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MANAGING EXAM STRESS: EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

In the article, the author explores the pervasive issue of stress in modern society, focusing on its impact on students, especially during examination periods. Stress, a well-known phenomenon, is often induced by various factors such as work challenges, financial struggles, health issues, and interpersonal conflicts. Despite extensive research on stress, its management remains crucial for maintaining a healthy and fulfilling life.

The examination stress faced by students is highlighted as particularly detrimental, affecting their mental state, health, motivation, and cognitive functions, ultimately hindering their development as future professionals. The necessity of preventing examination stress is emphasized.

The literature review reveals that stress and its factors have been widely studied across multiple disciplines, with significant contributions from Canadian scientist Hans Selye, who first introduced the term “stress” in 1936. Stress is examined from three perspectives: as a situational demand, a physiological and psychological response, and the long-term consequences of acute experiences. Stressors can be physical, mental, actual, or probable, and stress is classified into various types, including eustress (positive) and distress (negative).

Stress manifests in three stages: the anxiety stage, resistance stage, and exhaustion stage, with prolonged stress potentially leading to serious health issues. Modern classifications of stress differentiate between physiological, chronic, acute, chemical, biological, psychological, emotional, and informational stress. Examination stress is specifically linked to the informational type, resulting from the pressure of preparing for and taking exams.

The author identifies multiple factors contributing to examination stress, such as anticipation of the exam, restricted movement during study periods, strict time constraints, sleep disturbances, and lifestyle changes. Understanding these factors and recognizing stress symptoms can help students mitigate their effects.

Preventive measures for stress, particularly examination stress, include self-regulation techniques, breathing exercises, aromatherapy, physical exercise, positive attitude adjustments, and maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Psychological methods such as relaxation techniques, meditation, autogenic training, and behavioral corrections are recommended. Practical methods to handle stress involve problem-solving, shifting focus, and planning effectively.

Emphasizing the importance of relaxation, the author discusses methods like breathing regulation, neuromuscular relaxation, and humor. Autogenic training is mentioned for its benefits on cardiovascular health and overall well-being. The article suggests creating a stress-free environment through art, music, massage, or physical activities, and maintaining proper nutrition. If necessary, professional help and medication are advised.

Self-observation and self-regulation are crucial for students to manage stress effectively. Understanding individual reactions to stress and employing appropriate coping strategies can significantly enhance a student’s ability to handle examination stress.

In conclusion, the article provides a comprehensive analysis of stress, particularly examination stress, and offers various strategies for its prevention and management, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to maintaining mental and physical health during stressful periods.

Key words: *examination stress, depression, adaptation, relaxation, physical activities.*

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УПРАВЛІННЯ ЕКЗАМЕНАЦІЙНИМ СТРЕСОМ: ЕФЕКТИВНІ СТРАТЕГІЇ ДЛЯ СТУДЕНТІВ УНІВЕРСИТЕТІВ

В статті автор досліджує розповсюджену проблему стресу в сучасному суспільстві, приділяючи особливу увагу його впливу на студентів, особливо в період іспитів. Стрес, широко відоме явище, часто викликає різні фактори, такі як проблеми на роботі, фінансові труднощі, проблеми зі здоров'ям і конфлікти між людьми. Незважаючи на широкі дослідження стресу, управління їм залишається вирішальним для підтримки здорового та повноцінного життя.

Екзаменаційний стрес, з яким стикаються студенти, виділяється як особливо згубний, що впливає на їх психічний стан, здоров'я, мотивацію та когнітивні функції. В кінцевому підсумку він перешкоджає їх розвитку як майбутніх професіоналів. Підкреслюється необхідність профілактики екзаменаційного стресу.

Огляд літератури показує, що стрес і його фактори широко вивчаються в багатьох дисциплінах, в цьому значний вклад вносить канадський учений Ганс Сельє, який вперше ввів термін «стрес» в 1936 році. Стресс розглядається з трьох точок зору: як ситуативні вимоги, фізіологічні та психологічні реакції, а також довгострокові наслідки гострих переживань. Стресори можуть бути фізичними, психічними, реальними або вірогідними, а стрес поділяється на різні типи, включаючи еустресс (позитивний) і дистрес (негативний).

Стрес проявляється в трьох стадіях: стадії тривоги, стадії спротиву та стадії стану, причому довгий стрес потенційно може призвести до серйозних проблем зі здоров'ям. Сучасні класифікації стресу розрізняють фізіологічний, хронічний, гострий, хімічний, біологічний, психологічний, емоційний та інформаційний стрес. Екзаменаційний стрес конкретно пов'язаний з інформаційним типом, що виникає в результаті напруги підготовки і здачі іспитів.

