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STRESS - A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last 15 years the word 'stress' appears to have figured more frequently in common usage and the academic literature on the subject has mushroomed. Previous generations suffered hardship and pestilence but the feeling now seems to be of a general level of chronic stress rather than the more episodic stress of the past. This has been related to a number of factors :- rapid change, the knowledge explosion, time pressures and increased choices. This has occurred in a context of decreasing social structure, support and mores. People are looking to psychotherapy and stress management for relief. The world views underpinning these are likely to be "some instrumental criterion: They reduce stress, promote health, enhance happiness, or the like. Determining the beliefs that reduce stress is, however, not equivalent to establishing the truth or legitimacy of those beliefs.....many beliefs may be worth being stressed for - indeed, worth dying for. A world view whose ultimate claim to authority is pragmatic may be inherently self-limiting and self-defeating if an "inherent" sense of purpose is what provides people with the capacity to withstand the corrosive aspects and vicissitudes of living,"¹

Christianity can provide that sense of purpose and practical guidance on living through the pressures of life. It is unfortunate that the disciplines of psychology and theology have been divorced since essentially they share a subject matter - the soul. Both derive their study data from human events. They often use different language and dimensions to describe this but the approaches are potentially complimentary with common practical implications. Christianity has incarnation as a main tenet, not just in terms of the life of Jesus, but in viewing the whole world as a revelation of God and his purposes. The Bible is an interpretative account of human histories and experiences. To learn of the world is to learn of God and his will and the human response to that. C. Bryant² states "The preacher and the pastor has much to learn from the behavioural sciences. In particular I think that an important part of the task of restating the gospel must be carried out by a psychology that can explore and interpret experience. For Christianity was an experience before it was a theology." I therefore make no apology for the fact that the majority of this dissertation could have figured in one submitted to the Psychology faculty. It will hopefully have an added dimension.

¹ Lehrer, Principles and Practice of Stress Management p13

² Bryant, The River Within p4

WHAT IS STRESS ?

ORIGINS OF THE WORD

The word "stress" is thought to originate from the Latin word "stringere" which means to draw tight. T. Cox³ notes that one of its earliest recorded uses is in a religious context. The poet Robert Mannyng (AD 1303 - Handlyng Synne) wrote "That floure ys kalled 'aungelys mete' that God gate the folke to ete What they were yn wylderness Forty wynty, yn hard stres." Variants on this; stres, stresse, stresce, strest and straisse later appear in English literature. The word has been traced (via Middle English)" to the old French word "Destress", which meant to be placed under narrowness or oppression"⁴. The original English word "distress" evolved into two words "stress" and "distress" with slightly different meanings, "the one ambivalent, the second always indicating something unpleasant."

In the seventeenth century it meant "hardship, adversity or affliction." "During the late eighteenth century its use evolved to denote force, pressure, strain or strong effort, with reference primarily to a person or to a person's organs or mental powers."⁵.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1976) gives five definitions, three of which are relevant here i.e. "1. Constraining or compelling force.....2. Effort, demand upon physical or mental energy.....4. (Mech.) Force per unit area exerted between contiguous bodies or parts of a body. "Concepts associated with stress in both common parlance and in the dictionary definition are those of distress (pressure of pain, anguish, exhaustion), strain (exertion to meet demands, being subjected to stress) and fatigue (weariness after exertion or long strain). Stress is "used as a noun when we talk about being under 'stress', as a verb when events are 'stressing' us and as an adjective when modern life has become 'stressful'."⁶

Selye⁷ points out "that stress is an abstraction; it has no independent existence." He sees it as important to name stress before it is possible to scientifically define it⁸. Quoting Shakespeare "What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet", he points out that we can "discuss a rose by any name because everyone knows what is meant by a rose, but you cannot discuss, and far less define a new scientific concept without first identifying it in some way by a name." There seems far more consensus as to what is a rose than what is stress and the varieties of it have lead to differing theories and practical approaches.

Stress is a subject studied in several disciplines:- medicine, psychiatry, physiology, psychology, sociology and anthropology. It includes such diverse subjects as conflict, frustration, anxiety, emotions, disaster, social outburst and riot. "The reason for this voluminous activity is that

³ Cox, Stress p2

⁴ Fontana, Stress Management p2

⁵ Cooper and Davidson, Stress Survivors p4

⁶ Ross & Altmaier, Intervention in Occupational Stress p1

⁷ Selye, The Stress of Life p43

⁸ Selye, The Stress of Life p38

stress, as a universal human and animal phenomenon results in intense and distressing experience and appears to be of tremendous influence in behaviour."⁹ Although now a concept of particular interest to psychologists the study of stress has its roots in medicine. Claude Bernard (1860s) "proposed that an individual's internal system should ideally remain constant in spite of external changes a concept that was developed into the notion of homeostasis by Walter Cannon(1935).....Homeostasis has relevance for stress when we think about ourselves as a system that balances specific resources with the demands imposed upon us."¹⁰ From the beginning of this century doctors have noted relationships between certain personalities and diseases. Studies of the physiological changes associated with emotional change contributed to the development of the study of psychosomatic diseases (e.g. ulcers, asthma). Most people are aware of the link between external events and bodily reactions, e.g. butterflies in the stomach before an examination.

MODELS/THEORIES OF STRESS

Models or theories of stress fall into three categories. Stress can be viewed as an **internal response**, as a **stimulus or external event/factor** or as an **interaction** between internal and external factors.

Selye is the main proponent of the view of stress as a **physiological response**. Stress is the non-specific response to external and internal demands made on the body. The response is a defensive reaction and is the same irrespective of the stressor. It is much the same in people and animals. He named this the General Adaptation Syndrome. There are three stages to this alarm:- resistance and collapse. Alarm is the body's initial response to the stress during which there is a brief period of lowered resistance. If particularly severe death could result, but when survived it is followed by a time of heightened resistance. If the stressor continues then the immediate responses of the alarm stage are replaced with responses which are appropriate to the situation. There is an adaptation to the situation and resistance rises above the normal. However if there is long term exposure to the stressor the energy necessary for adaptation may be exhausted and results in collapse. He advanced the study of stress by pointing out that stress is an experience which can progress through different stages but the theory with its strong physiological basis has been criticised. Further research has thrown into question the concept of a non-specific response and he has been accused of ignoring the psychological factors. He does however recognise psychosomatic factors, the interplay between willed action and consequent feeling (smiling actually cheers one up) and devotes considerable attention to the social and philosophical implications of his biological studies. He describes an evolution of altruism and egotism from cellular origins to human behaviour, believing "the permanent fight between altruistic and egotistic tendencies ...account for most of the stress in interpersonal relations." The emotions associated with this are gratitude and its opposite revenge. He sees the inspiring of gratitude as a way of avoiding selfish clashes between people and the inspiring of gratitude in others as a worthy reward

⁹ Lazarus, Psychological Stress and the Coping Process p2

¹⁰ Ross & Altmaier, Intervention in Occupational Stress p2

to seek for one's own behaviour. He regards the understanding of the process of stress as of importance to the individual in leading a more successful life. He sees stress as an unavoidable part of life and not necessarily a bad thing. He believes it is important that individuals have a long term goal or philosophy in the context of which they can cope with stress but he does not prescribe any particular one.

Levi and Kagan developed Selye's model to describe **psychological factors** in the mediation of physical disease. They maintain that psychosocial stimuli can cause disease. There is non-specific aetiology. A life change is postulated to evoke a physiological stress response to prepare the person for coping. However in excess it can ultimately produce structural and functional damage, the nature of which may vary between individuals. The external factors interact with the "psychobiological programme" (i.e. a combination of genetic factors and influences of earlier environments which results in a propensity to react in accordance with a certain pattern) to determine the stress response. This may be the precursor of disease and finally of disease." This sequence of events can be promoted or counteracted by intervening variables. These may be intrinsic or extrinsic, mental or physical, and can modify the effects of the causative factors (the psychosocial stimuli and the psychobiological programme) at any subsequent stage in the process."¹¹ Research has shown that there is no simply defined stress response and the same response can be evoked by different initial events in different individuals. It is not clear whether certain personal factors such as emotion and fatigue should be regarded as stressors, stress responses or both. This model which is not a simple stimulus-response but a complex cybernetic model with continuous feedback between all the component parts can allow for this.

Other theorists have viewed **stress as a stimulus** and analogies with engineering have been used drawing heavily on parallels with Hook's Law of Elasticity. The stress or load puts a metal under strain. If the stress remains within the elastic limit of that particular metal when the stress is removed the metal returns to its original state. If the limit is exceeded then permanent damage is done. It is postulated that like metals people vary in the amount of stress they can tolerate before breakdown occurs and heredity, early experience and later learning are believed to determine this. There are some problems with this simple model. It appears to assume that situations which make no demands are not stressful, but undemanding or boring situations can be as stressful as those where there is excessive demand. Further, human beings may reach a breaking point, but, unlike metal, they may be capable of recovery, perhaps even to function at a higher level. Welford¹² postulates that there is an optimum level of performance in relation to environmental demand. The relationship between the two is U shaped so that a very low or very high demand level can result in reduced performance. Margetts (1975) couched a similar theory speaking in terms of stimulus input. Living organisms attempt to maintain a reasonable stimulus level and disequilibrium results if there is excessive change from this. This may be temporary whilst adjustment occurs or there may be permanent functional or structural

¹¹ Cox, Stress p8

¹² 1975 Cited in Cox, Stress p16

pathology. "Unless the stress-strain relationship in man functions both unconsciously and automatically, we have to accept some intervening psychological process which does mediate the outcome of that relationship. Stress has to be perceived or recognised by man."¹³

Defining stressors in a particular situation is not easy and experimenters seem to have to rely predominantly on consensus or intuition. From research reports Weitz (1970) identified eight types of situations treated as stress :-" speeded information processing, noxious environmental stimuli, perceived threat, disrupted physiological function (perhaps as a result of disease, drugs, sleep loss, and so forth), isolation and confinement, blocking, group pressure and frustration. Frankenhaeuser (1975) would add lack of control. "¹⁴ Situations which would generally be agreed to have stress elements may not evoke a stress response in all people. Cox points out that it is important for experimenters treating stress as an independent variable to ask, "Does stress exist in the eye of the subject or in the eye of the experimenter?"¹⁵

Both 'stimulus' and 'response' theories tend to view the individual as too passive and cannot fully account for individual differences. Acknowledgement of the active role of the individual within the particular environment is necessary hence the development of interactional theories.

Lazarus¹⁶ stated "The important role of personality factors in producing stress reactions requires that we define **stress in terms of transactions** between individuals and situations rather than of either one in isolation." He notes the distinction between "psychologically based stress reactions and those produced by direct assault by noxious stimuli on bodily tissues."¹⁷ He sees learning, developmental level and culture as important variables. **Stress is an area for study not a stimulus, response or intervening variable.** In analysing psychological stress he emphasises the variable 'threat'. "Threat implies a state in which the individual anticipates a confrontation with a harmful condition of some sort." Cues are evaluated by the individual by the cognitive process of appraisal. Degree of threat will be appraised according to external factors in the stimulus configuration (e.g. power, imminence of harmful confrontation) and factors in the psychological structure of the individual (e.g. motivation strength, beliefs about transactions, education). "Once a stimulus has been appraised as threatening, processes whose function is to reduce or eliminate the anticipated harm are set in motion. They are called coping processes."¹⁸ A process of secondary appraisal will determine the form of the coping process. This takes into account the possibilities for various actions in the stimulus configuration and of psychological factors (the 'price' in terms of certain strategies, ego reserves, beliefs about the environment and one's resources for dealing with it). The intensity of a stress event is therefore determined by the individual's assessment of the threat involved and of the person's assessment of how well (s)he can cope with it.

¹³ Cox, Stress p15

¹⁴ Cox, Stress p15

¹⁵ Cox, Stress p17

¹⁶ Lazarus, Psychological Stress and the Coping Process p5

¹⁷ Lazarus, Psychological Stress and the Coping Process p2

¹⁸ Lazarus, Psychological Stress and the Coping Process p25

Cox and Mackay describe stress as "Part of a complex and dynamic system of **transactions** between the person and his environment."¹⁹ It has stimulus and response elements but emphasises the ecological and transactional nature of these and of the psychological perceptual phenomenon involved. Feedback components are regarded as important. There are 5 stages in the system.

1. The environmental demand which can be external or internal.
2. The person's perception of the demand and of his/her own ability to cope. Stress arises when there is an imbalance between the perceived demand and the person's perception of his/her ability to meet it i.e. cognitive appraisal is the important factor.
3. Psychophysiological changes - the subjective experience of stress (emotion) and behavioural attempts to reduce the demand.
4. Coping processes and their perceived consequences. Again it is the perceived as well as the actual consequences which are important. "It has been suggested that stress may only occur when the organism's failure to meet demand is important, or through the anticipation of adverse consequences arising from failure to meet demand (feedforward)."²⁰ The relationship between demand and ability to cope is not a simple one i.e. a small discrepancy does not necessarily mean low stress. (McGrath 1976)
5. Feedback. This occurs at all stages of the process but is perhaps most important in regard to the effectiveness of the coping response as an ineffectual or inappropriate response is likely to increase or prolong the stress experience with consequently more severe and/or lasting effect.

