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Mental Stress: A Short Overview

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From times immemorial, human beings have been trying to find the root cause of mental problems. Many a scientists, doctors, counselors, spiritual leaders have suggested different ways to solve different aspects of mental issues but till date 'Mental Stress' remains the most enigmatic topic of research and discussion.

The revision of disorders specifically associated with stress in revised International Classification of Diseases (ICD 11) is scheduled for release in 2018. ICD-11 is of immense importance to South Asia where large populations are subjected to considerable stress and trauma caused by conflicts, natural disasters and unaddressed mental health needs. Individual human personality traits are an important factor which determines how a stressor is perceived, framed, interpreted, experienced and manifested, its course, recovery, and prognosis. [1]

We are all made different genetically as far as our mental make-up is concerned. Amongst the different personality tests available, Eysenck's Personality test (EPQ-R) is quite reliable for assessment of the different parameters of human personality e.g. Psychoticism, Extraversion, Neuroticism (PEN). For the same stressful situation/factor, our reaction to it are different depending upon our individual PEN score; e.g. Individuals with high Psychoticism score react differently (more aggressive and troublesome, socially withdrawn) in comparison to those with a low score (socialized, empathetic and conventional). Similar differences in behavior are also seen with Extraversion and Neuroticism scores.

Strangely, 'Self-awareness' of unethical behaviors and the propensity to correct it can be found only in a miniscule percentage of human beings. Most of us take it for granted and do nothing about it. Thus adulteration of human society has been a continuous process. Then the moot question that crops up is: "Can human personality traits be modified for betterment? If so, then how?"

The role of neurotransmitters specially 'serotonin' in the modulation of human behavior has been widely studied. The serotonin level in the platelets gets disturbed in mental stress

which in turn further affects the outward behavior of a person deleteriously. Hence, level of Platelet serotonin needs to be maintained within a normal range. Correction of serotonin, if low by anti-depressants and if high by Anti-psychotics and Mood Stabilizers can be easily achieved rationally with immense beneficial effects [2,3]. Along with medicines, scientifically programmed Meditation/Mind Training programs will add-on to the perpetuation of human rationally thinking behavior rather than impulsive aberrant behaviors causing harm not only to himself/herself but to his/her surroundings and the society at large. Integration of Mental health awareness has now become a pre requisite in all aspects of health and social policies for its immense beneficial effects in social, psychological and physical well-being, including cancer prevention and treatment of the human race [4].

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