



COPING WITH STRESS: AN AYURVEDIC PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Vrinda Kaknurkar^{1*}, Dr. Jayashree Tongaonkar^{2} and Dr. Vikram Rajpurohit^{3***}**

^{1*}M.D. (RogNidan) Professor and HOD, Dept of Rog Nidan, SSAM Hadapsar, Pune, Maharashtra.

^{2**}MD (Kaychikitsa) Professor and HOD, Dept of Kaychikitsa, SSAM Hadapsar, Pune, Maharashtra.

^{3***}MD (Rasashastra) Ayurvedic private practitioner, Pune, Maharashtra.

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Vrinda Kaknurkar**

M.D. (RogNidan) Professor and HOD, Dept of Rog Nidan, SSAM Hadapsar, Pune, Maharashtra.

Article Received on 09/04/2017

Article Revised on 30/04/2017

Article Accepted on 20/05/2017

ABSTRACT

Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances. Stress is good when it is limited to anxiety or tension. However, beyond one's comfort zone, stress stops being helpful and can start causing major damage to one's mind and body. *Ayurveda* recognizes this stress as a sign of imbalance in one's body. It alters the functions of mind and body through imbalance of *Satva-Raja-Tama* and vitiation of *Vat-Pitta-Kapha* respectively and thus prevents one from being able to cope with the situations that arise. Stress affects 'the channel of mind' *Manovahastrotas*, and ultimately affects mind or *Man*. Stress leads to an offence against wisdom (*Pradnyaparadh*) which is root cause of all diseases. There is no cure for cognitive, emotional and behavioral signs and symptoms of stress. However, getting control over them automatically cures physical signs and symptoms of stress. *Ayurvedic* treatment given in the form of oletion, gentle massage, oil flow and oil pad on head, application of oil in ear or nostrils pacifies vitiated *Vata* and prevents one from landing in many serious health issues. Additionally One's support network, regular exercise and healthy diet and practicing *Pranayama* helps one to build strength of mind, senses and soul. Optimistic attitude, accepting the change in life, knowing one's stress full situation including how long it would last and affect one's life is what one need to gain by getting treatment and that is what is called coping with stress.

KEYWORDS: coping with stress, ayurveda, vata, pitta, kapha, satva, raja, tama.

INTRODUCTION

Modern life is full of frustrations, deadlines and demands that lead to stress in common man's life. Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.^[1]

Stress is good when it is limited to anxiety or tension. *Raja guna* which is one of the three universal attributes (*Satva-Raja-Tama*) or qualities of consciousness increased during anxious state ignites kinetic energy, movement, passion and ability to act and can help one rise to meet challenges in life.^[2] During anxious state heart rate increases, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises which indicate vitiation of *Prana-Udana-Vyana*; however within limits this leads to physical changes like increase in your strength and stamina and enhance your focus.

When working properly, stress helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert. However, beyond your comfort zone, stress stops being helpful and can start causing major damage to your mind and body.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A comprehensive literature search was conducted. It is an observational and analytical study based on Authentic *Ayurvedic* texts, Modern texts and Internet sources. Data was collected analyzed for further discussions and conclusion was drawn.

STRESS AND AYURVEDA

Ayurveda recognizes this stress as a sign of imbalance in our body. It alters the functions of mind and body through imbalance of *Satva-Raja-Tama* and vitiation of *Vat-Pitta-Kapha* respectively and thus prevents one from being able to cope with the situations that arise. Stress affects 'the channel of mind' or *Manovahastrotas*, and ultimately affects mind or *Man*. Stress is responsible for altering the knowledge gaining process where mind connects sense organs to soul through intellect^[3]. Stress leads to change in functions of mind which are thinking (*Chintya*), analyzing, elaborating (*Vicharya*), guessing, perceiving, assuming, etc. (*Uhya*) and determination and dedication (*Sankalpya*).^[4] Stress leads to loss of control of mind over sense organs and it prevents sense organs from thinking about unwanted and weird things.^[5] In

short, stress leads to an offence against wisdom (*Pradnyaparadh*) which is root cause of all diseases.

STRESS AND MODERN SCIENCE

Signs and symptoms of stress overload^[6]

Cognitive Symptoms:

1. Memory problems
2. Inability to concentrate
3. Poor judgment
4. Seeing only the negative
5. Constant worrying
6. Anxious or racing thoughts

Emotional Symptoms

1. Moodiness
2. Irritability or short temper
3. Agitation, inability to relax
4. Feeling overwhelmed
5. Sense of loneliness and isolation
6. Depression or general unhappiness

Physical Symptoms

1. Aches and pains
2. Diarrhea or constipation
3. Nausea, dizziness
4. Chest pain, rapid heartbeat
5. Loss of sex drive
6. Frequent colds

Behavioral Symptoms

1. Eating more or less
2. Sleeping too much or too little
3. Isolating yourself from others
4. Procrastinating or neglecting Responsibilities
5. Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
6. Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

AYURVEDIC TREATMENT

Ayurvedic treatment is outlined based on following basic principles stated by *Charaka* for treatment of any psychological disorders (*Manovikar*)^[7].

1. Treatment based on *Ayurvedic Tridosha* concept (*Dnyan-Vidnyan*) to pacify vitiated *Dosha*.
2. Treatment to build strength for mind (*Man*), senses (*Indriya*) and soul (*Aatma*) through (*Dhairya-Smruti-Samadhi*).