This model "treats stress as an intervening variable, the reflection of a transaction between the person and his environment and, like the model offered by Levi and Kagan, it is part of a dynamic cybernetic system."²¹

Interactional models allow perceptual factors to be included in the organism-environment relationship and provide a framework for study and guidelines for the alleviation of stress. Extremely severe demand situations which create immediate physiological damage or fatigue are perhaps more appropriately described by S-R models. Stress must remain a very difficult area for research as social background is important. Laboratory studies cannot create the breadth of life situations and the subjects inevitably must have some degree of control over the intensity and length of the experience.

FACTORS INVOLVED IN DETERMINING DEGREE AND NATURE OF STRESS

In life everyone has some pressure or misfortune, and daily faces a degree of stress. Why do some people cope with situations which in others cause high stress levels? Key elements in determining this have been identified primarily as the individual's personality, physiological makeup

¹⁹ Cox, Stress p18

²⁰ Cox, Stress p20

²¹ Cox, Stress p20

and the number and nature of the stress events. Coping mechanisms available to the person greatly effects the final outcome.

PERSONALITY

Personality is seen as a very important factor and two types of personality particularly relevant to stress issues have been identified:- **Type A and Type B**. It must be noted that there are no distinct divisions between the types but that people fall somewhere on a continuum but leaning more towards one end or the other. Tests have been devised to measure the individual's inclination towards Type A or Type B behaviour. (See Appendix 1.) Friedman and Rosenman identified the types when they developed a susceptibility profile to heart disease. The coronary patients, type A's "were extremely competitive, high-achieving, aggressive, hasty, impatient and restless. They were characterised by explosive speech patterns, tenseness of facial muscles, and appearing to be under pressure of time and the challenge of responsibility."²² Characteristics they noted included:- "Almost always feeling guilty when attempting to relax or do nothing for even just a few hours. No longer noticing the more interesting things or lovely things encountered during the day. Not having any time to spare to become the things worth being because you are so preoccupied with getting the things worth having."²³ Type B's have the opposite habits and traits. They are more relaxed, playing games for fun with generally no feeling of a need to impress others with their accomplishments unless the situation demands it. They do not harbour 'free-floating hostility'.

This personality distinction is not sufficient alone to explain susceptibility to stress. Researchers at the University of Michigan found "that Type A behaviour acted as an intervening factor; when Type A behaviour was combined with work and family stress factors it predicted stress-related illness."²⁴ Type A's tend to smoke more, take less exercise and to have higher blood pressure and cholesterol levels so increasing their susceptibility to heart disease. They also put less effort into relationships so depriving themselves of social support. There is a link between high status jobs and Type A's. They tend to be promoted faster and to work longer and harder. It appears that they seek the challenge as they do not report any more overload, anxiety or dissatisfaction. Why then should they become ill? Studies indicate that they experience high anxiety when they are exposed to uncontrollable stress, e.g. an externally controlled work environment. Type B's suffer more with too little external control. An appropriate match between job and personality is important.

"**Hostility**, or a cynical, mistrusting attitude to others, or self-involvement and a feeling of isolation and incompleteness"²⁵ has been strongly linked with heart disease. The link with hostility may be because hostile individuals are more physiologically reactive than non-hostile so reaching a point of collapse quicker, or because they do not 'cool down' and stay aroused longer.

²² Cooper et al, Living with Stress p47

²³ Cooper et al, Living With Stress p50

²⁴ Cooper et al, Living with Stress p48

²⁵ Argyle, Social Psychology of Work p271

Kobasa developed the '**Hardy Personality**' theory to distinguish those who are and those who are not made ill by stress. The personality qualities have three components.

1. **Commitment** - "the ability to believe in the truth, importance and interest of who one is and what one is doing and, thereby, the tendency to involve oneself fully in the many situations of life, including work, family, interpersonal relationships and social institutions."²⁶

2. **Control** - the tendency to believe and act as if one can influence the course of events. Persons with control seek explanations for why something is happening with emphasis on their own responsibility and not in terms of other actions or fate. Some people believe their decisions and actions influence personal outcomes, others that outcomes are determined by fate or chance. The former has been termed having an internal locus of control and the latter an external locus. It is important to note that it is the person's perception of control not actual control which is important and this may not be accurate. Various studies have shown internals better able to cope with stress. Where it is impossible to exercise control internals can experience greater stress than externals, i.e. the nature of the stress is important. (For Locus of control Questionnaire see Appendix 2.) There may be occasions where it may be helpful to believe one has no control (e.g. where an accident occurs causing irrational guilt). One result of repeated failure to influence outcomes is what Seligman 1975²⁷ termed 'learned helplessness'; people give up trying.

3. **Challenge** - "belief that change rather than stability is the normative mode of life."²⁸ Seeing stressors as potential opportunities for change or challenge enables hardy individuals to see even undesirable events in terms of possibility for personal development rather than threat to security. Hardiness leads to coping. Those with hardiness have a sense of purpose of life and confidence in their ability to cope. Garfield in defining 'Ego strength' endorses this and adds they have "the energy to sustain long hours of work and the flexibility to adapt to change."

PHYSIOLOGICAL FACTORS

Behavioural and evolutionary processes are closely related. To survive a species must adapt to environmental change. It has been postulated that innate responses to stress in humans are in many instances maladaptive in modern industrial society and have to be suppressed in favour of cognitive responses. Bodily reactions which were essential in responding to the threat of an approaching mammoth may be totally inappropriate in dealing with an irate boss. Since they may be appropriate if one finds oneself in the path of an oncoming car this does not mean that the reactions are now entirely redundant.

There are three animal responses to danger:- **fight, flight and freeze** and these are found in humans. It is the physiological pattern associated with fight and flight which has been linked to stress. When a threat is perceived a complex chain is triggered starting in the central nervous system. The

²⁶ Argyle, Social Psychology of Work p272

²⁷ Ross and Altmaier, Intervention in Occupational Stress p20

²⁸ Argyle, Social Psychology of Work p272

central nervous system activates hormone secretions. It is through this activation that the hypothalamus, when recognising danger, triggers the pituitary. The endocrine system is one of the main ways in which messages are carried around the body. The pituitary releases hormones, causing the adrenal glands to intensify the output of adrenaline into the bloodstream and to release corticoids. All this stimulates the cognitive, neurological and muscular systems. The person is aroused for action : blood supply to the brain is increased, the heart speeds up so increasing blood supply to the muscles, breathing rate and function improve and glucose and fats are released into the bloodstream to provide additional energy. As a result blood pressure rises and the blood supply is reduced to the stomach, intestines and skin. Finally the cooling system is activated and perspiration results.

This response is designed to improve performance for a limited period after which arousal will fall to its normal level. If it continues the body begins to weaken and illnesses occur. **The person will fall victim to an illness associated with the weakest part of their body.** The heart rate can be permanently raised, resulting in hypertension and ultimately heart disease. The rapid breathing can lead to hyperventilation and other respiratory problems. Cortisones act to inhibit inflammation and activate the defensive immune reactions. Prolonged release results in a less effective reaction to invasion by foreign substances. This has been linked to the development of cancers. Continued muscle tension leads to pain in the muscles, especially in the neck, shoulders and back. Changes in skin resistance lead to rashes and skin diseases. For further details of the effects of pressure on bodily functions and symptoms and illnesses associated with stress see Appendices 3 and 4

Emotion is an important ingredient of the stress scenario. "The experience of stress is not usually or simply reported in terms of 'being stressed', but is more often described in ways associated with emotions such as anger, anxiety, depression, fear, grief, guilt, jealousy and shame."²⁹ Stress is an emotional experience and one which is associated with the more negative emotions. It is therefore worth noting here that there is a strong cognitive or interpretative element in the labelling of the physiological activities of the body. Schachter showed the same visceral reaction could lead to differing labels being given to them according to social situation or instruction given to experimental subject. This labelling is also related to past experience.

Various questionnaires have been devised which seek to alert individuals to the fact that they are under stress and to try to give them some idea as to how severe their position may be. Some of these do so by listing symptoms of the type described above and asking people to identify those applying to them and simply add them up as indicators of stress level. (See Appendix 5.) Others try to give some weighting as to the seriousness of the particular symptom. (See Appendix 6.) The aim is to alert the individual so remedial action can be taken before permanent harm occurs.

LIFE EVENTS

Using the engineering analogy it has been postulated that breakdown occurs when stress accumulates past a key point. There have been attempts to identify these factors, their relative impacts

²⁹ Cox, Stress p27

and the consequent effect. The stage of an individual's life is one factor to be considered. There are stages or eras of life through which we all have to pass. For some time we may live in a relatively settled life pattern but there come transitions points as we age when we have to reassess lifestyle and goals. Coupled with this are events which can occur at any time (e.g. illness or death of a relation).

A. Meyer (1930's) suggested doctors record environmental events alongside medical information in an attempt to identify events making the patient susceptible to disease. This was developed further by Holmes and Rahe (1967). "They defined stress of life events as those events which either signal or initiate significant life change in the individual experiencing them."³⁰ Some of the events have negative connotations (divorce, dismissal), some possibly neutral, (change in residence, or recreation) and others positive (marriage, vacation). The point is that all represent a change and it is the accumulation of change they see as stressful. They obtained scores relating to the degree of stress associated with each event and for an individual could then find a total stress score for any one year. These in turn were related to the probability of illness during the next two years. (See Appendix 7.)

The weakness of this assessment approach is that a life event may have a different meaning for each person questioned. C. and R. Cooper adapted the approach by incorporating a 10-point scale for each life event based on its degree of upset or stressfulness to the individual. C. Cooper points out³¹ that the extent to which the number of simultaneously occurring events lead to ill health will also depend on other factors such as capacity to cope and personal support. "It can, however, give one an idea of how stress factors, which arise with changes in life are being experienced by the individual and act as a warning sign for a potentially stressful situation." (See Appendix 8.)

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND COPING STRATEGIES

These are noted to be relevant at this point but issues related to them will be expounded in a later section.

MANIFESTATIONS OF STRESS

The description of stress in terms of its effect on health has been already mentioned, as have the emotions associated with it. Stress is also said to show in mental and behavioural changes and affects our relationships. Stress assessment questionnaires monitor all these aspects. The spiritual dimension is one that receives very little attention in terms of stress related symptoms but one questionnaire, which does contain a list, again shows that stress has a detrimental effect. Emptiness, loss of meaning and doubt are typical of the tone. The inclusion of features in such lists appears to be arbitrary and largely dependent on the value judgement of the writer rather than on external agreed

³⁰ Ross and Altmaier, *Intervention in Occupational Stress* p4

³¹ Cooper and Davidson, *Stress Survivors* p5

criteria, e.g. 'distrust' and 'hiding' could be regarded as spiritual problems and 'apathy' as an emotional one. (See Appendix 9.)

MEANING AND VALUE OF THE CONCEPT 'STRESS'

'Stress' is a word that almost every-one understands but no-one can simply define. Unlike 'rose' it does not refer to an easily observable object, or even a force. It can refer to almost any kind of unpleasant experience or effect. In some circumstances it is used to describe something positive though some would argue that it is more accurately termed 'pressure' then. The way it is measured has a strong subjective element. There is a danger that it will be used as a simple single-cause 'explanation' for changes in psychological and physiological states and thereby limit research into the multiplicity of psychological and physiological interactions which take place when an organism adapts to a particular environmental situation in order to survive. It can also be used as almost synonymous with adaptation. "In 1966 Lazarus suggested that stress be treated as an organisational concept for understanding a wide range of phenomena of great importance in human and animal adaptation. Stress, then, is not a variable but a rubric consisting of many variables and processes.....It is incumbent upon those who use this approach, however, to adopt a systematic theoretical framework for examining the concept at multiple levels of analysis and to specify antecedents, processes, and outcomes that are relevant to stress phenomena and the overarching concept of stress."³² Any definition of stress must include the relationship between the person and the environment and the characteristics of both. Physical illness depends not only on an external organism but on the person's susceptibility. "Psychological stress, therefore, is a relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being. The judgement that a particular person-environment relationship is stressful hinges on cognitive appraisal."³³ Appraisal implies some kind of assessment or mental yardstick by which value is put on life events. Put at its simplest stress could be said to refer to the pressures of life, the significance of these and how we cope with them. Christianity was originally seen as the Way of Life and provides a context therefore for evaluating the meaning of life events and of determining attitudes that are most appropriate for coping with those events.

