

## The Importance of Stress Management in Buddhist Perspective

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Stress has become a constant issue in the modern world. Most jobs involve heavy workloads and people are being pressurized to meet higher standards of living due to unlimited demands. All of this can lead to out of control stress levels and individuals are unsatisfied with the modern life style. Dr. Andrew Galizek has stated that stress is the illness of 20<sup>th</sup> century caused by the industrial revolution. The industrial countries such as Japan derive stress as Karosi because many people die due to heavy workload and uncontrolled stress levels. Positive stress can help an individual to perform under pressure and motivate but constant negative stress which is in the emergency mode will exhaust an individual physically, mentally and socially. Buddhist soft skills are one of the best ways to manage stress and towards reaching a positive lifestyle.

This paper will elaborate many Buddhist techniques which still has up to date validity even though the teachings were introduced by Lord Buddha before 2600 years in India. The significance of Buddhist techniques with compared to western psychological aspects is highlighted throughout the paper.

The word stress derived from the Latin word “Strictus” and the Buddhist term āsava which denotes the meaning of defilements or klesa is the best suitable word for mental stress. Many suttas related to āsava such as Sabbāsava, Satipattāna, Vitakkasantāna, Anumāna, Ratavinitha, Bayabherava are reviewed in this paper. The 7 methods of managing stress such as by seeing, by restraining, by using, by enduring, by avoiding, by removing and by developing according to Sabbāsava sutta is highlighted in the second part of the paper. Furthermore, eradicating stress through achieving soft skills by practicing eight fold path, ānapanasathi in Satipattāna sutta, practicing four sublime status, Saptha Bojjanga, practicing loving kindness meditation, Mahādukkakhandā sutta will be elaborated in the paper.

Buddhist stress management is discussed in this paper comparing it with western psychological inventions such as psychoneuroimmunology study in which researchers are interested in the study of psychological factors and physical changes. It is revealed that when a person is under stress the hypothalamus sends messages to endocrine glands. The studies have revealed that severe stress has caused the higher risk of heart diseases which occurs due to antagonistic hostility, chronic depression and continuous negative emotions.

Soft skills which is associated with emotional intelligence quotient which includes self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, empathy and social skills can be well developed through mindfulness meditation. Recent neurological research which reveals neuro plasticity; the brain changes after relaxation meditation fulfills the great qualities such as loving-kindness, wisdom and sympathetic joy. These Buddhist techniques can be used to manage stress without any discrimination.

**Keywords:** *Stress, āsava, neuro plasticity, mindfulness meditation, EQ, Soft skills.*

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