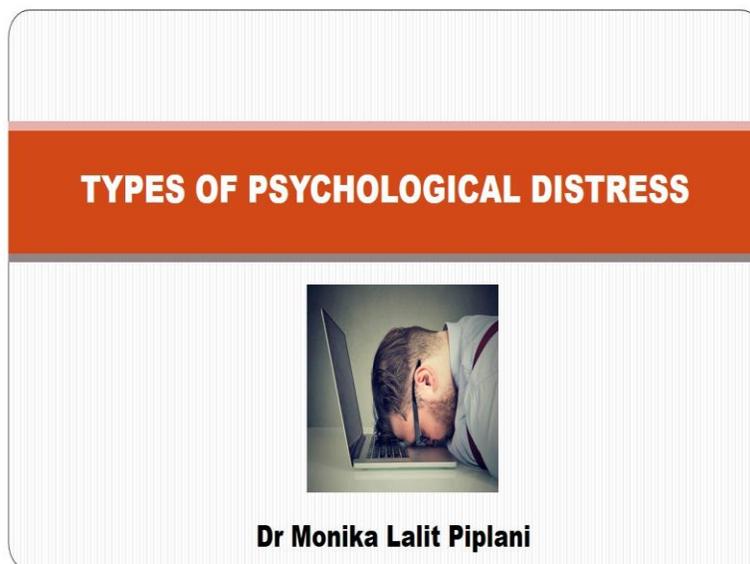


**Basic Certificate in Palliative Care**  
**Dr. Geeta Joshi**  
**Dr. Piyush Gupta**  
**Dr. Col. Yashavant Joshi**  
**International Institute of Distance Learning**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur**

**Week-03**  
**Lecture 04: Types of Psychological Distress**

Week number 3, lecture number 4. Hello friends. So, welcome we are still running into the third week and this is about types of psychological distress.

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This presentation has been prepared by Dr. Monica and I am just a presenter, Dr. Yashwant Joshi.

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## WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS?

Psychological distress describes the **unpleasant feelings or emotions** that you may have when you feel overwhelmed.

These emotions and feelings can get in the way of your daily living and affect how you react to the people around you.



We have already generally learnt we had two-three lessons about psychological distress, but let us just go over it quickly. Psychological distress describes the unpleasant feelings or emotions that you may have when you feel overwhelmed. Unpleasant, you don't like to think about it. Pleasant feeling, yes you are happy when you eat good food, when you go out, see a good movie, you meet your friends.

Feelings are there, but they are good feelings. But when we talk about psychological distress, unpleasant feelings and emotions. And these emotions and feelings can get in the way of your daily living and affect how you react to the people around you. It affects your normal routine, personal and social life.

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## **WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS?**

The concept of psychological distress is still vague but a closer look at the scientific literature shows that the expression **“psychological distress” is often applied to the undifferentiated combinations of symptoms ranging from depression and general anxiety symptoms to personality traits, functional disabilities and behavioral problems**

The concept of psychological distress is still vague, but a closer look at the scientific literature shows that the expression psychological distress is often applied to the undifferentiated combination of symptoms ranging from depression and general anxiety symptoms to personality traits, functional disabilities and behavioral problems.

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## **What Causes Psychological Distress?**

Psychological distress happens when you are faced with stressors that you are unable to cope with. These stressors could be:

- Traumatic experiences
- Major life events
- Everyday stressors such as workplace stress, family stress, and relationships
- Health issues

What causes psychological distress? Traumatic experiences, major life events, everyday stressors such as workshop, workplace stress, family stress and relationship. Normally we

call them hassles, small hassles, but if small hassles continue, then it they become a stressor, gives you stress and health issues of course.

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### **What Causes Psychological Distress?**

- Most studies have targeted a specific age group such as **adolescent, young adults, working age adults and seniors**.
- **Gender differences** in the factors associated with psychological distress have also been found among Australian workers (Jorm et al. 2005). For instance exposure to stress tended to vary across the three age groups under study (20-24; 40-44; 60-64).