³² Lazarus and Springer, Stress, Appraisal and Coping p11/12

³³ Lazarus and Springer, Stress, Appraisal and Coping p21

STRESS AND WORK

So far my comments on stress have been largely in regard to individuals but there are also wider organisational effects. Cox³⁴ lists some of these as "Absenteeism, poor industrial relations, and poor productivity, high accident and labour turnover rates, poor industrial climate, antagonism at work and job dissatisfaction." This has general economic and social implications for a country with consequent effects on almost everyone whether they are personally employed or not. A large proportion of adult waking hours are spent at work so clearly what happens there will have a profound effect on the person. It is worth noting that despite all the negative aspects, overall the health of the employed is better than that of the unemployed. In specific instances, however, work conditions can be highly destructive of well-being.

There have been various attempts to assess the cost in economic terms alone of the consequences of stress but this is virtually impossible to calculate. The long list of physical illnesses believed to be stress related, mental and emotional illnesses and inability to work due to inappropriate attempts to cope (e.g. using drugs and alcohol) mean millions of lost working days. One recent estimate (made Nov. 1994 in The Times) put stress at work as causing 90 million lost working days and costing £7 billion a year. Inefficiency, mistakes and accidents further increase the monetary loss. What is clear is that on economic grounds alone the effect on employees of stress in the work situation is something which employers cannot afford to ignore.

DUTY OF CARE

There is also a humanitarian or moral dimension to consider when structures are created which disregard the welfare of those bound to exist within them. Legislation has been introduced over the years to protect workers. This was initially in terms of limiting the length of the working day and the physical environment. It is now encompassing their general welfare. Prejudice against minorities and sexual harassment are areas where the courts now hold employers as responsible for distress to employees. There has historically been a stigma and sense of failure attached to emotional or mental illness so that employees were blamed or held to be in some way deficient in 'not being up to the job'. This has no doubt allowed employers to unfairly use their employees without being challenged. There is an increasing belief by the public that employers have a responsibility for the mental health of their workers. A survey of 2,000 people conducted by MORI³⁵ showed that in 1970 70% believed in employers' responsibility but by 1995 this had risen to 78%. Awareness of the issue was raised by the case of John Walker, a social worker who successfully sued Northumberland County Council when he suffered a second nervous breakdown as a result of pressure of work and received £200,000. The judge did not hold the council responsible for the first breakdown, ruling that this was unpredictable. They were held liable for the second one as they re-employed him without lightening his workload. Dr

³⁴ Cox, Stress p92

³⁵ The Times 18/4/95

Chris Johnstone recently reached an out of court settlement of just over £5,000 (plus an estimated £150,000 costs) with Camden and Islington Health Authority for requiring him to work up to 112 hours a week as a senior house officer in obstetrics and gynaecology. He alleged stress was caused and listed among his symptoms slurred speech, resentment of patients, depression to the point of considering suicide and fatigue resulting in him falling asleep at the wheel of his car and having an accident. He decided to take legal action because he feared that because of exhaustion he could endanger life. The Court of Appeal in 1990 ruled his "employer could not lawfully require him to work so much overtime in any week as was reasonably foreseeable that it would damage his health."³⁶ The Courts therefore seem to be holding employers culpable where there is a negligent disregard for the consequences of work tasks or work duration on the employee.

The area of responsibility is a difficult one. There has recently been a further factor added to this difficult question. It relates to work which can ,because of its inherent, unavoidable nature involve such traumatic situations that the worker is left incapacitated. Demands for compensation by some Police, who claim they were traumatised by the Hillsborough football ground disaster, have been rejected as have many ex-servicemen's claims in respect of suffering caused by wartime experiences. There are many jobs, particularly in the emergency services and forces, where it is inevitable that workers will be subject to trauma and this should be clear to them when they chose that employment. It might then be argued that in choosing that career they place themselves knowingly at risk and are hence responsible for the consequences. Perhaps this is an area where the apportioning of blame is inappropriate. If the job has to be done for the benefit of society then society should accept the care of those who suffer as a result even if this involves substantial financial outlay.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Before examining the factors that are generally believed to contribute to stress at work I will briefly comment further on those very extreme cases - labelled now as suffering from **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**. This was first listed as a diagnostic category by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 but had been recognised long before. In the World War 1 it was termed "shell shock" and World War 2 "battle fatigue" and the term post-traumatic stress disorder gained prominence in America where the mental health workers had to deal with the difficulties Vietnam War veterans had in readjusting to life at home again. It is particularly associated with war and other tragedies. It refers to a stress-related psychological disorder where its victim has extreme difficulties in coping with daily life. They have difficulties in maintaining normal relationships, holding a job and have emotional problems such as depression, irrational guilt and aggressive outbursts. They may experience sleep problems including nightmares and have flashbacks of the frightening event. They may seek to tackle the problem by inappropriate means such as alcohol, so exacerbating the problem. The worst cases resort to suicide. An example of which I have personal

³⁶ The Times 26/4/95

knowledge typifies this. A man appeared in the magistrates court on two charges of driving under the influence of alcohol. He was well over the legal limit and the offences occurred only days apart. He presented himself for interview for a court report only after considerable persuasion by his family as he regarded himself as beyond help and deserving of a prison sentence. He was a veteran of the Falklands campaign where he had been fire fighting on ships hit by missiles. He had clearly been in considerable personal danger but the greatest distress had been caused by the sight of burned human bodies. Further he had been placed in the position of deciding who to try to save. He was left with an irrational sense of guilt. He blamed himself for not saving those who died and for those who survived but were permanently injured. He blamed himself for the whole war. He was no longer able to relate to his wife and children and regularly got drunk. He eventually began to see the possibility that he could and should be helped and would have consented to a probation order. The magistrate imposed a prison sentence - fortunately suspended - saying that probation was not appropriate for this category of offence. Fortunately he did seek further assistance from the social and mental health service and readjusted successfully. This case was at a time when the condition post-traumatic stress disorder had not been widely publicised. Later experience with the court showed a different response once the term was current and highlights the need for all areas of society to be aware of the condition if there is to be understanding rather than condemnation of apparent failures.

One person's experience of traumatic stress can have wide-ranging effects. Whilst sufferers may come to terms and cope the effects can be lifelong and something both they and their families have to learn to live with. The recent VE Day celebrations have revived memories some worked hard to erase and have required counselling again.

CARING PROFESSIONALS AND STRESS

It is becoming widely recognised that professionals treating trauma and disaster victims are themselves at risk from their secondary involvement in the situation. Those who have to deal with traumatised groups such as rape victims, sexually abused children, torture victims and war veterans can suffer from counter transference reactions, vicarious victimisation and stress related burnout. Therapists must be aware of their own affective reactions and may themselves need counselling, or some sort of good supervisory support if they are to cope. Families of workers counselling the bereaved after the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster found problems with their own families. Children expressed varying emotions, anger, rejection or overprotection of their parents. In that incident it was not only the workers dealing with humans who suffered e.g. a computer operator responsible for recording data of individuals and families poured out emotion in a poem³⁷ that showed the full human impact had been felt.

³⁷ Barnes, Consultation to a Disaster Unit - Context Autumn 1991 No 9 p18

STRESSFUL OCCUPATIONS

As stated earlier in the section on Duty of Care (page 14) the courts hold employers culpable for ill effects on their employees when those effects were to a degree predictable. The question of what is or is not a stressful occupation is not simple to answer. The job, the person and their interaction all have to be considered. If a person has the ability to do a job and it provides him/her with the appropriate level of stimulation then they are unlikely to feel stressed. The social support available may also affect the ability to cope.

Comparing relative stress levels of occupations is difficult and not a lot of research has been done. Cooper has drawn up a league table ranking over 100 jobs (listed under 13 group headings) according to their degree of stress. (See Appendix 10.) Uniformed professions have on average the highest stress rating (6.4 with Police the highest 7.7). Arts and communications and Commerce and management come out second (5.3) followed by Industrial production (5.1), Caring professions (4.7) and Health (4.6) Technical specialities have the lowest rating (3.7). There is however considerable overlap between the group ratings, e.g. mining at 8.3 is the highest rating with the Armed Forces (4.7) scoring less than construction work (7.5) or dentistry (7.3).

"Stress related illnesses are not the exclusive problem of either high- or low-status workers"³⁸ A US National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health found both high and low levels of stress in white- and blue-collar employees and in skilled and unskilled. Factors other than status are involved though in some cases these could be linked with status. Most people have heard of "executive stress" but it is not necessarily those in high positions of responsibility who suffer most. Prof. Marmot (a professor of Epidemiology) has for the past 18 years studied civil servants. He showed that the lower a civil servant's grade the higher the risk of premature death. He saw the main factor as **control**. It is not the demands per se which damage health but demands in the face of no control over them.

There have been several attempts to identify peoples' motives for working and there are generally recognised to be two areas of motivation :- the need to provide finance to survive and to meet a need for "self-actualisation." To varying degrees one may be sacrificed to gain the other but over this century there has been an increasing move towards people seeing work as important more for self-actualisation than for basic survival. With the introduction of the Welfare State there is probably a lessened fear of being destitute in material terms. The base-line of expectation in life has been raised. More and more declarations of what is reasonable for a human to expect as of right have been made in political circles. It is therefore to be expected that people will look for a work situation which at the minimum gives them safety and the prospect of continuing good health and ideally will meet their higher aspirations. Where their job does not meet these criteria and they are unable to remedy the situation stress is likely to result.

³⁸ Cooper et al Living with Stress p84

JOB STRESS FACTORS

Physical aspects of the workplace are the most obvious ones with temperature, humidity, noise, vibration, smells and illumination being the most common problems. Some can have direct physical impact, e.g. noise causing deafness, or chemicals resulting in breathing difficulties but there are less obvious consequences. Noise can cause hypertension and mood changes, interfere with information processing and attention and mask auditory feedback and inner speech. Cold can reduce motivation whilst heat can lead to irritability. Such physical factors are most often associated with industrial settings but are also relevant in other professions. Hospital workers are often faced with artificial light that can be monotonous and too bright and this can be coupled with bad smells. Industrial workers may also live with the knowledge that they are dealing daily with materials (e.g. asbestos) which could lead to a painful or premature death.

Demands of the work task are most obvious in industrial terms. Repetitiveness has been justified on economic grounds, particularly since industrialisation, but work which is dull and monotonous leaves people with no sense of achievement and is only endured usually for the money (though it could be an escape from a demanding home environment). People tend to cope by "turning off". After even short exposures to production line work people find it very difficult to introspect and report their own feelings. This kind of work is also likely to be machine paced and to isolate workers so there is minimal opportunity for social interaction. It is perhaps the most de-humanising kind of work and has been used to exemplify exploitation of workers with humans being treated as little more than extensions of machines.

Workload has several dimensions. There can be overload in physical, mental or emotional terms. This can be in quantitative (amount to do) or qualitative terms (difficulty of the task). The former can be in terms of too fast a rate of work or too long hours. There can be stress as a result of too little to do but it is usually overload which is the problem. The main effect seems to be on the heart. Reference has already been made (on pages 14 and 16) to other effects on overworked professionals (in medicine and social work). Work quality suffers and "working beyond forty hours a week results in time that is increasingly unproductive."³⁹ Clearly being faced with a task beyond one's ability is likely to lead to stress. This may not just be a matter of not being trained or of an individual's limited ability. The work task may be inappropriately set. Public expectations of professionals may not be realistic. With medical advances there are greater expectations that cures will be effected and medical teams are therefore under greater pressure. The introduction of League Tables for school examinations has lead many teachers to complain that they are being held responsible for failing to produce high success rates when social deprivation and culture may be the most important limitations of success in their area.

It is not only the number of hours but their distribution that can cause stress. **Shift work** is a necessary part of many occupations. This has long been the case for caring and emergency services, in continuous processes and factories where maximisation of production necessitated it. This is now

³⁹ Cooper et al, Living with Stress p90

spreading to new areas - all night filling stations appeared with the motor ways and we now have all night supermarket shopping. Offshore oil rig workers are put under pressure from the work pattern (28 days on/off being reported as particularly stressful). "Shift work affects blood temperature, metabolic rate, blood sugar levels, mental efficiency and work motivation, not to mention sleep patterns and family and social life."⁴⁰ There is however some evidence that some workers can adapt especially those on fixed rather than rotating shifts.

A vast number of jobs are affected by **new technology**. In some cases this can provide the welcome opportunity for learning and variety but it can also be stressful, particularly perhaps for older workers or if there is too rapid change. It can also bring with it the fear of staff reductions and compulsory redundancy.

Travel can also be a cause of stress, particularly with overcrowded roads, and air and train delays. It can also isolate workers from their colleagues and families if it forms a large part of the job. On the positive side having a journey home can provide a break from work during which the worker can start to unwind and not arrive home full of the tension of the work day. Living on the job provides tensions of its own.

Risk or danger is an intrinsic part of many jobs and in some cases may be part of its attraction. In cases such as police, armed forces, firemen and miners where workers are properly trained and equipped to deal with emergencies stress levels are not necessarily high. There is an increasing number of jobs where previously little personal danger was experienced but where now workers constantly fear for their safety. Incomes Data Services (an independent monitoring company) says that violence rose by 110% in the ten years to 1991 with more than 90% of attacks coming directly from the public. Ambulance and fire crews, doctors on home visits, workers in casualty departments and social workers have all been reported in the press as victims of assault, particularly distressing perhaps as they are intent on helping people themselves. Transport and various types of council workers suffer abuse as do, perhaps slightly more predictably, pub staff and bank employees. Workers in the public sector particularly have little control over who they will deal with. Constant verbal abuse can lower morale even without physical threat. The reasons for this increase are not clear but explanations offered are increased drink and drug abuse and increased defiance of authority particularly where the worker is in uniform.