Автор виділяє безліч факторів, що сприяють екзаменаційному стресу, такі як очікування іспиту, обмеження руху під час навчання, суворі тимчасові обмеження, порушення сну і зміни образу життя. Розуміння цих факторів і розпізнавання симптомів стресу можуть допомогти студентам пом'якшити їх наслідки.

Профілактичні заходи стресу, особливо екзаменаційного стресу, включають методи саморегуляції, дихальні вправи, терапію, фізичні ароматичні вправи, корекцію позитивних відносин і підтримання збалансованого образу життя. Рекомендуються психологічні методи, такі як техніки релаксації, медитації, аутогенного тренування та корекції поведінки. Практичні методи боротьби зі стресом включають проблему, переключення уваги та ефективне планування.

Підкреслюючи важливість релаксації, автор обговорює такі методи, як регуляція дихання, нервово-мишечна релаксація і юмор. Аутогенний тренінг згадується з-за його користі для здоров'я серцево-судинної системи та загального благополуччя. У статті пропонується створити середу, вільну від стресу, за допомогою мистецтва, музики, масажу або фізичної активності, а також дотримуватися правильного харчування. При необхідності рекомендується професійна допомога і медикаментозне лікування.

Самонагляд і саморегуляція мають вирішальне значення для ефективного управління стресом. Понімання індивідуальних реакцій на стрес і використання правильних стратегій подолання стресу можуть значно підвищити здатність студента справлятися зі стресом на екзамені.

У заключення в статті дан комплексний аналіз стресу, зокрема екзаменаційного стресу, і запропоновані різні стратегії його профілактики та управління, підтверджена важливість цілого підходу до підтримки психічного та фізичного здоров'я в стресові періоди.

Ключові слова: екзаменаційний стрес, депресія, адаптація, релаксація, фізичні навантаження.

Problem statement. In modern society, every person is familiar with the concept of “stress”. The fast pace of life, difficulties at work, lack of money, family problems, problems with children and health, difficulties in interpersonal communication – all this and much more contributes to stress. Throughout our lives, we constantly experience stress, as a result of which anxiety develops and health problems appear. And despite the numerous works devoted to this problem, the topic of overcoming stress is still relevant for solving issues related to a healthy and fulfilling human life. Any situation can be

stressful for the students. The exam period is no exception. Examination stress negatively affects the psycho-emotional state and health of students, their motivational and cognitive spheres, and also complicates the process of becoming future specialists. Therefore, it is extremely important to prevent the stress during exams.

Review or recent research and publications. The analysis of scientific sources shows that stress and the factors of its development have been studied a lot by psychologists, physiologists, specialists in human psychology, engineering psychology and

management. Canadian scientist Mr. Selye was the first who mentions the term "stress" in his scientific works. His research. Stress factors were researched by L. Abolin, V. Bodrov, O. Valuiko, R. Hranovska, D. Grinberg, L. Jewell, M. Cooper and other researchers. Therefore, the works of these scientists became sources for writing the following article.

The aim of this article is to analyze to explore the pervasive issue of stress, particularly focusing on the impact of examination stress on university students. The article aims to understand the factors contributing to exam stress and provide a comprehensive analysis of various strategies for its prevention and management. Emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach, the article seeks to equip students with practical techniques and methods to effectively cope with and mitigate stress during examination periods, thereby promoting their overall mental and physical well-being.

The main body. The literal translation of the term "stress" (from stress English) is pressure, pressure, tension. Mainly before the concept of stress arose, this term was used in technical sciences to describe physical impact. It was introduced into medicine, biology and psychology by Hans Selye in 1936. The term "stress" is considered by psychological researchers from three different sides, these are:

1) Stress as a situation or its inherent factors that require additional mobilization and changes in human behavior;

2) Stress as a condition that includes a whole palette of specific physiological and psychological manifestations;

3) Stress as delayed negative consequences of acute experiences that impair a person's capacity and health.

Stress is caused by certain causes (stressors), which can be both physical and mental stimuli, as well as actual and probable stimuli. It may seem to many that stress can only have a negative impact on activities, even to the point of complete disorganization, but this is not so. The founder of this term, G. Selye, argued that a person cannot live without stress, and in the event of a lack of stress, he himself creates the conditions for its occurrence. So, for example, we can put off doing some work until the last minute; allow yourself to leave home for work or school a little later than necessary; after hearing the alarm ring, we allow ourselves to lie down for another five minutes, etc. You can understand that a person is experiencing stress by the presence of the following signs: irritability; depression; anxiety; fear; tension; uncertainty; confusion; panic; inability to concentrate on the

action currently being performed; certain problems with memory (increased time of memorization of memorized material; increase in the time required to remember previously learned material; increase in recall time); decreased speed of thought processes (inability to convincingly prove your point of view or come to any conclusions); certain problems with attention (inability to concentrate on the material being studied); decreased appetite or constant feeling of hunger; loss of sense of humor; abuse of bad habits; increased excitability, touchiness, tearfulness; loss of interest both in oneself and in the environment; inability to relax.