Most studies have targeted a specific age group, adolescent, young adults, working age adults and seniors. These are the four groups, they are most vulnerable to psychological distress. Adolescent, because they are advancing in age and whatever psychological or physiological changes are taking place in their body, they are unable to understand.

Young adult's means 20 and more, you see they want to have a job, they want to make a friend with a girl and all these things, if it doesn't happen, they might feel some distress. Working age adults in work related problems and seniors of course because of the age itself. So, these are the four age groups, they are vulnerable to psychological distress. Gender difference is also there, particularly ladies, they might feel psychological distress when their loved one, their husband and others, they lose them.

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## Factors Causing Psychological Distress

There are many number of situations that can cause stress some of the more common stressors include:

- Financial strain
- Loss of a loved one
- Health problems
- Moving to a new location
- Personal or family injury or illness
- Childhood adversity
- Problem with someone or Problem at work and conflicting
- Relationship with friends or family were risk factors for psychological distress for both women and men.
- Job loss associated with an increase in psychological distress.
- Relationship conflicts at home
- New or increasing work responsibilities
- Increasing demands
- Exposure to one or more traumatic incidents, such as a car accident or a violent crime

Factors we have seen earlier, let's see little bit about gender difference.

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### 1. GENDER DIFFERENCES

Gender differences occurred in three types of stress:

- Job insecurity, a risk factor for men but not for women
- Death in the family and end of a relationship were risk factors for women but not for men.
- Family conflicts seem to affect girls more than boys (Ystgaard, Tambs, and Dalgard 1999).

These findings support the assumption that the role of worker is still more prominent for men than for women whereas family-related roles are more crucial for women than for men.



What's the gender difference in our society? Basically, the preference is given to male, because they are stronger, that is our belief and they can work better. So, we give them jobs and ladies and girls cannot do a specific job. So, for girls, job insecurity is there for women, for men, okay, it just carries on. Death in the family and end of relationship

affects more to the woman. If a husband dies, the widow has to suffer so much, social pressure, sometimes her own children may not help her.

If wife dies, fine, husband also suffers equally, but then wife suffers more when she becomes a widow. Family conflict, you know, seems to effort girls more than boys. So, this is the situation. In India, we are trying to sort it out, the campaign which was started by our present government under the leadership of Sri Narendra Modi, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Hindi phrase meaning save daughter educate daughter), even we have started giving enrolling, we have started enrolling, girls were there in paramilitary forces, police department as well as BSF and others, but now we have started enrolling girls into armies also. So, that way we are giving them equal status to them to prove them in, we are giving them new opportunities.

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## 2. AGE RELATED FACTORS

### For Seniors:

- Chronic stress, recent life events and childhood trauma emerge as major risk factors for psychological distress

### For Adolescents:

- Stress related to **academic performance** increases the odds of psychological distress but there is some evidence that this type of stress may be more detrimental for girls than for boys. Thus the impression of failing in the role of students affects the psychological well-being of adolescents.
- **Being bullied at school** and family conflict increase the mean level of distress in both girls and boys
- **Parental divorce** seems to have a stronger effect in adolescent girls
- From a psychosocial point of view, the transition from adolescence to early adulthood stands as a **major life transition** since, over a short period of time, high school graduates experience abrupt changes in their lifestyle and social identity and face new sources of stress, social network and social support that may foster or strain their psychological well-being

Age related factors, seniors we said and for adolescents, academic performance are there because when they become adolescent, there is a time they enter into standard 10 and standard 12. And standard 10 and standard 12, they are the more exams. So far, they were taking exams in the schools only, papers are being set up by the same teachers and they were being evaluated by the same teachers, there was no problem. But since the first time when they face standard 10 exam and 12 exam, they come to know, yes, the pressure is

there to prove their merit. In the school, people bully them, parental divorce, major life transition, major life transition like in my life, I was in the army, so after each two years, I have to change the location.