Allied to this is the general **emotional content** of the work. This particularly applies to the caring professions and emergency services. Something has already been said about the impact of dealing with the victims of post-traumatic stress disorder. "You don't magically leave personal feelings behind you when you qualify as a social worker or nurse or doctor or teacher, or when you take on managerial responsibilities. You don't discard feelings of like and dislike for example, of sympathy and antipathy, of love even and hate."⁴¹ Highly emotional work tasks are common in the area of child protection. Social Workers and Police have increasingly high work loads and have to

⁴⁰ Cooper et al, Living with Stress p89

⁴¹ Fontana, Managing Stress p40

cope with the victims and perpetrators of child abuse. Coupled with this is high public accountability. They have to keep the difficult balance between respecting individual liberty and protecting the innocent whilst listening to accounts of, and witnessing the results of behaviour that sickens normal sensibilities. Any error of judgement is not likely to be met with understanding.

In other situations workers are met with reminders of their own mortality not only in hospitals or hospices but in old peoples' homes. In caring for the severely handicapped workers can have to come to terms with the difficult truth that some human situations have no chance of improvement.

Less obviously the job of a train driver can have emotional impact. Since the advent of North Sea Gas the railway has become the surest way to commit suicide. There are three or four suicides on the railway each week.

There is evidence to suggest that those entering caring professions often do so to meet their own needs in a way related to their own childhood experiences, e.g. those abused as children may go into child protection work. This only serves to add to the personal significance of events to the worker. The term 'helperholism' has been coined to describe this addictive drive to help, which can be progressively destructive to the worker. Negative behaviour can result from unsatisfied or unresolved personal pain which can be supported by irrational beliefs such as:

"Pain and suffering are bad and must always be alleviated.

I must never make mistakes, be weak, demanding or fearful.

If I take care of myself, my clients will suffer"⁴²

The phenomenon of **burnout** is "a special kind of stress that occurs when dealing with people especially difficult clients."⁴³ It occurs as a result of ongoing job stress. It involves physical, emotional and mental exhaustion. The worker reports weariness but is often unable to sleep. They feel depressed, helpless and hopeless. Life satisfaction, both in work and leisure is reduced. They form negative attitudes towards clients and fellow workers, even to family and friends. The main feature of this is that they tend to dehumanise and fail to respond to feelings.

Relationships with clients/customers often represents the primary focus of the work an employee does and can be a significant source of stress. Also important are **interpersonal work relationships**. In **relationships with groups or with co-workers** poor relationships are associated with feeling of threat, "low trust, low supportiveness and low interest/willingness to listen and be empathic." The higher the group cohesion the higher the perceived ability to cope with stress. Communication plays a large part in this particularly if it is not only work related but socially supportive (friendships, non work activity, chatting in the staff room).

Considerate **leadership** can reduce stress. This usually involves allowing subordinates to actively participate in decision making and having good two way communication. There are situations where this may not be appropriate (e.g. fire fighting or in battle) and a strong, directive leadership will

⁴² Morrison, Address BASPCAN Conference 1990

⁴³ Argyle, Social Psychology of Work p269

reduce stress. The supervisors can suffer stress from the responsibility they hold for people under them. **Responsibility** is generally a source of stress but it is greater when it is a responsibility for people rather than for objects.

It is important for every-one to have a clear understanding of each worker's **role**. Unclear job specifications leave workers vulnerable to accusations of not fulfilling their task, not showing initiative or of exceeding their responsibilities. Others in the organisation may call upon them to do conflicting tasks and their priorities may be unclear. Something has already been said about the conflicts inherent in social work and the police due to the differing responsibilities within situations. Role confusion is apparent in many jobs. Prison Officers and Probation Officers are subject to society's expectation that they will both punish and rehabilitate. Managers can find loyalty to the company in conflict with that to customers and subordinates. The individual's own perception of the job or personal beliefs may be at odds with what is required to do the job. Part of the stress dentists feel has been explained by saying that there is a conflict between their desire to be helpful and healing and the necessity sometimes to inflict pain.

There can be even greater tensions when **personal ideology** clashes with the performance of a task. Examples of this are Roman Catholic doctors and nurses who may be required to assist in performing abortions. The question of whether being a practising homosexual is incompatible with being a priest or not is a source of stress for those who wish to be both.

Roles and relationships outside the organisation also cause stress. A supportive home situation can reduce stress whilst problems there can reduce ability to cope at work. One of the main changes and sources of stress over recent years is as a result of the dramatic increase in the number of working wives or "dual-career" families. The traditional model of the man going out to work whilst the wife stays at home and looks after the home, at least until the children grow up, has broken down. This has led to greater marital adjustment problems. Working mothers are under particular pressure, with those in full-time employment the hardest hit. Despite changes in attitude which means that men are more prepared to share child care and household tasks the responsibility for this still rests primarily on the woman. There are likely to be clashes of loyalty and role expectations when children are ill. Children of working mothers have been shown to have less time off school or nursery than those of non working. Mothers may go to work themselves when ill so they can be "ill" when their child is and still not have too bad a sickness record. Where two people try to pursue careers there are greater problems moving for promotion and hence greater calls for good understanding relationships and joint problem solving ability. There can be advantages in that two incomes are likely to mean reduced financial problems and many women benefit from working in terms of enhanced self-image and self-actualisation.

Finally **organisational issues** can cause stress. There are many organisational procedures that are inefficient and time wasting. Recent years have seen a vast increase in bureaucracy that has stopped professionals from doing what they see as their job. For example many teachers complain that they spend so much time on paperwork now that they are too tired to teach. Where a company is

badly organised lack of equipment or inefficient work practices cause stress. Change is another major cause of stress. There is an unfortunate tendency to tackle problems, not by defining the issue and coping with it but by having a general reorganisation. This serves only to cause insecurity, at least temporarily. In many cases, especially in the public sector, staff have found themselves having to reapply for their own jobs, whilst others are moved to jobs or locations they did not want. With the recession and government cutbacks fear of redundancy, being a victim of it, or the unfortunate manager obliged to implement it has become a major source of stress.

COPING WITH STRESS

Lazarus defines coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person."⁴⁴ Although this can involve attempts to remove the source of the stress it must be noted that the emphasis is on "manage". There are many human environments and experiences that cannot be avoided or controlled such as ageing and disease, bereavement, and natural disasters. One of the main elements in coping therefore is the preservation of self-esteem, a positive, tolerant outlook and maximum health and comfort in the face of unremediable situations. The well-known prayer "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference" is particularly apt if inappropriate strategies are not to be adopted. An ability to analyse situations accurately and have a realistic appreciation of one's own abilities and resources is important in coping. Coping strategies which are very physiologically based must have a wider assessment and rationale along-side them if they are to be maximally effective. As stress is not simply definable, so it is not simply remedied. What is effective to cope with stress in one person or situation may not be effective in another and the best results seem to come from combining more than one technique.

Assessing what is an effective coping strategy is therefore not easy. The literature is full of research proposals with differing and sometimes contradictory outcomes and there are numerous methodological problems in evaluating it. There has been a rapidly growing interest in stress management over the last ten years, especially in the business sector resulting in the production of management programmes which can vary in length from a few hours to several weeks. They may be "off the peg" group packages or individually tailored. In the health sector (where stress management may be aimed at more specific symptoms of stress, e.g. high blood pressure) there are even more intensive and often more individually based approaches. To compare approaches it is necessary to take into account the nature of the stressor, individual differences, outcome of the stress and short and long-term effects of intervention⁴⁵. Measuring the progress made depends a lot on self or experimenter assessment but physiological measures (e.g. blood pressure) are also used.

COPING TECHNIQUES

Techniques for coping fall broadly into two categories ; **those for manipulating the environment** and **those for manipulating the individual** though these should not be seen as mutually exclusive.

⁴⁴ Lazarus and Folkman, Stress, Appraisal and Coping p141

⁴⁵ C. Barlow, Stress Management Intervention

ENVIRONMENTAL EMPHASIS

Attempts to change the environment can occur at various levels. **National or even international policies** that cause unnecessary pressure may have to be changed and this may only be achieved by political action. One example of this is in the policy to have more civilian workers in the police force which means that officers cannot have a rest from the stress of being on the beat by a period at a desk job. On a more global level is the issue of nuclear weapons and the threat their existence poses to the human race. Attempts to create this sort of change may in the short term increase stress on those who have or take on the responsibility to press for or legislate for change.

In the work situation much can be done to tackle organisational issues that cause stress. This means in some cases a willingness to reassess the aims and priorities of the company or agency. The prime conflict which often emerges here is that between money and welfare. It may be more profitable to work in one way but that may leave the workers feeling devalued and dehumanised. It needs a commitment to the principle that human self-fulfilment and health ranks above profit if change is to be made. Evidence suggests, at least in developed countries, that overall the economic price of treating workers as valued and respected individuals is not as high as it may look if one merely looks in isolation at the unit cost of producing "a widget". Here as in politics the fundamental question as to what quality of life and relationships we as a society want is raised and to what degree we are prepared to use each other. The Christian and humanitarian position on this is well expressed by the quotation, the origin of which I am ignorant, "It is a law of human nature as sure as the law of gravity that to live life to the full we must learn to love people and use things, not love things and use people." The blame for "using" workers does not entirely rest with the managers. To a large extent they have to respond to consumer demand to survive in a competitive world. Consumers and managers need to look at attitudes that may cause problems for others e.g. is it really necessary to demand shop assistants work night shifts, local residents suffer traffic noise and daytime shoppers pay more so that some people can buy groceries in the middle of the night?

Sensitive and informed management can lead to less stress. Something has already been said about the kind of difficulties encountered in various jobs and of the approaches that can minimise these, e.g. democratic management styles. The correct person- job fit is important. Careers advisers must give the most accurate picture possible so that people do not enter jobs with the wrong perception of them and recruiters should select appropriate people. Careful job analysis is needed as is careful interviewing perhaps with the use of psychometric tests. This needs to be followed up by good training and a career structure that allows people the maximum opportunity to use and develop their skills. Work environments (including work hours and their distribution) can be adapted to create the minimum physical pressure on workers and workers educated to take advantage of health and safety procedures at work. Sabbaticals have been traditional in some professions (e.g. education) and these may provide one answer to the problem of burnout.

Most organisations have provided supervision of employees but this has not generally been perceived as supportive. The aim has been more in regard to accountability and maintenance of work

standards rather than directed towards worker distress. The importance of offering **employees counselling** has become increasingly evident and there have been differing attempts to provide this. "The task of counselling is to give the clients an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more resourcefully and towards greater well-being."⁴⁶ It is not necessarily crisis intervention when something is wrong but relevant to new situations where choices and developments have to be made. The ICAS National Conference 1990 Counselling at the Service of Business presentations reported basically three styles with examples of each.

The **Welfare approach** has been used by British Rail and the Police. In British Rail the scheme was staffed by volunteers. Stressors were listed as management induced (particularly through reorganisation), operating incidents, (equipment failures), unpredictable, exceptional incidents (vandalism, accidents), and domestic difficulties (need to be mobile, tension between long work hours and financial need). Help was sought for financial problems (50%) domestic difficulties (30%) and alcohol and health (20%). The presenting problems therefore do not directly match perceived stressors but the aim was to provide "untroubled people" to operate a complex, technological railway. This system did have problems of confidentiality (e.g. where an alcohol problem was admitted). The Police Forces offer internal or external professional, confidential counselling and this is in addition to colleague support. The take-up was slow due to the macho culture and fear of affecting promotion prospects but is now fully accepted. It has led to less wastage due to premature retirement and sickness leave. It has pinpointed what in the organisation is causing problems.

John Lewis plc exemplifies the **occupational health approach**. Workers there are also partners and there has always been an ethos of mutual care. Branch Registrars provide a means of dealing with grievances. Partners' counsellors and the medical services are also available. Occupational health nurses have an important role to play as brokers to other services.

The **personal/career/management development approach** is used by Lloyds and BP. These approaches aim to look more at the relationship of the individuals and the organisation rather than to help individuals to cope with crises. Lloyds try to independently review employees so that maximum career development occurs with individual and organisation benefiting. BP seek to "empower" people. They have sought to engender a culture based on counselling values. Counselling is seen as a key process in organisational development. It not only aids individuals but provides feedback on damaging aspects leading to organisational change and changed values and climate.

