Chapter I

INTRODUCTION
Acts of coping focus on demands that are experienced by a person taxing or exceeding his or her capabilities. The general aim of coping behaviour is the removal of the experienced imbalance between demands and capacities. Stress and anxiety are experienced throughout one’s life. In all the stages or phases of life, but the amount of stress and accompanying strain that is experienced in old age far exceeds that experienced in any other phase of life and even more than that experienced in all the other phases of life put together.

In old age stress arises from a number of sources (Birren, 1964), which can be broadly categorized as socio-economic, physiological, familiar and kin related and psychological. The elderly like the younger population come to terms with life by evolving strategies of personal adjustment which enable them to avoid emotionally disturbing situations or to cope with the stressful situations. Thus coping is a critical strategy or method that allows the older population to appraise their situations, assess needed skills and face critical, radically distinct life tasks (Lee, Barry, Tamkin & McConatha 1984).

Hans Selye (1975), the father of stress theory, defined stress as “the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it”. The “demand” can be a threat, a challenge or any kind of change that requires the body to adapt. The response is automatic and immediate. Stress can be good (called “eustress”) when it helps us perform better, or it can be bad (“distress”) when it causes upset or makes us sick, confusion, loss of sense of humour.

According to McGrath (1970) “there is a potential for stress when an environmental situation is perceived as presenting a demand which threatens to exceed the person’s capacities and resources for meeting it, under such conditions where he has expected a substantial differential in the rewards and costs from meeting the demand verses not meeting”. As per this approach stress is looked upon as an interactional outcome of the external demand and internal resources. The other comprehensive approach views stress is not only in interactive terms but also as an individual phenomenon peculiar to the individual and his environment. It is seen as the situational outcome.

The origin of the concept of stress predates antiquity. The concept has been borrowed from the natural sciences. During 18th and 19th century, stress was equated...
with “force, pressure, or strain” exerted upon a material object or person which resists these forces to maintain its original state. The use of the concept in this manner encouraged physicists and engineers into adopting it to suit their ends. Thus, stress in engineering is known as “the ratio of the internal force brought into play when a substance is distorted to the area over which the force acts.

The term stress has been used variously to refer to (a) stimulus (external force acting on the organism), (b) response (changes in physical functions), (c) interaction (interface between an external force and resistance opposed to it, as in biology), and (d) more comprehensive combinations of the above factors.

Although we tend to think of stress as caused by external events, events themselves are not stressful. Rather, it is the way in which we interpret and react to events that makes them stressful. People differ dramatically in the type of events they interpret as stressful and the way in which they respond to such stress. For example, speaking in public can be stressful for some people and relaxing for others.

Life would be simple if one’s biological and psychological needs were automatically gratified. But there are many obstacles; both personal and environmental that may interfere. Such obstacles place stress on individual. Stress is the cause of huge losses of production in industry. But the techniques to combat stress and increase well-being in one’s daily life are within his reach—if he knows how to go about them.

The stress response starts in the part of brain, which operates, primitive nervous system. It sets off a cascade of energy resource activating functions all aimed at maximizing personal ability to fight or flight. Breathing, muscles tense, blood flow is up, inhibited hands, feet cool, and mind races or goes blank. Heart beat speeds or different organ functions are go off kilter and reduces the immune system.

Positive stress adds excitement to a person. Deadlines, competitions, confrontations and even bored on the other hand. Excessive stress may create negative feelings. The optimal level of stress will be a motivating force but not overwhelming. So one should not try to eliminate stress but should learn how to manage it. Stress is like electric power. It can light up a bulb and provide
illuminated. The same phenomenon of burnout is the harmful effect of stress resulting in loss of effectiveness.

Broadly stress may be classified into three types: (1) Psychological stress; (2) Organizational stress; (3) Social stress.

**Psychological Stress**: Stress is a dynamic state within organism in response to a demand for adaptation. Life itself entails constant adjustment. Living creatures are always in a type of more or less pressure. The linkages as psychological variables evoke stress response that may ultimately be more damaging to the organism than aversive even itself. Psychological stressors may lead the physical event, last longer and continue to induce stress after physical event is past.

Lazarus and Cohen (1996) have suggested three general categories of stressors-cataclysmic phenomena, individual crises and daily hassles. Cataclysmic phenomena refer to a group of stressors resulting from sudden event or clusters of related events affecting large number of people. The second group includes those events that challenge adoptive abilities in the same way as cataclysmic phenomena but affect small number of people. The third group namely daily hassles refer to those stable and repetitive problems encountered in daily life that typically do not present great adaptive difficulty.

**Organizational Stress**: Organizational membership is a dominant source of stress. The concept of organizational stress first evolved in the classic work of Kahn et al. They were the earliest to draw attention to organizational stress in general and role stress in particular. According to Pareek’s pioneered work on role stress, there are ten different types of organizational role stress.

