



STRESS MANAGEMENT IN DENTAL PROFESSION FOR BETTER AND SUCCESSFUL ENVIRONMENT

Maya Dalaya, Mridula Joshi, Mahesh Ghadge, Juhee N Mehta
Madhumita Sachdeva and Gunjan Daphale

Department of Prosthodontics Bharati Vidyapeeth Dental College & Hospital Navi Mumbai

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ABSTRACT

Stress is not good for health but poor stress management increase susceptibility and vulnerability to ill health including cardiovascular disease, ulcers, colitis, hypertension, lower back pain, eye strain, marital disharmony, alcoholism, drug addiction, mental depression and even suicidal tendency. Every day each person faces some kind of challenge, big or small. Attempting to stay on schedule in a busy dental practice is a chronic source of stress. Not receiving commensurate payment for their services, anxiety, about the future and long working hours may also act as stressors.

Key words:

stressors, depression, anxiety, conflict,
coping strategies and appraisal

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INTRODUCTION

In this competitive world we must learn how to cope stress, so we need to be acquainted with the knowledge of stress, stressors and how to manage or cope with it¹. Stress is not good for health but poor stress management increase susceptibility and vulnerability to ill health including cardiovascular disease, ulcers, colitis, hypertension, lower back pain, eye strain, marital disharmony, alcoholism, drug addiction, mental depression and even suicide². Stress is defined as “an imbalance between a perceived demand (stressor) and a person’s perceived ability to cope with or to meet that demand³. Stress is a mental or emotional and physical response to the demands that are placed upon a person.

Stress may take form of personal insult to dentist as incompetent when compared with peers or are seen as insensitive, inconsiderate and inferior doctors. In dental practice stress includes geriatric patients or subjects dealing with neurotic difficult or uncompliant adults and also anxious children. So it’s common fact for a dentist to suffer from variety of stress-related physical and emotional problems. Dentists or people under stress may behave differently, too pacing, eating too much, crying a lot, smoking and drinking more than usual or physically striking out at others by hitting or throwing things. Hence stress is manifested in dental profession for any dentist as it may result in absenteeism, increased incident rate, inter-personal aggression, poor quality control, low productivity, reduced morale, high turnover, complaints and litigation.

Stress and Stressors

Stress causing events are called stressors; they can come from within a person or from an external source and range from relatively mild to severe. Stressors are events that cause a stress reaction. Actually there are two kinds of stressors, one those that cause distress, which occurs when people experience unpleasant stressors, and those that cause eustress, which results from positive events that still makes demands on a person to adapt or change. Distress is the effect of unpleasant and undesirable stressors. Eustress is the effect of positive events or the optimal amount of stress that people need to promote health and well being⁴. To elaborate the key stressors in dentistry are as follows-

1. Running behind schedule.
2. Causing persistent dull and long pain.
3. Heavy and strenuous workload.
4. Late patient’s appointment.
5. Anxious and un co-operative patients⁵

There are many strategies to achieve improving skills at conflict resolution, negotiating disagreements, greater assertion and skills in art of communicating⁶. A professional person or dentist needs to act in a way which is being appropriate and proper by both their patients and professional colleagues. Thus by adopting a positive attitude to both work and life, the treatment and management of patients can be seen caring and non-judgeable. Very often inappropriate comments by professional colleagues that may suggest a lack of integrity, inferior abilities or stature are unethical and best avoided as

*Corresponding author: Maya Dalaya

Department of Prosthodontics Bharati Vidyapeeth Dental College & Hospital Navi Mumbai

they can quickly cause an emotional fall out or anger which becomes destructive⁷. They will offer an ear and useful feedback which is appropriate to the problem⁸. The acquisition of skills would help in the management of fearful patients, as well as specific stress-relieving procedures such as relaxation, hypnosis, yoga and desensitization cognitive coping skills will be useful to alleviate potential stress⁹. Some practitioners and dentists has been more philosophical in their approach to stress management. But when it comes to issues of flexibility and adaptability, throughout a lifespan there are numerous milestone to be negotiated as each age demands new learning, new behaviour, and new roles that carry with them the obligation and readiness to meet the expectations of society for us as health professional¹⁰. Sources of stress in humans and dental profession¹ Although several specific sources of stress are for example marriage problems, hectic job schedules, car problems, target deadlines and etc, the reasons why people find these events stressful and can be divided into several following categories:-

Psychological Factors

- Pressure - It is the psychological experience produced by urgent demands or expectations for a person's behaviour that come from an outside source.
- Uncontrollability – Another factor that increases a person's experience of stress is the degree of control that the person has over a particular event or situation. The less control a person has, the greater the degree of stress.
- Frustration – The psychological experience produced by the blocking of a desired goal or fulfilment of a perceived need eg losses, failures, rejections and delays are all sources of external frustrations. Internal frustrations also as personal frustrations occur when the goal or need cannot be attained because of internal or personal characteristics.
- Aggression –It is actions meant to harm or destroy, is unfortunately another typical reaction to frustration.
- Conflict – A psychological experience of being pulled toward or drawn to two or more desires or goals, only one of which may be attained. Lewin (1935) defined three types of conflicts, and has definitions are still used.

The Factors Involved in Stress are as Follows

1. Cognitive Factors
2. Social Factors
3. Culture Factors

Management of stress

- a. Problem focussed coping is used when the problem can be eliminated or change so that it is no longer stressful or that the impact of stress is reduced.
- b. Emotion focussed coping is often used with problem focussed coping and involves changing one's emotional reaction to a stressor.
- c. Meditation can produce a state of relaxation and reduce the physical reactions common to stressful situations. Concentrative meditation involves focussing inward on some repetitive stimulus, such as one's breathing.
- d. Yoga exercises- with lots of focus and work on your mind, its easy to feel stressed. There are many different ways to cope with stress---Yoga can help reduce stress because it promotes relaxation, which is the natural opposite of stress. Yoga can benefit three aspects of

ourselves that are often affected by stress are our body, mind and breathing.

- e. Social –support system is network of friends, family members, neighbours, co-workers and others who can help to a person in need. This helps immensely to reduce stress, help prevent illness and aid people in coping more effectively with stressors.
- f. Cultural difference-Different cultures perceive stressors differently, and coping strategies will also vary from culture to culture.
- g. Religious belief-A belief in a higher power can also be source of great comfort in times of stress. There are several ways that religious beliefs and vibrations can affect the degree of stress people experience and the ability to cope with the stress.
- h. Focus on Eight Simple Golden Rules-
- i. Adopt a programme of regular physical and mental exercises.
- j. Attend course on stress management and improving communication skills.
- k. Be kind to yourself and less critical and demanding of your efforts.
- l. Work from time to time and leisurely break from routine is mandatory.
- m. Improvement in the working environment.
- n. Skills for patient, money and time management is also important.
- o. Avoid isolation, share problem and experiences with fellow dental practitioners.
- p. Take possible time off when pressures of practice start to build¹¹.

CONCLUSION

Dentists are prone to professional burnout, anxiety disorders and clinical depression. While the root causes, stress and stressful situations, can never be completely eliminated from clinical practice. The successful key for managing stress is to recognize and understand its cause. Some of the preventive measures that could minimize the stress of dental practice are as follows.

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