There is therefore a shift from seeing individuals as problems to seeing the organisation itself as the problem. It may need external consultants to allow organisations to see their own shortcomings as organisations, like individuals, can develop their own defence mechanism and self rationalisations. A unit facing closure may display the same kind of denial strategies that an individual facing death may adopt⁴⁷. A unit may need to be clear as to its task if members are not to waste energy and feel failures in attempting the inappropriate if not impossible. Take for example a unit for the terminally

⁴⁶ Conference Report ICAS National Conference 1990

⁴⁷ Obholzer and Roberts, *The Unconscious at Work*

ill. To try to meet the normally expected medical task of effecting cures will lead to stress and disillusionment but redefine the task as maximising the quality of life of the patient and it becomes an achievable one.

Some issues highlight changes and conflicting values of the individual, work and society and may require a combination of action at various levels. The issue of working mothers is one of these. Some mothers work from financial necessity and others from a desire to be able to pursue a career. The pressure on women can probably only be released through a combination of actions. The woman needs to be confident in her own priorities as does her family. Organisations that want mature working women, and perhaps want to avoid permanent loss of staff in whose training they have invested may have to provide extended career breaks, more compassionate leave, working from home and/or child care facilities. Nationally child care provision must be facilitated if women are to be encouraged as workers. Alternatively if women are to be encouraged to be full-time homemakers and mothers this may need financial recognition as well as social status and respect.

Time management by the individual is another way of controlling the environment. Rather than be a reactor to whatever seems the most pressing task and responding to the immediate demands and agenda of others it is suggested that individuals should set their own timetable and priorities. Those who wish to follow this kind of strategy are advised to categorise and list work each day according to urgency and importance and label A, B, and C tasks, A being the most important.⁴⁸ The idea is that these tasks should be tackled first. Considering the consequences of actions may help one to decide what is or not a priority or indeed a necessary task at all. Tasks that it is not necessary to do may also be listed. Some of these may be appropriately delegated. Realistic daily timetables should be set allowing some time for the unforeseen and space to think. It is also necessary to decide how much time is to be devoted to various aspects of one's life. Here personal priorities come in, balancing time to be devoted to work, family and leisure. The key is to have clear long term goals and then to set scheduled objectives and actions to achieve these. Keeping a diary and making lists may help ease the strain on memory and strengthen resolve to stick to a plan. It may be necessary to challenge others expectations of one and resist attempts by others to deflect one from the planned course.

Assertiveness and good effective communication are necessary. Stress is minimized if one is aware of what others expect of one, hence the need for good job descriptions. Clarity of message and efficient communication of it is the key. Both self-confidence and self respect as well as a recognition of others needs and the rights of others is involved in assertiveness. Basic assumptions are that we all have the right to be listened to, respected and understood. We are not perfect so we all have the right to make occasional mistakes and to change our minds. In appropriate assertiveness the feelings of all are recognised and the individual has to calmly and rationally assess what is needed and clearly and firmly state this. Being assertive is therefore not the same as being aggressive. It may be necessary to reach some kind of compromise to achieve the best outcome in a situation; assertiveness is not a way of "winning".

⁴⁸ Makin & Lindley, Positive Stress Management Chapter 3

An ability to think clearly and in an informed manner seems to be a key to coping with stress. It is first necessary to pinpoint the area of life that is of particular concern. If a person says that they are stressed by work the problem may begin to focus but it may still not be obvious how to cope. If it can further be defined e.g. "I am always late home because my boss gives me lists of jobs to do too late in the day and I dare not tell him or refuse to do them," then it may be possible to start to develop a coping strategy. As well as being aware of outside pressures and agenda it is helpful to be aware of one's own, perhaps unconscious driving forces and beliefs. These may be the standards we are all absorbing from our society. In particular we are now constantly bombarded by propaganda from commercial, political and entertainment areas. The picture of a world in which everyone is or could be eternally young, healthy, financially successful (but always astutely on the lookout for bargains) and surrounded by consumer goods, a loving family and pets is constantly presented. Expectations of relationships and self-fulfilment are high, with not always the expectation that this requires work by the individual. With the great medical advances expectations of a cure for any complaint have increased. The introduction of the National Health Service has served to illustrate that calls for health care can be endless. It is therefore necessary to decide what it is realistic to expect if one is not to waste energy attempting to achieve the unattainable and feeling inadequate when one has failed, or to feel that Fate is against one. Apart from the wider messages we all receive we each carry personal beliefs often inculcated in us as children. "Never give up", "Big boys don't cry" are examples of such messages that can have negative implications.

INDIVIDUAL EMPHASIS

As an individual it is not always easy to personally reflect and be aware of ourselves and our environment's impact on us. It is here that **individual counselling** is of value. The aim of a lot of counselling is to raise **self-awareness** so it is appropriate to consider what is meant by **self**. It is a concept that has long exercised the minds of philosophers, theologians and psychologists. Different schools of thought lay emphasis on different aspects. It is a concept by which the individual is viewed as more than a physical object, but it is not distinct from the physical body (i.e. it has no independent existence of its own). It is the product of past events but more than the sum of them. Whilst there is a common element to it, it is dynamic and changing. It is that part of us which is concerned with thinking, feeling, perceiving and evaluating. We have beliefs about ourselves based on our own perceptions and feedback from others and we act according to these. The self has various aspects; the inner - the physical that includes bodily sensations and body image, the spiritual that is concerned with meaning and the darker side (regarded by, e.g. Jung as essential to be faced and accepted) and the outer- social self

There are many styles of **counselling** but they all seek ultimately to enable individuals to harness their own resources to take responsibility for themselves and cope to the maximum possible. Listening and being non directional whilst moving the client towards understanding and solving problems is a feature of much counselling. The degree to which the past is seen as important varies. In

Psychoanalysis it is seen as very important whilst in more problem solving oriented approaches such as Brief Therapy it would be less so. Pent up emotions and distorted belief systems may need tackling to allow realistic facing of the present situation. There are many mental defences which people adopt which are necessary and in moderation are healthy. We cannot always face reality. If carried to excess mental defences create rather than solve problems. Defence mechanisms include projection (seeing in others the qualities that are actually our own), reaction-formation (expressing the opposite to what we really feel) rationalisation (offering a reasonable excuse) and intellectualisation (using logic to distance emotion). Some awareness of the use of these kind of strategies can allow people to understand themselves. When we are aware of our own ego boundaries and workings we can relate more appropriately to others and not become over entangled with others' problems. When we know our own resources we can realistically assess what we can cope with and how.

Most attempts to teach people to cope with stress or to treat them therapeutically involves giving information about the causes and effects of stress so that they are actively and creatively involved in their own treatment or stress management.

In **Cognitive** approaches and **Stress Inoculation Training** encouragement is give to individuals to make careful objective appraisals of the threatening situation and to analyse it in the light of their own ability to cope. They may need to reinterpret the situation and their feelings, perhaps in a more positive manner in order to harness resources. Inappropriate conceptualisations of the situation, based perhaps on an ongoing emotional disposition, come to be recognised so the person can discriminate behaviour that helps or hinders coping. What can or cannot be changed is recognised and the person facilitated to find a sense of meaning, "a healing theory or explanation of what happened and why."⁴⁹ This gives a sense of hope.

Finding meaning in what is happening is an important part of coping with events. There is a danger of becoming dispirited if this fails. "For some, a set of religious precepts helps in the process of making sense of life. For others, a philosophical, political or psychological set of beliefs and values is what helps to add meaning."⁵⁰ In concentration camps some found purpose in their suffering but for others this was impossible and they lost their faith in God. Some were however able to find a purpose in their existence and determined to survive, e.g. for their relations or for revenge. The degree and nature of the commitment one feels will determine motivation to cope and is linked to meaning. "The more deeply held the commitment, the more vulnerable the person is to threat but at the same time the more motivated to ward off any threats and harm to that commitment."⁵¹

The beliefs we hold will also determine how we appraise a situation and assess our ability to cope with it. We may hold different beliefs about our ability to cope in different situations, e.g. that we have no control over the work situation. The strategies we find acceptable to adopt will be

⁴⁹ Lehrer, Principles and Practice of Stress Management p379

⁵⁰ Bailey, Coping with Stress p86

⁵¹ Lazarus & Folkman, Stress, Appraisal and Coping p162

influenced by our desire to conform to norms and the beliefs we may absorb from our society. Some beliefs can inhibit coping, e.g. a belief in Fate or a punitive God.

A number of studies mention religion as a positive factor in coping with stress. Examples include such diverse groups as Canadian students⁵², mature adults in hospital⁵³, and black corporate managers being relocated⁵⁴. The social aspect of religion may well be relevant in supplying support, but the ideological aspects which provide a world view are no doubt also relevant. The interaction regarding locus of control, belief in God and coping with stress does not appear to have been given much research attention.

The amount of social support available from both home and work influences the ability to cope. This may be emotional, informational or tangible. The social group provides feedback on the individual's behaviour and feelings, is a source of ideology and offers a repertoire of tried coping strategies. The home is ideally a place where people are accepted as themselves and supported whether they succeed or fail.

Very specific regimes of managing stress are taught. Many of these are based on techniques that **counteract the physical effects of stress**. Use is made of the control which can be exerted over the body and the link between cognition, emotion and the neuromuscular circuits associated with them. Effecting a change in the body influences cognition and vice versa. Change created by various techniques, perhaps initially in a clinical or defined practice situation, can be generalised to the whole life situation thus relieving the stress symptoms.

Relaxation techniques are widely taught. The tension in the muscles associated with stress and anxiety is released. **Progressive relaxation** devised by Jacobson is one of the most extensive techniques. As with most relaxation techniques the individual lies on their back or sits in a comfortable chair with muscles supported. A quiet, undisturbed place that is at a comfortable temperature is required and unrestrictive clothing is worn. The individual's attention is drawn to their breathing and then they are made aware of their muscle tone by systematically tensing and relaxing different sets of muscles, slowly working through the body from toes to head. Sessions proceed until the individual reports feelings of calm, comfort and rest. Lower blood pressure, heart rate and changes in the galvanic skin response occur. At the end it is advisable to cancel the effect, allowing muscle tone to return by making slow, deliberate movements of the body and taking deep breaths, otherwise one can be left feeling lethargic. Abbreviated methods have been developed. Relaxation classes are held and pre-recorded tapes are available for use at home. These may also include relaxing background images and a commentary to stimulate the imagination by evoking images with relaxing associations, e.g. country scenes, water, velvet. It is possible to record one's own or to mentally run through a relaxation pattern. It must be noted that there are some heart and back conditions when deep, extensive relaxation may not be helpful.

⁵² Frankel et al, Religion and Wellbeing Among Canadian University Students.

⁵³ Koenig, Relationship Between Judeo-Christian Religions and Mental Health

⁵⁴ Toliver, Movers and Shakers : Black Families in Corporate Relocation

On a more clinical level specific problems, anxieties or phobias particularly, can be cured by **systematic desensitisation**. The patient and clinician together work out a hierarchy of situations associated with the problem and the patient slowly learns to remain relaxed while exposed to increasingly more threatening stimuli.

Once conscious of one's body tension attention can be given to minimising muscle tension. The idea is to generalise techniques to the whole life situation so brief, specific relaxation can be applied to tense muscle groups at any point, e.g. relaxing shoulders whilst waiting for the traffic lights to change. Correct furniture and posture are important. Courses such as those on the Alexander technique teach one to avoid unnecessary body stress.

Attention to diet can improve general health as can **exercise**. Exercise for stamina, strength and suppleness assists health and leads to a general feeling of well-being. Aerobic exercise has been used therapeutically to relieve stress. Socially most people report feeling better after exercise. Quite apart from the chemical releases in the body which may contribute to this there are often social aspects, being a team member or attending classes. Even exercising alone means a break from work or other worries and pent up energy can be released. In contrast relaxation can be evoked passively by for example gentle massage.

Music can help evoke relaxation. The type of music that is most beneficial is quite individualistic and the field of music therapy is quite a young one. It is one an individual can easily incorporate into daily routine to relieve stress, e.g. a car journey home can be accompanied by music and thereby provide a "tunnel" to unwind between work and home rather than another battle area with other motorists.

When we are in different emotional states our **breathing** is affected (short breaths linked with panic, long irregular sighs with depression) and this is something that can quite easily be consciously controlled. First one must concentrate on how one is breathing. Is it tight and an effort, long or short breaths, even or irregular? Correct breathing is slow and regular but each individual has their own pattern of rhythmical inhalation and exhalation. Once aware of one's own pattern it is possible to ensure one breathes properly at all times, taking conscious control at times of stress. One may need to start by holding a hand on the chest and stomach to be aware of the movement of the diaphragm. Counting as one breathes in and out may help initially. Controlled breathing forms a basis to many relaxation and meditational techniques. It is also a strategy that can be easily applied at any time quite inconspicuously. It aids both relaxation and alertness.

Meditation has long been associated with religious practice but more recently has been recognised as having a therapeutic effect even when stripped of that religious context. In meditation thoughts and feelings are harmonised. In particular control is gained over thoughts. "Through dealing with our thoughts instead of letting them deal with us, we become calmer, more peaceful."⁵⁵ During the day there are very few moments that are genuinely threatening but we tend to relive these in our thoughts with the attendant emotions. Our thoughts turn to the future and we anticipate threats.