**Inter-role Distance Stress (I R D)**: It is experienced when there is a conflict between organizational and non-organizational roles.

**Role Stagnation (R S)**: This kind of stress is the result of gap between demand to outgrow his previous role and to occupy new role effectively. It is the feeling of being stuck in the same role. Such a type of stress results into perception that there is no opportunity for one’s career development.
Role Expectation Conflict (REC): This type of stress is generated by different expectations by diverse significant persons about the same role. The role occupant is ambivalent as to whom to please.

Role Erosion (RE): This type of role stress is the function of the role occupants feeling that some functions which should properly be belonging to his role are transfer to / or performed by some other role. This can also happen when the role occupant performs the functions but the credit for them goes to someone else.

Role Overload (RO): When the role occupant feels that there are too many expectations from the significant roles in this role set, he experiences role overloaded. The former refers to having too much to do, while later refers to too difficult.

Role Isolation (RI): This type of role stress refers to psychological distance between the occupant’s role and other roles in the same role set. It is also defined as role distance, which is different from inter role distance, in the sense that IRD refers to the distance among various roles occupied by the same individual. Role isolation is characterized by the feelings that others do not reach out easily, indicative of the absence of strong linkages of one’s role with other roles.

Personal Inadequacy (PI): This type of stress arises when the role occupant feels that he does not have the necessary skills and training for effectively performing the functions expected from his role. This is found to happen when the organization do not impart periodic training to enable the employees to cope with the fast changes both within and outside the organization.

Self-Role Distance (SRD): When the role person goes against his self-concept, and then he feels self-role distance type of stress. This is essentially a conflict arising out of mismatch between the person and his job.

Role Ambiguity (RA): It refers to the lack of clarity about the expectations of role, which may arise out of lack of information or understanding. It may exist in relation to activities, responsibilities, personal styles and norms. And it may operate at three stages, (a) When the role sender holds his expectations about the role. (b) When he sends it and (c) When the occupant receives those expectations.
Resource Inadequacy (R In): This type of stress is evident when the role occupant feels that he is not provided with adequate resources for performing the functions expected from his role.

Social stress: Sometimes society acts as a source of stress. Every culture teaches people what to define as stressful, what to interpret as a minor adjustment. Even such a profound experience as the death of an infant can have different meanings. For an Indian couple, if their infant dies, it will be one of the most shattering, stressful events they will ever experience. But for an Australian aborigine, the death of an infant merely postpones the day it will enter the human family. This tribe of people believes that the soul of an infant merely returns to the common world of spirits, to avail a better time to the born. Similarly, what happens in our families brings great joy as well as the most intense forms of stress.

Conflict between husband and wife, arguments with teenage children, failing health of a parent, adjusting to new schools, feeling isolated in a new neighbourhood, and death of a family member can all bring unrelieved stress. Family pressures inevitably affect one’s life at work and vice versa.

Beyond the family and one’s life at work, all of us are connected to the wider social and physical environment. The government raises taxes and we felt the pinch. Gas shortage occurs and we have to wait in long queues. All of us encounter such short-term stresses that come from the wider environment: Impersonal, beyond our control, yet they can invade our lives and create unrelieved stress.

Stages of Stress: Stress is considered as a response to a situation, which demands with the purpose of the individual to adapt a change physically. Proposed theory of “General Adaptation Syndrome”, which states that when an organism is confronted with a threat the general psychological response occurs in three stages viz., Alarm stage, Resistance Stage, and exhaustion stage.

Alarming stage: The first stage includes an initial “shock phase” in which resistance is lowered, and a “counter shock phase” in which defensive mechanism become active. Alarm reaction is characterized by autonomous excitability. Adrenalin discharge, increased heart rate, muscle tone, blood pressure, and gastrointestinal ulceration may be occurred. The level of resistance and severity of symptoms may depend on the nature and intensity of threat and the conditions of the organism.
**Resistance Stage:** Maximum adaptation occurs during this stage. The bodily signs characteristics of the alarm reactions disappear. Resistance is increased to above the normal levels. If the stressor persists, or the defensive reaction proves ineffective, the organism deteriorates to the next stage.

**Exhaustion stage:** Adaptation energy is exhausted, signs of alarm reaction reappear, and resistance begins to decline irreversibly. The organism collapses. One of the major shortcomings of this theory is that the related research was carried out on infrahuman subjects, where the stressors are usually physical or environmental. This is not always as in relation to human organisms.

**Optimal Stress:** There is no single level of optimal stress for all people. Every individual has unique requirements. As such, what is distressing to one may be a joy to another. And even a particular event is differing in distressing in different persons in their physiological and psychological response.