In this case, stress occurs in three stages:

1) Anxiety stage – occurs when the body encounters certain traumatic environmental factors and tries to adapt to them.

2) Stage of resistance (adaptation) – at this stage the body adapts to changing conditions.

3) Exhaustion stage – if the stressor continues to act for a long time, then the body's resources are depleted, which can lead to illness or death of the individual.

Modern scientists divide stress on various grounds, so depending on the effect of stress on the body, they distinguish positive (eustress) and negative (distress). In the first case, stress mobilizes (increases) the body's strength (first love; shopping); in the second, leading to disorganization of forces (decline, loss) of the body (conflict with parents; broken heart). Depending on the causes, stress is divided into:

1) physiological – when the body is physically overloaded, as well as exposed to various environmental factors that are negative (high or low temperature; strong odors; increased noise levels);

2) chronic – stress that has a constant impact on the body (forced communication with an unpleasant person; constant lack of sleep; constant rush and feeling of lack of time to complete the planned work);

3) acute – stress that occurs after a person experiences a traumatic event (a conversation with a boss or a loved one; a quarrel with a friend; parting with a loved one; first salary, etc.);

4) chemical – stress caused by exposure to various chemicals on the body (alcohol, tobacco, unpleasant smell of perfume);

5) biological – stress that a person experiences as a result of injury, illness or muscle strain (hypothermia; hot steam burn; intoxication; viral infection; injury in the form of a bruise or fracture; sunburn);

6) psychological – stress that arises as a result of a violation of the psychological integrity of the individual, for example, as a result of experiencing positive (falling in love, joy, happiness) or negative

(anger, resentment, sadness) emotions. It is divided into emotional and informational;

7) emotional – stress that is caused by various emotions (joy because I received an “excellent” mark on an exam; meeting a loved one after a long separation; watching a movie that caused sadness, etc.);

8) informational – stress resulting from information overload (when preparing for a test or exam, you need to remember a large amount of educational material) or vacuum (the first days of vacation after the exam session). This type of stress is referred to as exam stress. (Seyle, 1956: 56).

Speaking about the factors contributing to the occurrence of examination stress, it is important to note that all these factors are encountered to one degree or another when students prepare for and pass exams. Waiting first for the exam itself, and then for the assessment, introduces an element of uncertainty that contributes to the development of stress reactions. Prolonged restriction of movement associated with repetition of a large amount of material is a form of partial immobilization, and the need to meet a strict time limit allotted for preparing for an exam answer creates additional stress. To this must be added a violation of the sleep-wake pattern, especially the night before the exam, and a violation of the usual dynamic stereotypes (lifestyle) during the session. Taking into account all of the above, we have to agree that during the examination session, students have to deal with a wide range of synergistically acting stress factors, ultimately leading to the development of severe stress. (Kulich, 2015:88).

Examination stress is an inseparable part of a student’s social adaptation during training. Having realized the reasons that cause stress, including exam stress, and having analyzed one’s own condition, a person can prevent this phenomenon. Every student at a university, technical school, or college can choose a set of stress prevention methods, including exam stress, based on their own individual characteristics. Various psychological methods can be used to prevent stress. Knowing the theoretical basis of stress, every person can live, study and work productively in modern society.

In psychology, there are the following methods for preventing stress: methods of self-regulation (laughter, smiling, stretching, muscle relaxation); breathing exercises; aromatherapy; art therapy; physical exercise (swimming, running, walking); ability to plan your day; a positive attitude towards problems (try to approach the problem according to the principle “it could be worse”); change in attitude towards the situation; inclusion of positive emotions

in life (watch an interesting film, read a book, listen to your favorite music); talk about the problem with a friend or girlfriend; walks (after school, on weekends or before bed); switching attention (if you have to work at a computer for a long time, you need to periodically switch to some other activity); the desire not to put off doing necessary things until the last moment; find time for your favorite activity and much more. (Fomenko, 2014: 180).

According to Hans Selye’s classical theory of stress, the human body copes with stress in three ways (Seyle, 1956:103).

1) brain signals travel through the vagus nerves to the motor muscles, shoulders, hips, and so on, spreading throughout the body and preparing it for an immediate response;

2) brain signals travel through the autonomic system to vital organs – heart, lungs, and so on. The pulse quickens, red blood cell pressure and blood sugar levels increase, breathing becomes frequent and intermittent;

3) brain signals enter the adrenal glands and hypothalamus. The adrenal glands regulate the release of adrenaline into the blood, which is a common fast-acting stimulant.

