



STRESS @ HOME

A HANDBOOK OF 40 STRESSBUSTERS FOR HOUSEWIVES

TENSIONS
ANXIETY
STRESS

Seema Gupta

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Published by:



V&S PUBLISHERS

F-2/16, Ansari road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002

☎ 23240026, 23240027 • Fax: 011-23240028

Email: info@vspublishers.com • Website: www.vspublishers.com

Regional Office : Hyderabad

5-1-707/1, Brij Bhawan (Beside Central Bank of India Lane)

Bank Street, Koti, Hyderabad - 500 095

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E-mail: vspublishershyd@gmail.com

Branch Office : Mumbai

Jaywant Industrial Estate, 1st Floor-108, Tardeo Road

Opposite Sobo Central Mall, Mumbai – 400 034

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Dedicated to.....

*All those housewives
who love to live
a stress free life*

Acknowledgements

 I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few people who helped me make this dream a reality.

First of all, I must thank my mother-in-law, Mrs. Avdhesh Gupta who taught me the intricacies of life and value of relationships.

Besides the all round help and unfailing support extended to me by my husband, Mr. A.K. Gupta and my daughters, Aashima and Ameesha. I wish to acknowledge my sincere thanks to Mr. Ram Avtar Gupta, Managing Director of Pustak Mahal for his support and encouragement to me to author this book. Without his support and encouragement, this book would not have been possible.

I also extend my grateful thanks to Mr. S.K. Roy, Executive Editor of Pustak Mahal for his unfailing help and guidance. It is his faith in my abilities which enabled this book to see the light of the day.


—Seema Gupta

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My Word

hen I began my tryst with **Psychotherapy and Counselling**, I was amazed at the vast number of women suffering from personality disorders owing to the pressure mounting within them due to increasing stress.

Here I would particularly like to mention this case which is a perfect example of how stress accumulated over the years, can play havoc with not only a person's own life but with the lives of others associated too. There was this lady who had a teenaged daughter who was to write her class XIIth board exams that year. The lady wanted her daughter to be a doctor whereas the daughter was more keen on doing engineering. The girl was good at studies and had scored 87% in her Xth boards. While choosing her stream in class XIth, the girl wanted to opt for Maths and Computers in the Science stream while the mother insisted on her studying Biology. After much persuasion, the girl opted for Biology as well as Mathematics, (though she hated Biology), so that she could appear for the competitive examinations for both medical as well as engineering.

The mother, being a housewife, diverted all her energies to the girl and tried forcing her to give more attention to Biology. The girl, though, more keen on engineering, could not ignore her mother. The girl fared poorly in her exams in class XI, not only in Biology but in all the subjects. The mother was shattered. Having sensed that the mother was disappointed with her performance, the girl lost her self confidence. She not only fared poorly in her XIIth boards, but could not clear any competitive test either. This was the last straw. The mother became depressed and went into

a shell. When the mother came for counselling, she was reluctant to talk at first. As the sessions progressed, it was revealed that she came from a nuclear family where her parents were both successful doctors. She herself could not get into medical so she was trying to fulfil her unfulfilled ambitions through her daughter. She, herself being a lonely and sort of neglected child at home, showered extra love and attention on her daughter which in time turned into possessiveness. The lady also had a domineering husband, so she resented not having her own career. She was answerable to her husband for all the money she spent. That was the stress factor which triggered her to force her daughter to take up a lucrative career to have a solid financial background too. The lady, in her young age, had seen her doctor parents as a very compatible couple, so it was etched in her psyche that a doctor can have the best of both worlds.

After many counselling sessions, she came to terms with reality and when her daughter joined B.Tech. (Aeronautics), she was more than happy for her.

The fact, I am trying to emphasize here is that stress is a part of our lives, but we should not let it dominate us. Just like a diabetic may have an urge to eat sweets but he should refrain from it considering the ill effects of sugar on his health; similarly, we must learn to cope with the stress by identifying the stressors in daily life.

The following pages would give you an insight on **managing stress** through relaxation techniques, by adopting healthy habits, meditation and discovering happiness in your **present** rather than delving in the **past** or worrying about **the future**.