The person who loves to arbitrate disputes and moves from job site to job site would be stressed in a job, which was stable and routine. Whereas the person who thrives under stable conditions, personal stress may require and the amount which he can tolerate before he become distressed.

It has been found that most illness is related to unrelieved stress. If one has experiencing stress symptoms, he gone beyond his optimal stress level. He needs to reduce the stress in his life and/or improve his ability to manage it.

**Causes of stress**

Both positive and negative events in one's life can be stressful. However, major life changes are the greatest contributors of stress for most people. They place the greatest demand on resources for coping. Major life changes such as for eg., Geographical mobility, Marriage, Divorce, Death of a loved one, and pressures for eg., time pressure, competition and financial problem will be potential causes of stress. The frustrating experiences, linked to certain situations for eg., group prejudices, discriminations, physical handicaps, organizational limitations, psychological barriers, moral restraints, absence of goals, disappointments, unsolved problems cause stress.
Researches on personality and stress have demonstrated personality factors also cause stress. Type "A" Personality has been found to be associated with burnout of stress. More recent research has shown that specific elements in type a personality contribute to burnout: Cynicism (Low interpersonal trust) and a sense of loneliness. Other personality factors contributing to stress are low self-esteem, rigidity, alienation, manipulative tendency and externality (a feeling that the person does not have control over what happens, and external forces or chances or fate determines things.) One research has shown that stress tolerance is higher in individuals with great-impulse control or self-control. Many factors add to be exhausted with stress.

Perfectionism and high demanding nature of a person will damage his interpersonal relations, self-esteem and strip to warm feelings. Unrealistic and impossible expectations from others make possible disappointment, self-repudiation and widespread unhappiness. Perfectionist will get the feedback of continuous rejection and self-putdowns. Demanding perfectionism usually results in failure and denies the peace of mind. Even if one achieve an exceptional result; still they will be the chances of unhappiness, as there will find additional reasons for not being good enough. Naturally perfectionism destroys self-esteem and other qualities and may paralyze the future chances of success in personal or professional life.

In the same way the authoritarianism also leads to rejection from others and produces frustration and aggressiveness. The negative thinking may produce imperfect result. Fearful personalities may always focus on fear of failure, fear of rejection and easily getting frustration. Crises and complications, failures and obstacles, chronic ill health and physical disability such some other factors may cause stress.

Too much stress can directly threaten the health. There are several signs and symptoms that can be noticed when a person has experiencing stress. These signs and symptoms fall into four categories: Feelings, Thoughts, Behaviour, and Physiology. When a person is under stress, he may experience one or more feelings for e.g., anxiety, irritability, moodiness, fear, nervousness, anger, frustration, and experience certain thoughts for e.g., low self esteem, fear of failure, worry, forgetfulness etc., and some behavioural manifestations for e.g., stuttering and
stammering, crying for no apparent reason, loss of appetite, smoking, impatience etc., certain physiological symptoms like perspiration, tiring easily, dryness of throat and mouth, tight muscles etc.

Whenever we experience stress, a stress mechanism is activated, which is also called alarm response. It is as if red alert is declared in the body to meet the impending challenge or emergency. In this condition the sympathetic component of autonomous nervous system is aroused through an impulse from the hypothalamus leading to somebody responses.

At first the Pituitary gland responds and releases the ACTH (Adreno Corticotrophin Hormone). It triggers the adrenal glands to produce another hormone cortisol which acts on the liver. Cortisol converts glycogen stored in the liver into blood sugar to provide instant energy. Breathing becomes faster to provide more oxygen to the body. Heartbeat is increased to increase blood circulation. Blood vessels are dilated and blood pressure is increased. If the stressful situation continues for a long time it causes psychosomatic disorders.

**Meditation and Stress**

Throughout the day, when we experience stress, our bodies automatically react in ways that prepare us to fight or run. In some cases of extreme danger, this physical response is helpful. However, a prolonged state of such agitation can cause physical damage to every part of the body. Meditation affects the body in exactly the opposite ways that stress does, restoring the body to a calm state, helping the body to repair itself, and preventing new damage due to the physical effects of stress.

The benefits of meditation are manifold. When practicing meditation, our heart rate and breathing slow down, our blood pressure normalizes, and we use oxygen more efficiently, and sweat less. Also, our adrenal glands produce less cortisol, our mind ages at a slower rate, and our immune function improves. Our mind also clears and our creativity increases. People who meditate regularly find it easier to give up life-damaging habits like smoking, drinking and drugs.

Meditation involves sitting in a relaxed position and clearing your mind. You may focus on a sound, like "ohm...", or on your own breathing, or on nothing at all. It's necessary to have 5-20 distraction-free minutes to spend. It's helpful to have
silence and privacy, but more practiced meditates can do it anywhere. Many practitioners of meditation attach a spiritual component to it, but it can also be a secular exercise.