I get posted all over India and along with me, my children have to go to that particular new location, new schools, new friends, new teachers. So, these are the problems of transition.

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### **What Does Psychological Distress Feel Like?**

We all react differently to stress and to changes in our lives. Psychological distress can come out as:

- **Fatigue**
- **Sadness**
- **Anxiety**
- **Avoidance of social situations**
- **Fear**
- **Anger**
- **Moodiness**



Psychological distress feels like this, fatigue, you feel tired, there is no life in you, you are like a boiled potato. Sadness, anxiety, avoidance of social situations, this is important because you don't get mixed up now, you remain aloof, you generally remain tight locked in your own room, you are not open to the outer world. Even I will say you do not see the sunlight also for that matter and that affects you very badly, fear, anger, moodiness.

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## **SYMPTOMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS**

Some of the more common physical, psychological, and emotional signs of chronic stress include:

- Rapid heart rate
- Elevated blood pressure
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Fatigue
- Difficulty sleeping
- Poor problem-solving
- Fear that the stressor won't go away
- Persistent thoughts about one or more stressors
- Changes in behavior, including social withdrawal, feelings of sadness, frustration, loss of emotional control, inability to rest, and self-medication



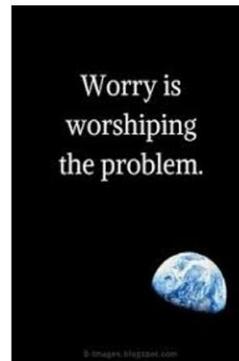
This symptoms we have seen earlier.

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## **MSAS-PSYCH SCALE**

The MSAS-PSYCH subscale was used to measure the frequency, presence, and distress associated with six psychological symptoms:

- Difficulty concentrating,
- Feeling nervous
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling sad
- Worry
- Feeling irritable



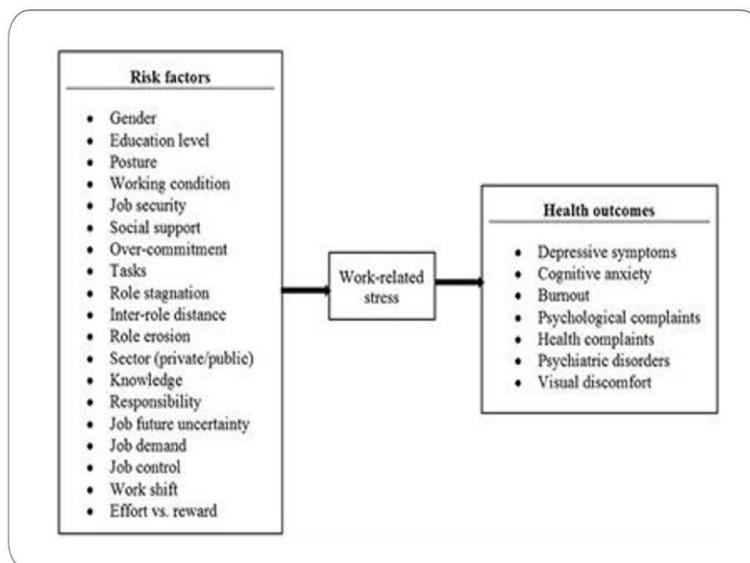
This is the skill, it was used to measure the frequency, presence, frequency, triggers and distress associated with six psychological symptoms. They had measured difficulty concentrating, you cannot concentrate on a particular work because your mind is fleeting, feeling nervous, difficulty sleeping, feeling sad time and again, you are worrying like anything, for anything you are worrying and feeling irritable on small issues. Worry is

worshipping the problem. When you worry a thing, it is not happening, but still you worry about the same issue, so you are worshipping it and nowadays people are worrying like anything and particularly when the mobile has come, they are worrying more and more instead of becoming happier.