The five sets of questionnaire are given separately to help you in assessing your stress levels and to give you an insight on how well to cope with stress at all levels.

Here is wishing you a happy and stress free reading.

—Seema Gupta


Stress – The Silent Killer

‘To me, the very essence of education is the concentration of mind and not the collection of facts.’

— Swami Vivekananda

‘The real difficulty is always in ourselves, not in our surroundings.’

— Sri Aurobindo

uring *Surya Namaskar*, each morning, when the bright sun rays touch my face gently, I feel light and relaxed. As the day progresses, the weight of emotions bogs me down and I wish for another ray of light from divinity to give me a fresh lease of life.

For a long time, I kept introspecting as to what makes us tense and unhappy. I ended up relating each day with the four phases of life. The early morning hours, when we are at our happiest and most relaxed, are like the carefree days of our childhood. As the day progresses, work mounts, expectations increase and there is a pressure to prove oneself – stress begins its journey through adolescence. By the time, our day progresses towards the post noon period, we are huffing and puffing to achieve our targets with tension mounting each second, quite like adulthood in life when we are working continuously without realizing how stressed out we are. Finally, it is time to close the shop. We are tired, stressed and devoid of energy. Our body and mind are craving for a break. So we call it a day – yes, the old age is creeping in.

But there have been times when we all feel very happy throughout the day. This clearly indicates that we have the power to conquer stress bodily, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually.

The first thing that comes to our mind is how do we define **STRESS**! Is stress a frown on our forehead or shaking of our hands in anger?

Stress is not something that affects us from outside. It is not an acquired trait by some unfortunate individuals. Stress is an integral part of the physical and mental system in all of us. We have inherited it during the course of evolution as a vital ingredient for normal functioning of the body. **Stress can be defined as a form of tension in our body or mind for which there is no release.**

Stress helps us in our survival on a sustained basis. But unchecked and uncontrolled stress can cause more harm to us than help. It can act as a **silent killer** and can erode our immune system leaving us vulnerable to many physical, psychological and personality disorders.


In simple words, stress is something that happens to our body whenever we are faced with a challenging situation.

The world witnessed stress for the first time when life itself originated on earth. Remember, the Darwin's theory of '**Survival of the Fittest**'. For people in those times also, it would have been equally stressful having to fight for each morsel, an inch of space or merely trying to survive. Stress always was and still is vital for our survival.

Does that mean stress is not bad for us? Exactly, that's the point!... In fact, stress is a motivating factor in our lives. However, the continuous and accumulating stress is detrimental to our mental and physical well being. We need to tame our feelings. Its optimum level provides the best opportunities to surging talents, energies and happiness.

We need not make any effort to get rid of stress because it would be futile. What we need to understand is that stress should be positive and conducive to our survival.

Social Norms

hen I was a child, once I went to my grandmother's house. She lived in a village. One day, we heard the loud banging of thali (plate) in a nearby house. I asked my grandmother as to what this commotion was all about. She told me that their neighbour has been blessed with a son. When I asked her, how could she be so sure that it is a son when she had not even seen the baby, she laughed and said, "only a son's birth can bring such happiness to the family which they express by striking a thali. A girl's birth would have gone unnoticed." I was too young to understand the real impact of her words then. I just mingled with everyone there and joined in their rejoicing on having got a heir. Now after three decades, when I look back, it hurts me to see that not much has changed for women in our society. They are still the weaker sex and are still being treated unfairly.

Society has set certain norms for women which they are expected to abide by. You must have heard of the Hindi movie, 'Fire' made by Deepa Mehta. It was about two women who turned into **lesbians**. Now this movie certainly defied all norms of the Indian society and Deepa Mehta received flak from all sections of the society. She had to bear their wrath so much so that she could not make the next three films in her much talked about series.

There is a rebel hidden within each woman, which tries to free her from all shackles, but her conditioning over the years forces her to keep a low profile. There may be a few exceptions to the rule, but by and large, women prefer to stick to the norms of the society. However, somewhere deep inside them lies buried a desire to be able to live their life as they wish. This suppressed desire turns into stress and harms her emotionally, mentally as well as physically.

