmony with the rest of the body; psychologically, as a state in which the individual feels a sense of subjective well-being and of mastery over his environment; and socially, as a state in which the individual's capacities for participation in the social system are optimal.

Another milestone towards a new definition of health was created in 1978, when on the initiative of the "Indian representatives" in the Executive Board of WHO, it was proposed that the definition of health be enlarged to cover spiritual well-being in addition to physical, mental and social well-being.

Total Health Includes Spiritual Well-being

The definition of health limiting it only to physico-psycho-socio fields is incomplete. Health is an integral concept which comprehends the totality of our being. True health has to extend not only to physical fitness but also to the simultaneous psychological and spiritual well-being.

In a broader perspective, the physical body of the human being is not as important as the spiritual, intellectual and emotional aspects. The mind draws its power from the spirit, transmits it to all the body organs and ensures their rhythmic and coordinated functioning.

It has been stated that health may not be everything but everything without health is nothing. The concept of health considered as a state of physical, mental and social well-being is inadequate vis-a-vis the urges of higher realizations inherent in human beings. A pack of wolves could be strong, mentally alert and socially well knit, and be as healthy as a group of physically fit, mentally aware and socially compact group of human beings, but the human perspective involving qualitative values of life is what distinguishes the group of healthy human beings from the former.

If we acknowledge the fact that we have a trinity of body, mind and spirit, then we are total individuals only when our body- self, mind-self, and spirit-self are unified to work in harmony with each other. To achieve total holistic health, one must first consider nutrition and physical exercise as partners in establishing and maintaining a healthy body. Second, one must develop mental exercise programmes to help achieve self-mastery and self-regulation. And third, one must breathe life into the spirit by creating a positive healthy belief factor and developing a capacity both to give and to receive love and affection. This is referred to as the holistic health approach.

Suggestions

We have already dealt with the methods of coping with stress and disease. However, a mention must be made of certain key organizational issues which relate to health and how the HRD systems can help in redeeming the same.

Performance Appraisal is one of the most important sources of stress in organizations. Being evaluated by their supervisors is a highly stressful experience for many persons. The stakes are high and the possibility of negative feedback is real. For this reason, it is important that such appraisals be conducted in as calm, rational, and fair a manner as possible. This involves considerable preparation on the part of the manager and the persons being evaluated.

It is also important to keep the executives' mental and physical health in view when they are evaluated. It
is possible that the individual has performed badly because of certain emotional problems or tensions and thus an attempt should be made to help him solve his problems. In the usual performance appraisal forms, there should be a special mention about the health status of the individual.

**Career Paths** is another HRD variable which is linked to health. As individuals move through various stages of their careers, they are also moving from one stage of life to another. The sequence of occupations and jobs that individuals hold during their working life constitutes their careers. Most careers develop vertically, through promotions, horizontally, through different jobs or functions, and radially, toward inner circles of power within an organization.

Crucial points in career planning occur at key times during the individual's life — for example at about age thirty, during the early forties, and again in the late fifties. Each career stage is characterized by different issues and problems.

The twenties are a time of getting started and choosing a career, getting established in it, and also selecting a mate. For many persons, the thirties bring rising family responsibilities as they start or add to their families. By the time individuals enter early thirties they have fairly clear ideas or self-perception of their talents and abilities, as also needs and motives, and attitudes and values. Together, these self-perceptions come to guide and stabilize a person's career, as they attempt to choose jobs and goals that are consistent with these basic characteristics. In addition, individuals must confront frequent job changes stemming from transfers and promotions. While such changes be beneficial to the individual's career, considerable costs. Individuals who are transformed or promoted are expected high performance from the very start, such demands occur just when they must establish new networks of social support and learn new skills, and eliminate old patterns of behaviour and attitudes no longer appropriate to their new position. This is an unsettling combination of events and must be handled successfully if individuals are to stay on track with respect to their career plans.

HRD systems and processes should help reduce these stresses. The HRD department or the personnel department should aim at fixing a time span after which only individuals are due for a transfer. This provides a margin for individuals to be mentally prepared for the same. Also, the individuals should be allowed to settle down in their new jobs before they are expected to show results. Effort should be made to provide training so that they can learn new skills required for the job.

**Middle Career Issues.** As one nears forty, it marks the end of the dream for many persons. At this point, they realize they will never fulfill many of their fondest dreams. They also discover that they have reached a career plateau. They have arrived at a point from which they are unlikely to gain further promotions or be given increased responsibility and authority.

Yet another factor for stress are the hordes of ambitious younger persons energetic and better trained (technically), pushing up from behind and trying to overtake.

To overcome these stress situations, individuals should try to expand their interests so that they no longer focus exclusively on their jobs. This can involve a conscious decision to spend more time with their families, the development of new hobbies, etc. The satisfaction thus derived from other sources helps them to remain personally happy and emotionally secure (Pestonjee and Muncherji, 1989).

To deal with career plateaus, which need not be permanent, individuals should recognize the need for change and take such steps as seeking training, developing alternate roles within the organization (serving as a mentor), or actually moving to another job.

The HRD departments establish 'Career Management Programmes' to help employees cope with such problems and plan effectively for the development of their careers. These programmes vary greatly in scope and content, but most of them involve efforts to (1) help employees assess their own career strengths (2) set priorities and specific career goals (3) provide information on various career paths and alternatives within the organization, and (4) offer employees yearly reviews of their progress towards these goals by managers. In addition, special workshops and technical training opportunities are often part of such programmes.

**Late Career Issues.** This is the stage when individuals find that they have gone as far as they can; and are either satisfied or dissatisfied with what they have achieved.

They also have to come to terms with the fact that their power and influence within the organization are beginning to wane. Besides this, the older employees become subject of negative stereotypes. They are viewed as being less productive, less efficient, less motivated, and less capable of working under pressure than the younger persons.

Finally, a very important issue that individuals face late in their careers is coming to terms with their own...
retirement. This involves a gradual re-orientation away from their careers and work toward leisure time activities. It requires careful planning to meet the special challenges faced by retired workers — a loss of social contact with many friends, reduced feelings of accomplishment, reduced earnings and so on.

The individual should try to take a practical view of this major change and adjust to it. The HRD departments can help the individual by seeing to it that all the dues are settled promptly and they could also try to reemploy a few capable individuals as say 'consultants' or some such jobs. Special training programmes on post-supernuation phase of an individual's career are vital.

It can be said in conclusion that a healthy executive is a basic requirement for progressive organizations and hence it is important for the organization to see that anxieties, depressions and stresses generated by the happenings in the organization are minimum. There are special clinical and psychological techniques available for dealing with such behavioural problems as depression, anger and anxiety. Ignorance about these techniques has led many a HRD department to plead helplessness in treating such situations. It is extremely helpful for the HRD professionals to know a little more about health related issues and their impact on performance, teamwork, and me-Qe of the individual executive.

References


Vikalpa