Practical methods of correction are based on the following provisions: adaptation occurs at all levels of human organization, including in the mental sphere; mental adaptation is a central link in the general adaptation of a person, since it is the nature of mental regulation that determines the nature of adaptation as a whole. Quite often, students experience adverse consequences not because of the incidents themselves, but because of the reaction to them. The following main ways to get out of a tense situation are identified: change or eliminate the problem; by switching attention to another more pleasant object, minimize the impact of the problem; using practical correction methods to reduce the effects of stress; most effectively select the moment to make a decision, implement your plan and prepare retreat strategies in advance if necessary; adequately assess the current situation and accept the fait accompli without meaningless resistance; weakening of motivation.

The most effective way to reduce psycho-emotional stress and emotional instability is the ability to relax. The ability to relax, subjectively and psychologically influence muscle tone is the most important condition for relieving arousal caused by anxiety. Relaxation methods include: voluntary regulation of breathing, neuromuscular relaxation, biofeedback, meditation, autogenic training. To form a new stereotype of behavior that was not previously

present in human activity, behavioral methods of correcting the stress state of the individual are often used. Physical activity is regulated by us, so it is necessary to use this opportunity effectively. If you need to quickly bring yourself into a calm state, it is advisable to use relaxation and breathing methods. While behavioral methods for correcting a person's stressful state contribute to the formation of new social skills, mastering psychological techniques of self-regulation, overcoming bad habits, relieving stress, getting rid of emotional trauma, etc.

A person's smile plays a special place in the correction of mental stress. When held on the face, it improves mood. Smiling helps increase the amount of arterial blood flowing through the brain, i.e., supplying the brain with oxygen. Laughter can also serve as a means of relieving emotional tension. The general effect of moderate laughter is that the brain is more intensively cleared of waste products, and therefore there is a feeling of a rested person. A sense of humor is also considered one of the important ways to relieve psychological stress. The essence of a sense of humor is not to see the comic where it exists, but to perceive serious, exciting situations as comic. Laughter effectively reduces the effect of psychological tension. After laughter, a person's muscles are less tense, and the heartbeat returns to normal.

Methods of autogenic training have been developed to normalize the activity of the cardiovascular system, breathing, internal organs, for diseases: this is the prevention of myocardial infarction, after a heart attack, fatigue, to stabilize blood pressure, improve kidney health, for migraines, for immunity to colds. An effective method for relieving stress is the method of voluntary regulation of breathing, through which a person consciously controls the number of breathing movements.

Also, to reduce their mental tension, a student can create an illusory world where there is no feeling of anxiety, engage in art, listen to calm music, go for a massage, go to the bathhouse, or do physical exercise. When preparing for exams, the student should improve nutrition; it should help restore vitamin deficiency. If the upcoming exams have a strong impact on the emotional state of the student, he should consult a doctor and take medicine as prescribed.

A student can determine the effectiveness of correction methods for his emotional states through self-observation, which allows him to record

mental signs of stress that are important to him. This method is based on the fact that the individual must independently strive for the goal and influence his behavior. Self-regulation of behavior is carried out through processes that are put into effect by the individual himself and are supported by him, i.e. through cognitive modes of behavior, such as planning, thinking, etc. A prediction of a student's stress reactions to the exam procedure is impossible without a detailed study of both physiological, and psychological components of examination stress with mandatory consideration of individual personal characteristics.

Conclusions. In conclusion, stress is a common part of modern life, especially for students during exams. This article has shown how exam stress affects students' mental health, physical well-being, motivation, and ability to learn. Despite much research, finding effective ways to manage this stress is still very important.

The article explains that stress can come from different sources and can be understood in various ways. It can be a situation that demands extra effort, a physical and emotional reaction, or long-term effects from intense experiences. Understanding these aspects helps in managing stress better.

Preventing exam stress is essential because it can significantly impact students. Factors like worrying about the exam, time pressure, changes in routine, and lack of sleep contribute to stress. Recognizing these factors and their symptoms is the first step to managing stress effectively.

The article suggests various ways to prevent and cope with stress. These include relaxation techniques, breathing exercises, physical activities, and methods to maintain a positive outlook. Simple actions like planning your day, taking breaks, and finding time for enjoyable activities can also help.

Relaxation and humor play important roles in reducing stress. Keeping a good diet and seeking help from doctors when needed are also beneficial. Self-observation and self-regulation are key to understanding and managing stress.

In summary, while stress is a part of life, especially for students, it can be managed. By using the strategies discussed in this article, students can reduce the negative effects of stress, improve their well-being, and do better in their studies. Managing exam stress is crucial for students' health and their future success.

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