⁵⁵ Fontana, Managing Stress p93

Meditation allows the individual to take control of this and to be- to exist in the moment - rather than to think. It gives an opportunity to relax and also to puzzle out solutions to more ultimate questions. A strong emotion, viewed in a detached manner in the context of the world can evaporate. It is a way of gaining control through letting go as there is no active dwelling on a subject or awareness of contemplation. People who regularly meditate report being calm, composed and, paradoxically, relaxed and alert at the same time. This generalises to their coping ability at other times and they have better health than non meditators. Meditation can bring about reductions in oxygen up take, blood pressure, heart rate and respiration as well as changes in the brain wave patterns. There are various meditational techniques but generally this involves a similar situation to that for relaxation with a control of breathing. The meditator then focuses on some object or sound. This may be a physical object, a pattern, a mental image or a repeated word or sound. Frequently the words have religious connotations but nonsense syllables have been equally effective. (See Appendix 11.) Meditation on nature is another option. Thoughts may drift into the consciousness but they are gently put aside as the mind turns back to the focus. Over meditation can be dangerous and only 15-20 minutes twice a day is advisable.

Meditation is often taught with the philosophical basis and techniques of **Yoga**. According to yoga philosophy and the philosophy of many religions the only way to find peace and harmony for ourselves is to live in peace and harmony with everyone and everything that exists in this universe⁵⁶. Physical and mental harmony is restored in meditation. "Meditation leads patients to a deeper appreciation of their relationship to their families, friends, communities, nations, and even the world."⁵⁷ It is not an escape from reality.

It is not generally appreciated how much conscious control it is possible to exert over the body. With the practice of **Autogenic Regulation Training** it is possible to regulate heart rate, respiration, blood pressure and muscle tension. This is not done by an active force of will but by passively concentrating on inner stimuli. "The creator of Autogenic Training, J H Schultz, was a firm believer in the self-regulatory capacities and ultimately self-healing powers of the body if it were only left to do its work."⁵⁸ The aim is to remove blocks to the restorative process. Just as we learn to respond to threats with anxiety or fear so we can learn to respond with calm. In Autogenic Regulation Training one talks to different parts of the body, making statements about them, describing, e.g. limbs as heavy or warm, heartbeat as regular and oneself as calm and at peace. In **Autogenic Biofeedback** the technique is linked with some kind of external measure of the physiological change.

Allied to this technique is **Hypnosuggestion**. Under hypnosis individuals can be made aware of past negative messages, hence losing negative feelings and becoming aware of their own latent strengths and positive qualities. It does not just aim to create bodily relaxation but equanimity or peace of mind. "The attainment of relaxation in the most important sense has a dimension that has

⁵⁶ Lehrer, Principles and Practice of Stress Management p119

⁵⁷ Lehrer, Principles and Practice of Stress Management p112

⁵⁸ Lehrer, Principles and Practice of Stress Management p207

been emphasised by Eastern spiritual approaches - living fully in the present moment instead of in the past or future, and thus excluding worry and negative emotions."⁵⁹ The hypnosuggestion should therefore most effectively take place in a philosophical context whereby the individual recognises that life inevitably has problems which are to be faced. Limitations in coping with these must be accepted and the need sometimes to change oneself recognised. The person can then be helped to picture themselves handling the situation calmly and maturely.

There is a range of prescribed **drugs** available for those who are totally overwhelmed and unable to cope with a particularly stressful period. However it is not considered desirable to take these for more than a very limited period and treatments and coping strategies such as those described above are recognised as having longer lasting and overall more beneficial effects.

Not all attempts to cope are healthy. Some people resort to illegal drugs or to the abuse of legal ones such as alcohol or tobacco. Comfort eating can be an attempt to cope. A sense of humour can be an appropriate way of releasing tension or distancing oneself from powerfully emotional or distasteful situations, but the development of a black sense of humour can be indicative of burnout. Food, drink and joking can all form part of a healthy lifestyle. It is therefore important to learn to monitor ones own feelings and behaviour to recognise when things are going wrong. (See Appendix 12.) To be aware of being under stress does not mean that clinical treatment is necessary. Many of the above strategies can be adopted without professional help and with a little thought we can be aware of our own resources. Most of us have our own personal way of unwinding - walking, gardening, music, prayer, reading, watching TV, sex, long relaxing baths, hobbies.

The list of possibilities is endless and research suggests stress is best attacked from a variety of angles, however a philosophical framework is central. If activities are seen as meaningful and people view life as possessing coherence and lawfulness then stress-related reactions are less likely. The "communal and spiritual" premodern world view contrasts "with the individualistic and materialistic consciousness of contemporary times."⁶⁰ The modern world lacks what Max Weber termed "theodicies." Theodicies are elements of a cultural world view that explain and confer meaning on experiences of suffering and wrongfulnessPsychotherapy and stress management may well be in the business of supplying secular theodicies to people who look to science and scientifically grounded professionals to alleviate the discomforts of life."⁶¹ Finding the beliefs that maximise health and happiness may not be the same as finding the truth. Many have been willing to be stressed and even die for what they believed gave life ultimate meaning and Christians have often done so.

⁵⁹ Lehrer, Principles and Practice of Stress Management p198

⁶⁰ Lehrer, Principles and Practice of Stress Management p12

⁶¹ Lehrer, Principles and Practice of Stress Management p13

SPIRITUAL AND THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS

I propose to take a fairly pragmatic approach and look at various beliefs behind our assessment of stressful situations and coping strategies. To look for a single theological or mystical answer to why stress exists and how we should respond is not, I believe, a viable option. This is largely because stress is not simply a name of some "thing" but is a complicated phenomenon whose very existence in many cases rests on value judgements of the individuals concerned. To couch the problem, for example, in terms such as "Why did God create stress?" would not be appropriate. To answer the question of why God created almost anything is in any case to give a descriptive and functional rather than absolute answer. For example, roses exist because of certain evolutionary processes and current ecological conditions. We can add to this the reactions they create in humans and the effect on human relationship with God.

MEANING

The literature reviewed attaches a major emphasis to a persons view of the meaning of life. It is essential therefore first to look at the Christian belief as to the purpose of life. A short catechismal answer to this is that we are created to love God, glorify and enjoy Him forever. The summary of what a Christian is expected to aim to do is given in Mark 12:29. First "The Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. Second, "You must love your neighbour as yourself." Our relationship with God is seen as the primary purpose of our existence and out of this stems love of others and a correct love of self. All we do forms part of a movement forward to a fullness of life within and beyond this world until finally Christ will bring unity in Him and the eradication of all evil.

What we experience and do is therefore to be judged only by the criteria as to whether it brings us closer to God and the ultimate fulfilment of His purposes. Everything we do and feel can be seen as moving us nearer to or further from God. Ignatius in particular expounded the concept of consolations and desolations. The former are feelings and experiences which move one towards God and the latter away from God. This does not equate with sensually pleasant or unpleasant experiences. It can be misunderstood to "mean that 'good' feelings are of God and 'bad' feelings are from evil, feelings of peace and joy etc., interpreted as from God, feelings of sadness, pain being from evil, as though those who are moving towards God must be on a perpetual high and those who are moving away from God must be chronically in low spirits. 'Bad' and negative feelings can be of God."⁶². Mark 14:34 says of Jesus "Horror and anguish overwhelmed him, and he said to them, 'My heart is ready to break with grief.'" The great spiritual teachers all advise one must examine one's conscience to ensure that a sense of the absence of God's presence is not as a result of some unacknowledged fault or obstacle that can be dealt with by confession and repentance. If no such problem exists there

⁶² Hughes, God of Surprises p94

may still be a lack of consciousness of God that can cause deep distress. This is not seen as failure but as a basis on which faith can grow and a deeper knowledge and love of God result. Consolations or particular experiences of God's presence are given or withheld in sufficient numbers and at appropriate timings such that the maturing person learns to live in a constant relationship of trust in God and does not rely on them or seek them as an end in themselves.

The mature spirit becomes detached from sensual experience so that the whole aim is to be directed towards God entirely from love of Him. This detachment from the sensual world does not mean a lack of concern for 'the world', indeed a greater concern for it should flow out as a result of the love experienced. Neither does it imply that matter is innately evil. The result is a greater ability to see things in their proper perspective, undistorted by other values. We all carry unconscious yardsticks by which we measure events, e.g. how much they enhance happiness, power, money or health. These are only in themselves subgoals or even hindrances for the Christian. Clearly if an event is being viewed as part of a loving divine purpose the reaction to difficulties and failures will be very different from that viewed by other criteria. What is perceived as a threat will differ. For example if gaining status is not the goal then events that mean a loss of status will not distress.

The time scale and the final assessment are not confined to our lives in this world. Christians have over recent years been more reticent than former generations to speak of the afterlife. The criticism that Christianity is only "pie in the sky when we die" may have something to do with it, along perhaps with the idea that in a scientific age it is not intellectually quite respectable. Also promising an attractive eternal life to the oppressed is no excuse for doing nothing here to remedy their plight as has often happened in the past. Loving ones neighbours is inextricably linked with loving God and means being responsible for contributing to their welfare⁶³. However there is no promise of perfection and complete justice in this life. It is important for Christians to retain the vision of their place in an eternal plan if hope is to be retained and they are to be able to face difficulties that seem at least in the short term to achieve nothing.

CONTROL AND RESPONSIBILITY

Issues of control and responsibility are also very important factors relating to stress and also figure importantly in the spiritual journey. It is a Christian belief that God made the world and has a final purpose for this. Views vary regarding the degree of autonomy God has given the world and of His continuing involvement, intervention and control of events in the intervening period. An individual's belief regarding this can have a major impact on how they regard the occurrence of stressful and painful experiences. Also tied to this are ideas about what 'ought' to happen and to whom by way of fortune or misfortune. Few people relish the idea of suffering and there is a general feeling that those least deserving should suffer the most. Suffering and misfortune are not visited in proportion to personal merit, or lack of it.

⁶³ Matt 25:31-46

The picture of a distant God in the sky who is omnipotent and capable of intervening in human affairs may provide comfort to some who believe that if they can summon up the requisite amount of faith to pray for protection then God will intervene and save them from misfortune. When prayers are not so answered it is more likely to cause rather than relieve distress; to create anger and resentment against God or to leave the individual feeling an unloved failure. It also raises questions as to the loving nature of God if God can intervene to prevent pain but chooses not to. "It is important for us to understand His intentions for us because when we are hurting, we generally put His motives on trial and question His integrity."⁶⁴ The question of God's responsibility and activity in the world is put poetically by Sydney Carter in "Friday Morning"⁶⁵. The thief about to be crucified beside Jesus reflects on who is responsible, putting ultimate responsibility on God.

But God is up in heaven and he doesn't do a thing
With a million angels watching and they never move a wing
It's God they ought to crucify instead of you and me
I said to the carpenter, A-hanging on the tree.

Clearly the whole tone and implications alter if one believes that the carpenter is God.

The understanding of God as continually involved in the world, indeed the Ground of our Being, is an old idea (e.g. New Testament ideas of being in Christ, Mystics such as Julian of Norwich), but has been given prominence again over recent years. It is within ourselves that we primarily find God. God is the basis of our existence and it is our relationship to Him that gives us coherence and meaning and allows us to evaluate what is happening in the world. God is in control of events through the willing response of those who chose to do His will. It is a basic belief that God has given humans free will to chose to love and obey Him or not. Although the end result is ordained by God this does not therefore mean that every action and event is predetermined. Between the beginning and the end is a creative interaction between humans and God. God has created a world that runs on set fairly predictable principles which humans have been given the intelligence to learn. In some cases it is clear that behaviour against God's law results in painful consequences for the perpetrator as a direct consequence but this is not universally so and the innocent may just as easily be the victim of someone else's sin.

The pious response to innocent suffering has often been the determined, or passive acceptance of events as God's will. This is not the attitude that the great spiritual writers propound. The ideal is to reach the point where one wills to do and see happen what God wills in any situation. It is an active joining of wills with the Divine will. It does not mean a passive acceptance of suffering for others where this can be remedied. It therefore means a struggling alongside God to further His will for the world. "The power of God becomes not the ability to decisively intervene in the natural order when things are going wrong, but the power to evoke a freely given loving response to God who reveals himself as powerless in being crucified."⁶⁶ T. de Chardin regards "Providence across the ages

⁶⁴ Freeman, God is not Fair p46.

⁶⁵ Smith, Faith, Folk and Festivity p12

⁶⁶ Pattison, Alive and Kicking p67

as brooding over the world in ceaseless effort to spare the world its bitter wounds and bind up its hurts."⁶⁷ This is done through centuries of inspirations of healers and benefactors. "The more we repel suffering at that moment with our whole heart and our whole strength, the more closely we cleave to the heart and action of God."

If one is to acknowledge God as omnipotent then it does not seem entirely possible to rule out His specific intervention in response to prayers where these accord with the Divine plan. It is however spiritually immature to regard prayer as a way of gaining control of events. S. Cassidy⁶⁸ quotes Robert Foxcroft the broadcaster saying shortly before he died of cancer:

PRAYER is asking God for the power to do His will.
MAGIC is asking God to do your will.
I believe in prayer rather than magic.