Unlike some medications and herbal therapies, meditation has no potential side effects. People with physical limitations may find it easier to practice than strenuous physical exercise for stress relief, plus, no special equipment is required. Unlike enlisting the help of a professional, meditation is free. However, it does take discipline and commitment, so some people may find it more difficult to maintain as a habit than methods that enlist the help of someone or something outside themselves for added motivation. Also, some people may find it more difficult to free their minds of the thoughts of the day, and thus find it more difficult than methods like journaling that involve focusing on these events, or methods that in themselves are distracting, like physical exercise or the use of humour.

'Mastery' can be described as: “One who has the control, use or disposition of something at will” (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principals, 1980:1286). Members of the experimental group in this study who practiced CSM reported effects that signified the experience of greater personal mastery as a consequence of the practice of CSM for e.g., Improved emotional-founded coping, Improved problem-focused coping, Improved resilience, and Improved crisis management.

Reports suggest that they experienced a greater ability for emotional-focused coping in the sense that they were more relaxed in dealing with problem situations, they felt they had a coping mechanism or 'crutch' to lean on, and were able to become less subjectively involved or more detached in facing problems.

**Hypnosis**

Hypnosis is perhaps one of the least understood therapeutic tools in use. While most people think of hypnosis as a way to get somebody to bark like a dog at the snap of our fingers or take off their clothes when they say the word 'stupendous', hypnosis can be a valuable tool in helping people overcome fears, withstand pain, or, yes, even reduce stress in their lives. Contrary to popular belief, one cannot be hypnotized without his consent or awareness. We can, however, be hypnotized by a
trained professional whom we trust, to more easily achieve goals we set for our self. Even better, we can save time and money and learn to hypnotize our self using our own voice or even just our thoughts, a practice known as 'self-hypnosis'.

Hypnosis can be used as a stress management strategy in two ways. Firstly, we can use hypnosis to get into a deeply relaxed state, fighting tension and triggering our relaxation response. This will help to prevent health problems due to chronic stress. Secondly, hypnosis can also help us to achieve various healthy lifestyle changes that can reduce the amount of stress we encounter in our life. For example, we can hypnotize our self to stick to an exercise program, keep our home less cluttered, feel more confident setting boundaries with others, etc. In this same vein, we can also effectively use hypnosis to help overcome any negative habits we’ve been using to cope with stress, like smoking or compulsive eating.

The process of hypnosis involves entering a trance, or a deeply relaxed, but focused state (like that of daydreaming or meditation), and making suggestions for our subconscious mind to accept. We can go to a trained professional for hypnotherapy, and they will talk us through it. Or, we can employ the use of books, videos, or even short articles to learn what are involved, and achieve effective results at home.

Hypnosis is an extremely versatile tool that can be used for everything from simple relaxation to pain management in childbirth. It is easy to do, can be quite inexpensive, and the results are lasting. There are no potential negative side effects, and it can give multiple benefits at the same time.

Hypnosis isn’t for everyone. Some people have trouble getting past their initial prejudices about the practice in general, and some have a more difficult time getting into the trancelike state required for hypnotic suggestions to become deeply embedded. Others find that they simply can’t find the time or the focus, and have an easier time with other stress-management techniques.

Like meditation, hypnosis does require more focus and practice than techniques like simple exercise or the use of medications and herbal treatments, and hypnosis also requires some training or the help of a trained professional. However, hypnosis may be a preferable option for those with physical limitations that make
exercise like yoga more difficult. There are no potential negative side effects, like with some medications or herbal remedies. Also, few other techniques can offer such a wide variety of benefits. With training and practice, virtually anyone can use hypnosis to some degree of success, and experience the many benefits this technique has to offer.

Integrating cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) with hypnosis may increase benefits to clients suffering from a broad range of mental and physical health problems. This practitioner's guide, written by some of the most influential clinical psychologists, educators, and hypnotists, brings together these two methods of treatment and provides a theoretical framework for this integration. By thoroughly reviewing the evidence-based research for the addition of hypnosis to cognitive behavioural treatments and illustrating a variety of clinical applications, the contributors show how the integration can mean productive treatment of clients who might otherwise not have progressed as quickly or successfully. A useful final chapter addresses the process of becoming a practitioner of both CBT and hypnosis.

Clinical applications of CBT and hypnosis integration were found to be useful for: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety and Phobia, Depression, Anger, Mind-Body Conditions (smoking, pain, sleep disorders) etc.

The above mentioned introduction on stress, causes, symptoms and some stress management strategies like meditation, hypnosis and other psychological methods would highlight its significance. It is clear from the above, that stress is part and parcel of life throughout the life course with differences in sources and manifestations. Keeping this in view, an attempt is made in this study to investigate the effects of meditation and hypnotism in coping with stress among elderly.