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Modern Approaches and Innovation in Psychology



Editor

Dr. Charulata Pradhan

Co-Editor

Dr. Shaikh Mohd. Arif

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• EDITOR •

Dr. Charulata S. Pradhan

Assistant Professor,
Dept. of Psychology

Kohinoor Arts, Commerce and Science College,
Khultabad, Dist. Aurangabad (MS)

• CO-EDITOR •

Dr. Shaikh Mohd. Arif

Assistant Professor,
Dept. of Physical Education

Kohinoor Arts, Commerce and Science College,
Khultabad, Dist. Aurangabad (MS)

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Modern Approaches to Stress Management A Positive Psychology Perspective

• Shradha A. Raravikar



M.V.P.'s Arts, Science and Commerce College, Ozar
(Mig) Maharashtra

ABSTRACT

The Positive Psychology Perspective can give a totally different alternative to stress management that is not about handling stress but to enhance subjective wellbeing and thereby creating a stress buffer and to prevent stress to some extent by using this enhanced wellbeing. An effort should be done to change overall evaluation of life by changing our perspective, strengthen ourselves emotionally and achieve highest possible emotional resistance. In short to do every possible thing to remain emotionally fit. Just as we keep our body fit with food nutrients and exercise, we should actively nurture our mind. At the outset, we must actively assume our responsibility to keep ourselves happy and perseveringly keep trying. The ultimate goal shall be to make life worthwhile through self-efforts i.e. Intentional Enrichment. A rationale behind this effort is the incompatibility of positive and negative emotions. The potential effects of negative experiences can be offset by positive emotions such as joy and contentment. Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade (2000) have found evidences of "undoing" potential of positive emotions. Fredrickson and Losada (2005) found that a mean ratio of 2:9 positive to negative emotions predicts human flourishing. Thus environmental, situational and interpersonal negativities can be offset by self gifted positive experiences and cumulative effects of such persistent efforts would invigorate mental health and enhance well-being. Also previous research shows that such activities do enhance subjective well-being (Fordyce; 1977, 1983). In such case it can be proved a great preventive measure of stress. To large extent, it can put a stop to occurrence of stress. On Fordyce's 14 Happiness Fundamentals (1977, 1983) and Keyes' concept of Mental Health (Keyes and Lopez, 2002), a model is proposed to enhance Subjective well-being and named as Intentional Enrichment Technique.

KEYWORDS : Positive Psychology Perspective, Stress Buffer, Nurturing Mind, Intentional Enrichment Technique

Introduction :

The term stress has been used in different ways by different theorists. Some have viewed stress as a stimulus event that presents difficult demands, while others have viewed stress as a response of physiological arousal elicited by a troublesome event (Cooper and Dive 2004). However the emerging consensus among contemporary researchers is that stress is neither a stimulus nor a response but a special stimulus response transaction in which one feels threatened. Managing stress is a top priority of almost everyone given to its detrimental physiological and psychological effects. It is an everyday event and unavoidable too. As Hans Seley (1973) noted, "Contrary to public opinion, we must not and indeed cannot avoid stress". Thus, most stress management programmes encourage people to confront stress than to sidestep it. This requires training people to engage in action-oriented, rational, reality-based constructive coping. Moreover Stress Tolerance can be build by enhancing social support, hardiness and optimism.

Objectives:

- To view stress management through Positive Psychology Perspective
- To find out the ways to create a stress-buffer by increasing Subjective Well-being
- To explain The Intentional Enrichment Technique

Positive psychology is the scientific and applied approach to uncover people's strengths and promote their positive functioning. The perspective can give a totally

different alternative to stress management that is not about handling stress but about enhancing subjective wellbeing and thereby creating a stress buffer, thus preventing stress to some extent by using this enhanced wellbeing.

Our feelings change in reaction to the surrounding events. Simultaneously we judge the consequences in a momentary, domain specific as well as broader context of our life. Thus subjective well-being involves various components: positive affect (many pleasant experiences) and low levels of negative affect (lesser unpleasant experiences), satisfaction pertaining to particular domains and satisfaction with life as a whole. If analyzed carefully, it becomes clear that the components are our passive reaction to the events. We have a very little, if any control over them. If we try to maximize positive affect with indulging ourselves, those efforts give momentary pleasure. Even ecstatic experiences make us happy for a short duration. With the process of adaptation very shortly we return to the baseline. In the context of positive affect the process is somewhat undesirable but it helps us to sustain pain and survive in extremities. To some extent negativities can be avoided but many times they keep falling and we become passive recipients left helpless. The satisfaction in important domains of life like relationships, work, and finances are also partially dependent upon significant interpersonal and environmental interactions. And satisfaction with life as a whole is a sum of these components. Given the lack of total control over all these factors, it's better to be self-

reliant in our pursuit of happiness. Of course total self-reliance is unrealistic, impossible and somewhat abnormal goal; at least we should be aware of our ability to enhance our sense of well-being. An effort should be done to change overall evaluation of life by changing our perspective, strengthen ourselves emotionally and achieve highest possible emotional resistance. In short to do every possible thing to remain emotionally fit. Just as we keep our body fit with food nutrients and exercise, we should actively nurture our mind. At the outset, we must actively assume our responsibility to keep ourselves happy and perseveringly keep trying. The ultimate goal shall be to make life worthwhile through self-efforts i.e. Intentional Enrichment. A rationale behind effort is the incompatibility of positive and negative emotions. The potential effects of negative experiences can be offset by positive emotions such as joy and contentment. Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade (2000) have found evidences of "undoing" potential of positive emotions. Fredrickson and Losada (2005) also found that a mean ratio of 2:9 positive to negative emotions predicts human flourishing. Thus environmental, situational and interpersonal negativities can be offset by self gifted positive experiences and cumulative effects of such persistent efforts would invigorate mental health and enhance well-being. Also previous research shows that such activities do enhance subjective well-being (Fordyce; 1977, 1983). In such case it can be proved a great preventive measure of stress. To large extent, it can put a stop to occurrence of stress. The well organized efforts in the direction can be fruitful.

On Fordyce's 14 Happiness Fundamentals (1977, 1983) and Keyes' concept of Mental Health (Keyes and Lopez, 2002), a model is proposed to enhance Subjective well-being and named as Intentional Enrichment Technique.

A rationale behind the technique is as follows. According to Lyubomisky and colleagues, 50 % of a person's happiness is determined by genetic factors and another 10 % is determined by circumstances. This still leaves 40% for the effects of intentional activity. Intentional activities mean those activities that are consciously chosen and require sustained efforts. The Intentional Enrichment technique provides such activities. It assists individual to take up his responsibility of own happiness and actively try for it. The technique takes support of Fordyce 14 Happiness Fundamentals (1977, 1983) and Keyes's model of mental health (Keyes and Lopez, 2002).

These efforts can be divided into five ingredients-

1. Enrichment of the Self
2. Enrichment of Thoughts
3. Enrichment of Relationships
4. Enrichment of the Work
5. Enrichment of society

Enrichment of these five ingredients can definitely enhance subjective well-being as they are very crucial and core parts of our life.

Initial requisites of Enrichment

1. Individual should be ready to take up his or her responsibility of own happiness
2. Individual should take active efforts to boost his or her happiness
3. The intention should not be the avoidance of pain but to offset its effects through self-efforts

Conclusion:

If people intentionally try to enhance subjective well-being, stress can be managed well. Further research on the effectiveness of Intentional Enrichment Technique is in progress.

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