There was a girl, I knew, who got married at a very young age. In her in-laws' family, it was a custom to change the girl's name after marriage. The same was followed with her. She was also given a new name. Now by sheer chance or luck, in her maternal home, there was a servant by the same name. The girl could not protest as she was taught to be submissive. Initially, no one said anything about this. Later on, when everyone got to know of this fact, they started teasing her. But it was very late by then. The new name stuck to her, so did the stigma. This comparison kept burning within her and this sweet natured girl turned into an irritable, short-tempered woman.


The Less Privileged Group

Women are a less privileged group. This has been accepted officially by the Government authorities also when they decided to allot a special quota for women in all spheres of life. Women are called **the weaker sex** because they are physically not as strong as men. But that does not make them any less important than men. Consider any field, any sphere of life and you will see that women have excelled by virtue of their natural talent. All they need is some support and help from their loved ones. When it is denied then their desires and their hopes die within their heart. Since they are not able to express these feelings, they feel suffocated within themselves. These feelings when held back for long, give rise to stress. Some spend an entire lifetime with these stressors playing havoc with their lives. They feel helpless and resigned to fate in the manner of a sacrificial lamb. Various symptoms of stress bog them down as they are unable to do anything because of the pressures of the society on them.

Stress Management – 40 Tips

Outer circumstances and events do not create stress. It is our response to them which creates stress.

— Swami Satyanand

 We all agree that stress is an integral part of our lives. A certain degree of stress is actually good for our growth. As excess of anything is harmful, similarly, excessive stress is also bad for us. Technically, whenever we perceive any physical or psychological threat, we come under the grip of stress. If I put it in a layman's language, it means that whenever our mind feels uneasy, restless, disturbed, agitated, tense or strained, we are said to be under stress. Then what is the stress free state of mind? When our mind is cheerful, feeling light, easy, calm and quiet, we are said to be in a relaxed state – this is the stress free state of mind. This is the state we enjoy and try to achieve it all the time. Once achieved, we long for it to last forever. But the irony of the matter is that while we try to cling to the relaxed state of mind, we come under so much stress in the process that we inadvertently put the stress back into our lives.

Strangely, this time, the cause for this stress is nothing else but our desire to be stress free. So while we know what stress is, what the stressors are and what are their repercussions, the most important thing in combating stress is **Stress Management**.

In this book, we shall take a look at the stressors in the life of an Indian housewife who has devoted her life to her husband, family and home. She is the homemaker.

There is a special conditioning of the traditional Indian woman who is a homemaker. She has been taught from the cradle onward to take life as it comes. There are rules and

restrictions for her which she is not supposed to break but follow them blindly. While it is impossible to enumerate and list various prejudices, it is important to know that these ingrained notions add tremendously to the stress levels of these women. Many a times, these innocent victims are not even aware that they are living under stress because they are conditioned to accept it as a part of their life. They are called upon frequently to fall back on their so called resources of will power but all this leads to stress arousal.

Let's take a look at the stressors, a housewife faces in her daily life and how she copes with them.

Complexes

Emperor Akbar admired the wittiness of Birbal. He thought Birbal was so wise because he was a Brahmin. Emperor then decided to convert himself into a Hindu Brahmin. Birbal tried to dissuade him but to no avail. So Birbal escorted the emperor, looking for a holy man who could convert him into a Brahmin there. Akbar saw a man scrubbing a donkey. The man explained, "I am changing my donkey into a horse. A holy man said that if I stood by the river and scrubbed it hard it would turn into a horse." Akbar realised his folly and promised Birbal to change himself and not the religion. He will act and become a better man. Managing yourself is very important before you manage anyone else. SWOT analysis helps in doing this to a great extent.

Swot

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

- ◆ **Strengthening** wisdom, intelligence, patience, character.
- ◆ **Controlling Weaknesses** like anger, jealousy, arrogance.
- ◆ **Grabbing Opportunities** of good communication and knowledge.
- ◆ **Facing the Threats** of bad health, poor relations and low esteem.