When I joined the army, there were no telephones, I am talking about in late 1970s. When I used to go to the border, I will write a letter that letter will reach to my mother after seven days, she will write again the letter will take about seven days, later somewhere or here, I will get the news, my mother will get the news that I am okay almost after 20, 21 days, sometimes maybe 30 days also, but nothing happened, I am still bloody surviving. She never, there was no chance at all, we believe that things will go okay. Nowadays, every now and then, when a child goes to the school and he gets late, a mother starts worrying because we don't have trust that the things will go to get okay. We worry and that a worryful situation every day brings lots of stresses in our life.

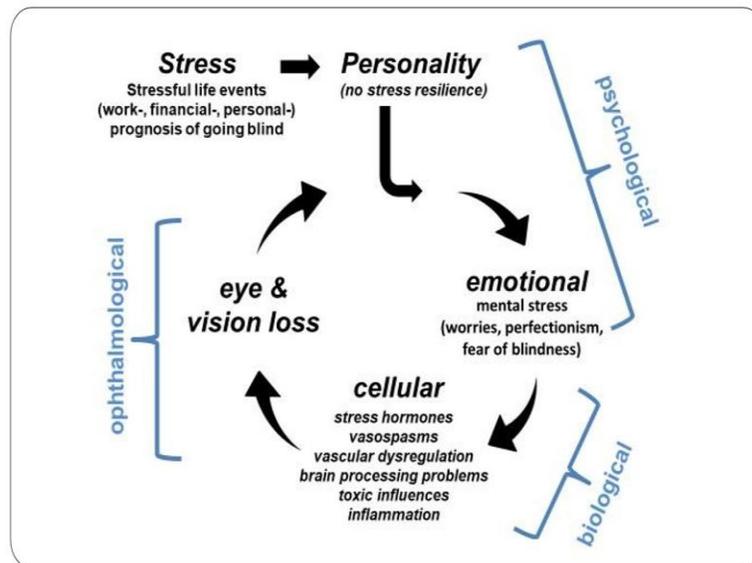
This was the scale and as per this scale and measurement, they said how much stress, psychological distress is there.

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These are the factors, they were listed out risk factors, work related stress, health outcomes.

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There is another chart, stress, personality, emotional, cellular, eyes and vision, the way your psychological distress was working on other factors like biological and ophthalmological. I do not know exactly because I am not an ophthalmologist or I am not a scientist, but I just tell you one thing, eyes and vision loss. In my time, in 1950s and 1960s, in my school, not a single child was wearing a spectacle.

In primary school, I am talking about primary school ke andhar koe ladaka aur ladakee chashma nahin pahanata (Hindi phrase meaning earlier in primary schools no boys and girls wears spectacles), and now you go to a school, small children, they are wearing spectacles. Why? What has happened? What has gone wrong with it? Maybe because of personality, because of physique, maybe emotionally or maybe they are working very hard, more and more, they are working more than what we are working during our time, 70 years back, I do not understand, but the things are there, obvious things are there. These things affect our physiological well-being.

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## **MODERATE LEVELS OF DISTRESS**

Take action if you have moderate psychological distress

- Make lifestyle changes.
  - Monitor the daily activities that cause you distress.
  - Minimize these activities.
  - Talk to someone you trust about how to manage these stressors better.
- Learn stress reduction skills such as:
  - diaphragmatic breathing techniques (learning to breathe from your diaphragm or stomach)
  - progressive muscle relaxation skills or yoga
  - visualization
  - affirmations
  - meditation
  - cognitive reframing (changing negative thoughts or learning to look at things differently)
  - take a stress reduction program

Moderate levels of distress, if you have moderate levels of psychological distress, you will have negative reaction to challenge, to challenges in your daily life. That is important to know what causes your distress.