1. Treatment based on *Ayurvedic Tridosha* concept (*Dnyan-Vidnyan*) to pacify vitiated *Dosha*

• Regulation of *Vat dosha*

It is done by **oletion (*Snehan*)** – oil is applied on head (*Murdhataila*) in four different varieties namely *abhyanga* (gentle massage by oil), *seka* (oil flow on head), *pichu* (oil pad on head), *basti* (holding oil on head).

1. ***Abhyanga* (gentle massage by oil)** – Luke warm *Tila taila* is used for *Abhyanga*. Massage of oil is done on head (*Shirobhyanga*) or on foot (*Padabhyanga*) every day. Practicing *Abhyanga*

with oil, grounds the energy, soothes the nervous system, reduces stress, quiets the mind, and promotes sound sleep.

2. ***Shiroseka* (oil flow on head)** – Luke warm *Tila taila*, medicated milk (*siddha kshira*) or butter milk (*takra*) is used for *Shiroseka*. It is done 7 to 10 days, every day for 30 minutes to get desired results. It helps in increasing concentration, calms down the irritable mind, and reduces headache due to tension.
3. ***Shiropichu* (oil pad on head)** – gauze piece soaked in medicated oil is kept on head (fontanel) for 30 minutes every day for 7 to 21 days. This method is the most convenient method of oil application than *Shiroseka* or *Shirobasti*.
4. ***Shirobasti* (holding oil on head)** – oil can be used in maximum quantity by this method; however bald head is mandatory to get desired benefits.

***Karnapurana* (application of oil in ear)** - Luke warm coconut oil applied in ear by drops or by keeping gauze piece pacifies vitiated *Vata*.

***Nasya* (application of oil to nasal passage)** - Each morning, application of three to five drops of *Nasya Oil* into each nostril relieves accumulated stress, and supports mental clarity. It also promotes unobstructed breathing.

2. Treatment to build strength for mind (*Man*), senses (*Indriya*) and soul (*Aatma*) through (*Dhairya-Smruti-Samadhi*).

Many factors influence stress tolerance and to increase one's stress tolerance an individual needs to concentrate on them and strengthen them. In other words one needs to build strength of mind (*Man*), senses (*Indriya*) and soul (*Aatma*) through (*Dhairya-Smruti-Samadhi*).

Following are the remedies:^[8]

1. Support network – Family and friends are one's support network. Talking to them is essential. If that is not sufficient or if not possible, one needs to take support of psychotherapist or counselor.
2. Regular exercise - can lift one's mood and help relieve stress, anxiety, anger, and frustration. Regular walk of more than 30 minutes every day serves the purpose.
3. Diet – Eat a diet rich in fresh fruit and vegetables, high-quality protein, and healthy fats. It should be a square meal. Do not have diet full of processed and convenience food, refined carbohydrates, and sugary snacks – they can worsen symptoms of stress.
4. *Pranayam* – Meditation – Sitting in *Padmasana* and simply concentrating on one's breathing can help one achieve sense of control and ability to deal with one's emotions.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

Stress affects 'the channel of mind (*Manovahasrotas*)' along with its other channels like *Rasavaha*, *Annavaha*,

Majjavaha and *Shukravaha srotas*. Treatment given in the form of oletion along with proper counseling, exercise, diet and meditation pacifies vitiated *Vat*. It regulates altered functions of *Prana-Vyan-Udan-Saman* and *Apan* (five types of *Vata*). It calms down hyperactive and excited mind or *Man* by regulating *Raja* and *Tama guna*. It nourishes senses (*Indriya*) and soul (*Aatma*). Control over cognitive, emotional and behavioral symptoms automatically cures one's all other physicals signs and symptoms.

CONCLUSION

There is no 'cure' for the symptoms of stress especially cognitive and emotional symptoms. However gaining control over them is possible. Coping with stress is essential to prevent landing into many health issues. Therefore, an *Ayurvedic* line of treatment is a good option for healthy way to cope with them.

Coping with stress is possible with optimistic attitude, accepting the change in life, knowing one's stress full situation including how long it would last and affect one's life. This is possible with the help of *Ayurvedic* treatment. It shows healthy pathway towards delightful life even while you are actually experiencing misery of life.

REFERENCES

1. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/stress>
2. <https://www.banyanbotanicals.com/info/ayurvedic-living/living-ayurveda/health-guides/the-channel-of-the-mind/>.
3. Vd.Kushwah Charaka Samhita: Ayurveda Dipika's Ayushi Hindi commentary. Chaukhamba Orientalia. Varanasi(U.P): Chau-khamba Orientalia; reprint edition **Sharir 1/18** Page no. 714.
4. Vd.Kushwah Charaka Samhita: Ayurveda Dipika's Ayushi Hindi commentary. Chaukhamba Orientalia. Varanasi(U.P): Chau-khamba Orientalia; reprint edition **Sharir 1/20** Page no. 714.
5. Vd.Kushwah Charaka Samhita: Ayurveda Dipika's Ayushi Hindi commentary. Chaukhamba Orientalia. Varanasi(U.P): Chau-khamba Orientalia; reprint edition **Sharir 1/21** page no. 714.
6. www.helpguide.org.
7. Vd.Kushwah Charaka Samhita: Ayurveda Dipika's Ayushi Hindi commentary. Chaukhamba Orientalia. Varanasi(U.P): Chau-khamba Orientalia; reprint edition **Sutra 1/58** Page no. 26.
8. www.helpguide.org.