God is not to be regarded as a source of heavenly power to be turned on and directed at the will of the praying individual who wants a situation concluding comfortably to their satisfaction. Progress is made through prayerful partnership between people and God - Nehemiah prayed to God and posted a guard⁶⁹

God has given us both choice and control in giving us free will. We are not merely creatures who respond to simple conditioning regimes. We have the insight to recognise attempts to treat us as such and select our own rewards for which we will act. Not rewarding every good act with an immediate good outcome, rather than being an act of injustice by God, actually forms the basis for real freedom, maturity and love. Serving God for what we can get is not the love God seeks from us.

Viewing God's control of the world as a general movement to an end working through free individuals removes the pressure of feeling that there is only one possible 'right' action in a situation. Mistakes can be tolerated with the assurance that the end can still be achieved. "In everything, as we know, he co-operates for good with those who love God and are called according to his purpose."⁷⁰

CHRISTIAN RESOURCES AND COPING STRATEGIES

The Christian has not been promised immunity from problems. Christians age, deteriorate and go through all the stressful experiences listed on stress questionnaires. The promise of the gospel is that they will be able to **cope** and do so with a special peace and joy. Jesus repeatedly warned his disciples of the troubles they would face but assured them of His continuing activity and presence which would support them through this. See for example the final discourses in St John's Gospel. Mother Julian of Norwich recounts her vision of Christ and His words:-

⁶⁷ De Chardin, *Le Milieu Divin* p84

⁶⁸ Cassidy, *Sharing the Darkness* p72

⁶⁹ Neh 4:9

⁷⁰ Romans 8:28

'You will not be overcome', were said very insistently and emphatically to give me confidence and strength for every trouble that may come. He did not say 'You will not have a rough time; you will not be burdened; you will not have to face difficulties, he said 'You will not be overcome. 'God wants us to pay attention to these words so that we can always be strong and confident through good times and bad times. God loves us and delights in us, so he wants us to love and delight in him and trust him implicitly. So all will be well.⁷¹

God does not promise the gift to an individual of great strength and continuing good health as St Paul learned when he prayed for the removal of the thorn in his flesh. His answer was "My grace is all you need; power is most fully seen in weakness, because then the power of Christ will rest upon me. So I am content with a life of weakness, insult, hardship, persecution, and distress, all for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."⁷² He was not afraid of weakness for experience had proved to him that when he had few resources of his own Christ's power had seen him through. This sense of being supported by Christ in difficult times even if at the time it is not always apparent is one that is reported by many Christians. The experience is put into story form in the widely circulated "Footprints". A person looking back on his life in terms of a trail of footprints in the sand, sees two sets, except at the most difficult points. He identifies one set as his own and the other as Jesus' and asks Jesus why He left him when he most needed Him. The reply is "I love you and would never leave you. During times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

The belief that God is ultimately responsible for the world and involved with each person in it removes from a Christian the pressure of feeling that they carry ultimate responsibility for creating the perfect world. Comment has already been made about the need for realistic goals. Christians can do their part in the knowledge that the rest is in God's hands. Some traditional prayers can sound quite exhausting and over demanding. The prayer of St Ignatius ends with the petition "to toil and not to seek for rest, to labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do Thy will." It is a prescription for a breakdown if not seen in the context of a deeply loving, trusting and dependent relationship with God. The prayer of St Francis puts the Christian role as agent of good in the world, bringing peace, love, pardon and joy. Here Christians are more clearly seen as instruments or channels of the love of God and not acting out of their own strength. A modern hymn very clearly sets out that there are some things which we cannot cope with alone

Father I place into your hands the things I cannot do.
Father I place into your hands the things that I've been through.
Father I place into your hands the way that I should go,
For I know I always can trust you.⁷³

Christians can often overwork themselves in an attempt never to deny others help and be seen to be about the Lord's business. Laudable as this may seem it is potentially self-destructive. Even Jesus made no attempt to teach or heal everyone and at times went to great lengths to ensure He had some time to Himself. He left the area or went out at night. Christians need to examine their activities

⁷¹ Mother Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love p142

⁷² 2 Cor 12:9,10

⁷³ Songs of Fellowship no. 21

and timetables to decide what God does require of them. (See Appendix 13.) Most religious orders are very careful to retain a balance of work, rest and prayer. The Benedictines in particular stress the need for moderation and care for physical needs as well as spiritual. It can be realistic humility rather than laziness or lack of love at times not to meet others needs.

Peace figures prominently as a gift of God. (e.g. John 14:27) and we are urged not to be anxious. I want to look at some of the features of the Christian way that helps us to achieve this.

The pointlessness of **anxious thinking** is clearly stated by Jesus. It will not make you taller or add a day to your life!⁷⁴ The exhortation is to live each day as it comes and cope with problems only as they arise. This is not to take an ostrich-like stance but avoids the pointless use of emotional energy in anticipating problems or seeing them as larger than they are by looking too far ahead. Groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous have proved the wisdom of this practical approach. For the Christian there is also the belief of God's continuing presence and support as we live day by day. Jean-Pierre de Caussade⁷⁵ and Brother Lawrence⁷⁶ in particular expound this. Now is the moment in which we serve God. No task however small can be divorced from part of our service of God or fail to be an opportunity to pray and be aware of His presence. Our concern at any time is only to be that what we are doing now is the best we can to serve God. Sitting worrying does not fall into that category. "Thoughts spoil everything. All evil begins there. We must take care to set them aside as soon as we observe them not to be necessary for the task of the moment or for our salvation, so that we can begin again our converse with God, wherein is our only good."⁷⁷

The Christian can always share fears with God and **pray** about them and these concerns are expressed in public worship. The Anglican morning collect, acknowledging that God has "safely brought us to the beginning of this day", continues to ask that we be "defended in the same by Thy almighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no kind of sin neither run into any kind of danger." In Compline God's presence and protection is requested through the night so that "we who are fatigued by the changes and chances of this fleeting world may rest in Thy eternal changelessness."

Knowledge of the unchanging love of God is the basis of Christian security. This means that it possible for the individual Christian to be honest with God about his/her feelings. The psalms are full of heartfelt expressions of **emotions**; some of them praise God; some are vehemently critical of Him and desperately crying for help. It is a pointless exercise to try to put up a pious, respectable front to God because He is fully aware of everything relating to us even from before our birth. Being prepared to be honest, even angry and critical of God, allows progress and a resolution of the situation. This does not mean one is given either a resolution of events to ones immediate liking or a theoretical explanation as to why one is treated like this. The story of Job clearly shows this. Though events do have a materially happy ending here Job is never given an explanation for his misfortune.

⁷⁴ Matt 6

⁷⁵ Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *Sacrament of the Present Moment*

⁷⁶ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God*

⁷⁷ Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* p24

The resolution of the situation comes in his conclusion that he has come to know God personally experientially. Christians are not expected to rationalise away their problems and feelings. "When all natural strength is abated, somehow we are ushered into the awesome presence of God. There is a gentle, sweet communication with Him. Struggle ceases; we accept."⁷⁸

There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that emotion per se is wrong. The Gospels record Christ as showing the whole range of human emotion. This includes the more negative sounding ones, such as exasperation with the slowness of the disciples to understand Him, anger at injustice, sickness and hypocrisy, grief at the death of His friend Lazarus, fear before His arrest and desolation as He hung on the cross. At one point His anger at the misuse of the temple by traders was expressed in a decisive physical outburst. The accounts of Jesus in Gethsemane show that he fully felt and acknowledged the terror of the ordeal He knew faced Him. Psychiatry has shown how important it is to be able to acknowledge and express emotion. Being aware of being the object of totally dependable and accepting love allows Christians the security to accept themselves and their feelings. There is also guidance as to how to direct and handle them. How one proceeds to act is based, as with Jesus in Gethsemane, not on a pious denial or repression of feeling but on an honest, prayerful acknowledgement.

Research on stress has shown the importance of right **relationships** and a healthy **self image**. The Bible has much to say on this. The basis of Christian relationships is love. The best definition of this is given in 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 "Love is patient and kind. Love envies no-one, is never boastful, never conceited, never rude: love is never selfish, never quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs, takes no pleasure in the sins of others, but delights in the truth."

The Bible acknowledges the breakdown of this ideal and offers remedies. Psychiatrists, Jung in particular, note the importance of being able to deal with the "darker side" of our nature. If this is not done properly, at worst neuroses occur, and at best poor relationships result. The Bible teaches that God loves us even when we are sinners and when we repent we are fully accepted back into relationship with Him. Christians do not need to be handicapped by a continuing sense of guilt. There is no need to continually prove how perfect they are to themselves or anyone else. This will not result in a totally irresponsible attitude since loving God means that one does not want to do the things against His will. It allows a realism about oneself, a constructive self knowledge. The Bible teaches that we are given various talents to use in Gods service and there is an expectation that the individual will realise these. There is much in spiritual direction and Christian counselling that overlaps with secular counselling in both aims and techniques. However the aim of the Christian is to achieve salvation not self actualisation per se and this can affect the way we view the opportunities to develop our various abilities and relationships.

A feature of right relationships in the Bible is mutual respect. The New Testament contains teachings regarding the use of power in relationships. Those in authority are required to see

⁷⁸ Freeman, God is not Fair p45

themselves also as servants and to treat with respect those under their authority. They are to facilitate the obedience of those under them (e.g. children, slaves). Humility is the true mark of greatness.

The saying of Jesus regarding turning the other cheek has led many to the conclusion that Christians cannot be **assertive**. As stated earlier (on page 26) being assertive is not the same as getting ones own way all the time and is not inconsistent with being a Christian. Jesus did not passively accept criticism but pointed out the reasons for what he was doing (mixing with outcasts, healing on the Sabbath) and made his critics look to their own motivations. The Christian is called to stand out against evil and there is nothing wrong in pointing out bad or inconsiderate behaviour. "If your brother does wrong, reprove him"⁷⁹ The corollary of this is however "If he repents forgive him." Christians are not to perpetuate grievances.

Anger may be an appropriate response but it is not one to maintain longer than necessary. "If you are angry, do not be led into sin: do not let sunset find you nursing your anger."⁸⁰ Christians are not to rehearse and perpetuate grievances. An awareness of their own acceptance by God, despite being imperfect, provides a basis to extend forgiveness to others. The inability to forgive can be more destructive and painful to those wronged than to the perpetrator. Recently a number of ex-prisoners of the Japanese travelled to Japan in a symbolic action to forgive, be reconciled and to gain release from the pain they had suffered for 50 years. Some found it cathartic, others sadly were still too traumatised to be able to gain the release of forgiving.

Christians are constantly being bombarded and influenced by the standards of the society in which they live. It is therefore necessary to take advantage of the **social support** which other Christians give and of the time honoured ways that have furthered Christian progress. The mark of the early Christians was the love and support they showed for each other, spiritually and practically. It is very much easier to be a growing Christian if one is part of a supportive Christian community. Churches vary as to how friendly and supportive they are in the wider social aspect. Ideally a church should embody the Biblical teachings of a community in which all the members work to build up a stronger whole. The New Testament sees the Christian community as having responsibility for the sick, needy and those in danger of going astray.

There is something about the act and even brickwork of **public worship** that takes one out of the normal cultural milieu and aids the sense of the reality of God. It can speak partly at an unconscious level. It is an exposure to therapeutic ideas. At times neither human relationships, nor logical thought can help one cope with life and it is then that sacraments are very necessary. "The dozens of altars set up along the beach-head at Dunkerque for communion night and day spoke more basically to the situation than could have done a dozen pulpits filled with silver-tongued preachers."⁸¹ Research on the human brain and thought processes has shown the importance of symbols and of intuitive (right brain) thought. Christians should not be afraid to take advantage of the rich traditional

⁷⁹ Luke 17:3

⁸⁰ Ephesians 4:26

⁸¹ Pike, Beyond Anxiety p140

symbolism generations have found so helpful. The church was responsible for the cure of souls long before psychiatrists appeared and the experience and techniques developed by the faithful is not lightly to be ignored.

Music is now being used as a therapy but it has long had a part in worship. There is a rich array of different styles available to worshippers that can produce different emotional effects. Restful, meditative music is available to calm as is cheerful, lively music to stir and lift the spirits. A vast amount of Christian experience and wisdom is contained in hymns and canticles for edification and assurance. For example "O love that will not let me go" is a meditative hymn of dedication with a repetition of the theme of God positively transforming our weakness to strength. In contrast "Give me oil in my lamp" is a cheerful, simple request for help with a tune to get one clapping and lift depression.