For example, are there certain activities of people that cause you distress? Know what helps your distress. Moderate level of distress also because you have certain challenges in your life, routine challenges, so that you must try and change. Like, your home is here and your workstation, workplace is about five, six kilometers away and you go there by a bus every day. You have to report to your factory around nine o'clock and there is a bus from your home around eight thirty. So, eight thirty you board a bus and by about nine o'clock or before that you reach your factory.

But most of the time you get late because you get up late and children gets the priority because they have to go to school early. So, your wife handles the children first and then thereafter your turn comes and this is going to remain forever till the time children goes to high school and colleges, they require mother's help and your factory timing is also going to remain the same thing. You get late, you miss the bus, you catch another bus or you catch auto rickshaw, you go late to your factories and every day if you go late, your

supervisor pulls you off. This is what is happening. Simple thing, but it creates distress, psychological distress because supervisor, he'll be abusing you.

Bloody, why do you come late every day? Now, until and unless you change the way of life and these tracers which are there in your life, what is the stresser first. stresser is you get up late. Why do you get up late? Second, why do you depend on your wife? Because your wife's priority is basically to get the children ready for the school. So, if you do not mend your way, way of life, then you are increasing stress and tension in your life and that is the psychological distress. So, some of the challenges in your daily life and my dear friend, these challenges will remain in your life. You are staying in a tenement and the nearest tenement, another person is staying there and he has got two, three pet dogs.

In the morning, he takes the dogs out and these dogs are spoiling in front of your house only. They leave those things, you know, excreta and other things. You tell that neighbor once, twice, my dear friend, yeah, why do you get the dogs here in front of me? He doesn't do anything. He spoils your front part of your home and this happens in number of places. This challenge is always there in the life.

What do you do about it? Do you go to police department or what? So, certain things, very small, small issues will bring moderate level of distress and it is better to resolve those challenges, small challenges, so that that moderate levels of distress goes away. Lifestyle, basically lifestyle changes are required and some of the things, the medical things, I will not tell you, but right style changes monitor the daily activities, when to get up, when to get ready and accordingly, most of the time your routine work, daily work will be okay.

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## HIGH LEVELS OF DISTRESS

If you have high levels of distress, you are likely to develop chronic problems that affect you emotionally and physically. This is because you are feeling the mental emotions of distress and your body's physical reaction to stress for a long time.

- When the emotions of distress lead to psychiatric problems (mental illness), it is harder to change.
- People with heart problems who also have high levels of distress may have:
  - Attention deficit disorder
  - Anxiety disorders such as panic attacks, worry and post traumatic syndromes. [Learn the signs of anxiety disorders and what to do if you have them](#) »
  - Depression. [Learn the signs of depression and what to do if you have them](#) »
- **A high level of psychological distress doubles your risk of having more heart problems.** If you have high levels of psychological distress you need to take steps to reduce stress.

High level of stress, if you have high level of distress, you are likely to develop chronic problems that affect you emotionally and physically. This is because you are the feeling, you are feeling the mental emotions of distress in your body's physical reaction to stress for a long, long time. When the emotion of distress leads to psychiatric problems, it is harder to change.

Before normal stresses becomes so hard that it becomes a psychiatric problem, then you have to go to psychiatrist for consultation. Before that, try and get hold of them. People with heart problems who also have high levels of distress may have attention deficit disorder. Attention deficit disorder means they want constant attention like a small child and that is not possible. Who is going to give you 24 by 7 attention? Anxiety disorders such as panic attacks, worry and post-traumatic syndromes.

Learn the science of anxiety disorders and what to do if you have them. So, these things you have to find out depression, learn the science of depressions. A high level of psychological distress doubles your risk of having more heart problems. If you have a high levels of distress, the chances of facing heart attack is higher.

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## **HIGH LEVELS OF DISTRESS**

- Take action if you have high psychological distress
- Work with a psychologist, social worker or psychotherapist. They will guide you through making changes in your life using techniques like:
  - Cognitive behavioural therapy.
  - Interpersonal therapy.
  - Brief psychodynamic therapy.
  - Behavioural therapies.
- Talk to your doctor about medications that could help you.
- Take a stress reduction program.

Take action if you have high psychological distress, work with a psychologist.

In such a case, you need a psychologist and social worker or psychotherapist. They will guide you through making changes in your life using techniques like cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, brief psychodynamic therapy, behavioral therapies. Talk to your doctor about medications that you could help and take a stress reduction program.

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## **MANAGEMENT**

- Psychological distress happens when you are faced with stressors that you are unable to cope with. Take action to improve your distress.
  - Make lifestyle changes.
  - Learn stress management techniques.
  - Work with a psychologist, social worker or psychotherapist.
  - Talk to your doctor about medications that could help you.

How to manage? Psychological distress happens when you are faced with stressors that you are unable to cope up. There are certain stressors you are unable to cope up, but there are certain stressors which you can cope up that is in your power.

Like I just gave you a case of a person who goes to factory and goes to factory late and gets rebukes every day from the supervisor. Here to get up and to get ready, it is his business and that is in his control, in his hands he can do it. But if he can't do it, then who can help him? So, certain stressors are there which you are able to cope up with and certain stressors are there which you are unable to cope up with. If that guy, if that neighbor with dogs does not improve, what do we do? Will you like to kill him? Will you like to fight with him? Take action to improve your distress, make lifestyle changes, learn stress management techniques, work with a psychologist and talk to your doctor in that order of priority. Most important is this lifestyle changes that Dr. Geeta Joshi has spoken to you earlier in a different week and stress management.

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Stress reduction, practice mindful eating pre-fast, mindful eating. People eat hog-like anything and then become fat and obesity is the mother of all diseases. If you become too fat, you will get so many diseases also. Organize your space, take an epsom salt bath, stay hydrated.

Stay hydrated means why do I keep taking water here? Because I want to remain hydrated. Particularly, I want my lips and tongue remain hydrated, otherwise I will not be able to pronounce it properly. Now also sometimes I can't because I feel thirsty now and then. Meditate or do breathing exercises, get good night's sleep.

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Stress management skills, friendly social network.

This is very important. Create a social network. It's for enjoyment also and when you need them, they'll be able to help you out. Reduce the noise. Self-limitations, find out what are your self-limitations. Accept yourself, love yourself, whatever you are.

Do not compare yourself with somebody else. Somebody may be handsome, somebody may be beautiful, you may not be, but I am what I am. Why should I compare with a hero or anybody else? I'm fine whatever I am. So you have to start loving yourself. You have to start stopping the comparison with others. Exercise, regular exercise, healthy diet, diet, dietary habits have gone very wrong.

Fast food has come up. In my time, there was nothing like all these western items, pizza and other things, you know. So costly and there is no nutrients inside that. Sleeping habits. Time management is very important.

Time and tide waits for none. And time management is required for each and every one. For a student, time management is required so that he has enough time to study and do well in the exam. For a wife, she requires a timetable so that the food is being prepared in time. For a husband, time management is required because he reaches in the factory or at in the office at appropriate time and comes back home timely.

So without time management, life doesn't go well. Meditation, learn. So these are again stress reduction, stress management techniques.

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## **RESOURCES**

The following books are recommended resources to help with Psychological Distress.

1. *Minding the Body, Mending the Mind*. 2nd Edition (2007). Joan Borysenko, Bantam Books: New York
2. *Mind your Heart* (2004). Aggie Casey and Herbert Benson, Free Press; New York
3. *Undoing Perpetual Stress: The Missing Connection between Depression, Anxiety and 21st Century Illness* (2005). Richard O'Connor, Berkley Books: New York.
4. *7 Easy Steps to Less Stress and Better Sleep* (2011). Jaan Reitav.
5. *Stress Less: The New Science that Shows Women how to Rejuvenate the Body and the Mind* (2010).

These are the resources which the author has used. Thank you dear friends and this is the end of week number three. Thank you. Thank you very much.