The Bible provides a wealth of human experience and Christians have found it very encouraging to see in it **examples of God's action in human lives**, bringing good out of bad situations and dealing with those in distress. Take for example the story of Joseph. Some may say he initially got what he deserved from his brothers for his arrogance. Later he matured to be a devoted servant but this did not prevent him from being wrongfully imprisoned. His suffering ultimately led to his being instrumental in saving many, including his own family, from starvation. 1 Kings 18 and 19 show how God taught and encouraged Elijah when he felt very alone. The lives of saints show that they had their difficulties but coped. For example St Teresa complains whilst writing "The Interior Castle" of head pains and noises. More recently "Miracle on the River Kwai" shows how the spirit of good survived in prisoner of war camps. David Watson's account of his terminal illness⁸² shows how, although things did not turn out as expected, God was at work in his life.

Selye points to **gratitude** as an important ingredient of the less stressed lifestyle. This again is to be a feature of the Christian attitude⁸³ towards God. It may be easy to do this when things go well but less so when things are difficult. The prayer of St Thomas More "Thank you dear Jesus, for all you have given me, for all you have taken from me, for all you have left me," is worth contemplating. To be grateful for the loss may be double edged. It is easy to be grateful for the loss of faults but not so grateful for the loss of possessions such as he had. He had the ability to see what were the essentials of life. We can be grateful if we can recognise what moves us towards God, even if in materialistic terms it is loss. Christians acknowledge that everything comes as a free gift from God for our care and to be used in His service. Gratitude for what one has comes from an awareness that no-one owns anything in an absolute sense and has no right to property. The Bible speaks of Christians having a reward for their faithfulness and service but the idea of God being grateful to us receives little attention. Julian of Norwich expounds this. Quoting God as saying "Thank you for all your hard labour, especially when you were young" she goes on to describe the "warm friendliness

⁸² Watson Fear no Evil

⁸³ See Ephesians 5:20

and perfect consideration" of God and the joy this gives.⁸⁴ Certainly feeling appreciated is something that makes one feel happier to labour.

As I have outlined in previous sections there is a close interaction between the body, mind and environment. God has given us considerable control over every detail of our lives. Health and wholeness are features of the gospel and the body is not to be abused (despite the teaching and practice of some overzealous individuals in the past) for it is the vehicle of being, the temple of our souls. It would therefore seem perfectly in accordance with Christianity to use the knowledge and experience of doctors and psychologists in learning and practising those techniques that relax and unify the body to counteract the feelings and effects of stress.

It is somewhat ironic that in the case of meditation 'secular' medicine has sought to achieve the positive effects of the technique whilst denuding it of the devotional aspect. The Christian can add a plus to this technique by retaining the direction towards God which the techniques were originally developed to foster. Using words, phrases or passages from the Bible as a focus for meditation is traditional. Meditation may be prayer or not according to whether it forms part of a presenting of the whole person to God. In the spiritual life it forms part of one of the conscious acts that the person can perform to provide a basis for contemplation and affording to God the initiative of revelation of Himself by the special gift of the awareness of His presence. It seems entirely in accord with the Christian belief in God's love and care for the world that what is good for our physical and mental health coincides with that behaviour which facilitates our relationship with God. Celtic spirituality is particularly good in linking prayer to everyday life and the cycle of nature. Its rhythmic, repetitive style can relax and aid regular breathing. (See Appendix 14.)

Christian spiritual practice has long recognised the value of time away from the daily routine. With the pace of modern life and constant stimuli this is now more than ever true. The making of retreats and having periods of silence is another example of the secular world adopting Christian practices, but excluding God.

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO STRESS IN SOCIETY

Christians have much to learn from secular research about what causes stress, particularly in the world of work and the causes of illness. To love ones neighbour and oneself requires knowledge as to what behaviour contributes to their well being. Something has already been said (see page 14) about culpability being related to knowledge of the effects of ones actions in relation to employers duty to their employees. It is possible in many cases to order things to avoid making others ill or fall into sin. Even matters such as the level of lighting can have moral implications - the employers unwillingness to provide the right equipment may cause the employee to have a headache and a row with his wife. The Christian stance in regard to stress I would see as twofold. Firstly to be aware of issues and solutions. Secondly to evaluate the situation along Christian guidelines to decide priorities

⁸⁴ Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love p32

and moral issues. Comment has already been made regarding the relative values of money and the welfare of the individual. Loving money causes evil. There are some situations where it is virtually impossible to entirely save people from stress (e.g. medical services, mining) if other sectors of society are to have the service we regard as necessary. There are a lot of complex social issues involved, and few simple answers. Generally a modest degree of stress provides impetus and is not harmful. Where it becomes harmful the Christian response, bearing in mind the belief in wholeness as a Christian ideal, must surely be to take action to reduce stress if possible. Following the techniques and strategies outlined earlier constitutes loving our neighbour.

There are situations where holding Christian principles may cause conflict and stress, (e.g. being required to work in a shop on Sunday, performing abortions or the business man who puts his competitiveness at risk by treating workers fairly). Christians may have to be prepared to put themselves under pressure in order to save others from destructive stress, as did those campaigning for the abolition of slavery or fairer work legislation. As stated the aim is not to maintain the relaxed 'feel good' factor at any cost but to do what is seen as God's will in any particular situation in the confidence of God's strength and ultimate purpose.

CONCLUSION

Change and problems are features of life and a degree of stress is inevitable, even valuable. Social and Psychological studies can show the causes and effects of stress and for effective coping it is important to be informed about these. Christianity provides a way of looking at the multiplicity of experience and influences in life. It guides our reactions to them so that change is positive, purposeful and in line with the Divine Plan; not left to chance or achieving only passing sub-goals. Lyn Marshall, in "Instant Stress Cure" asserts that the art of gaining control is the art of letting go. We need to learn to relax and move with the flow of life rather than unnecessarily strive with it. The Christian can take also this line because even though at times it is necessary to go against the crowd there is an assurance of God's overall control and of our ability to cope. I will finish with some words of John Greenleaf Whittier, a Massachusetts journalist and anti-slave campaigner. A Quaker, he knew the value of silence.

Drop thy still dews of quietness
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Quaker Faith and Practice 20.03

APPENDICES

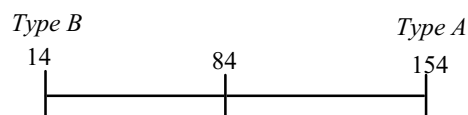
APPENDIX 1

Type A Behaviour

Circle one number for each of the statements below which best reflects the way you behave in your everyday life. For example if you are generally on time for appointments, for the first point you would circle a number between 7 and 11. If you are usually casual about appointments you would circle one of the lower numbers between 1 and 5.

Casual about appointments	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Never late
Not competitive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Very competitive
Good listener	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Anticipates what others are going to say(nods, attempts to finish for them)
Never feels rushed(even under pressure)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Always rushed
Can wait patiently	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Impatient while waiting
Takes things one at a time	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Tries to do many things at once, thinks about what to do next
Slow deliberate talker	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Emphatic in speech fast and forceful
Cares about satisfying him/herself no matter what others may think	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Wants good job recognised by others
Slow doing things	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Fast (eating, walking)
Easy-going	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Hard driving (pushing yourself and others)
Expresses feelings	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Hides feelings
Many outside interests	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Few interests outside work/home
Unambitious	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Ambitious
Casual	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Eager to get things done

Plot total score below



Source: Cooper's adaptation of the Bortner Type A Scale From Living with Stress p51

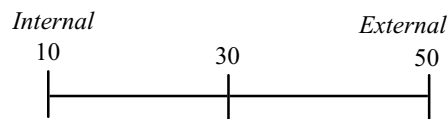
APPENDIX 2

Locus of Control Questionnaire

Circle the number that best reflects your attitude

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
Our society is run by a few people with enormous power and there is not much the ordinary person can do about it	1	2	3	4	5
One's success is determined by 'being in the right place at the right time'	1	2	3	4	5
There will always be industrial relations disputes no matter how hard people try to prevent them or the extent to which they try to take an active role in union activities.	1	2	3	4	5
Politicians are inherently self-interested and inflexible. It is impossible to change the course of politics	1	2	3	4	5
What happens in life is pre-destined.	1	2	3	4	5
People are inherently lazy, so there is no point in spending too much money in changing them.	1	2	3	4	5
I do not see a direct connection between the way and how hard I work and the assessments of my performance that others arrive at.	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership qualities are primarily inherited.	1	2	3	4	5
I am fairly certain that luck and chance play a crucial role in life.	1	2	3	4	5
Even though some people try to control events by taking part in political and social affairs, in reality most of us are subject to forces we can neither comprehend nor control.	1	2	3	4	5

Plot total score below:



Cooper et al Living with Stress p 55

APPENDIX 3

Effects of Pressure on Bodily Functions

	Normal-Relaxed	Under pressure	Acute pressure	Chronic pressure-stress
Brain	Blood supply normal	Blood supply increases	Thinks more clearly	Headaches and migraines, tremor and nervous tics
Mood	Happy	Serious	Increased concentration	Anxious and loses sense of humour
Saliva	Normal	Reduced	Reduced	Dry mouth lump in throat
Muscles	Blood supply normal	Blood supply increases	Improved performance	Muscular tension and pain
Heart	Normal heart rate and blood pressure	Output rate and blood pressure increases	Improved performance	Hypertension and chest pain
Lungs	Normal respiration	Respiration rate increases	Improved performance	Coughs and asthma
Stomach	Normal blood supply and acid secretion	Blood supply decreases, acid supply increases	Reduced blood supply reduces digestion	Heartburn and indigestion giving ulcers
Bowels	Normal blood supply and bowel activity	Blood supply decreases motility increases	Reduced blood supply reduces digestion	Abdominal pain and diarrhoea
Bladder	Normal function	Frequent micturition	Increased nervous stimulation gives frequency	Frequency and prostatic symptoms
Sexual organs	(M) Normal sex (F) Normal periods etc.	(M) Impotence (blood supply decreases) (F) Irregular periods	Decreased blood supply	(M) Impotence (F) Menstrual disorders
Skin	Healthy	Dry skin blood supply decreases	Decreased blood supply	Dryness and rashes
Biochemistry	Normal. oxygen consumed, glucose and fats liberated	Oxygen consumption increases, glucose and fat consumption increases	More energy immediately available	Rapid tiredness

Source: A. Meluish; Executive Health (London: Business Books) 1978 Cooper et al Living with Stress p16/17

APPENDIX 4

Physical symptoms of Stress

Lack of appetite
Craving for food when under pressure
Frequent indigestion or heartburn
Constipation or diarrhoea
Constant tiredness
Tendency to sweat for no good reason
Nervous twitches
Nail biting
Headaches
Cramps and muscle spasms
Nausea
Breathlessness without exertion
Fainting spells
Frequent crying or desire to cry
Impotency or frigidity
Inability to sit without fidgeting
High blood pressure

Mental symptoms of Stress

Constant irritability with people
Feeling unable to cope
Constant or recurrent fear of disease
A feeling of being a failure
A feeling of being bad or of self hatred
Difficulty in making decisions
A feeling of ugliness
Loss of interest in other people
Awareness of suppressed anger
Inability to show true feelings
A feeling of being the target of other people's animosity
Loss of sense of humour
Feeling of neglect
Dread of the future
A feeling of having failed as a person or a parent
A feeling of having no-one to confide in
Difficulty in concentrating
The inability to finish one task before rushing on to the next
An intense fear of open or closed spaces, or of being alone

List of Ailments Recognised to have Stress Background

Hypertension; high blood pressure	Rheumatoid arthritis
Coronary thrombosis: heart attack	Menstrual difficulties
Migraine	Nervous dyspepsia: flatulence and indigestion
Hay fever and allergies	Hyperthyroidism: overactive thyroid gland
Asthma	Diabetes mellitus
Pruritus: intense itching	Skin disorders
Peptic ulcers	Tuberculosis
Constipation	
Colitis	
Depression	

Cooper et al Living with Stress p19 & 20

APPENDIX 5

Assessing Your Stress

Is stress currently affecting you physically?

Tick 'yes' (✓) if the answer applies more than once weekly. If monthly, answer 'sometimes' (±), and if less frequently than monthly, answer 'no' (×)

✓ ± ×

Is your sleep disturbed by any of the following:

(a) difficulty in getting to sleep?

(b) waking frequently in the night?

(c) waking in the early hours unable to sleep again?

Are you experiencing sexual difficulties? (impotence, lack of desire for sex, etc.)

Do you have difficulty in sitting still without fidgeting?

Do you have headaches?

Do you bite your nails?

Do you feel unusually tired?

Do you have frequent indigestion such as heartburn?

Do you crave for food other than at mealtimes?

Do you have no appetite at mealtimes?

Is bowel function erratic - sometimes constipated, sometimes very loose?

Do you sweat for no obvious reason?

Do you have any 'tics' such as touching the face, hair, moustache, etc. repeatedly?

Do you frequently feel nauseous? Do you ever faint or have dizzy spells without obvious cause?

Do you feel breathless and tight-chested when not exerting yourself?

Do you cry or feel the desire to cry?

Are you suffering from high blood pressure?

Do you feel obliged to take a drink to 'unwind'?

Do you smoke to calm your nerves?

If you answer 'yes' to two or more of these questions (two 'sometimes' answers are equal to one 'yes') then, almost certainly, your body is adapting to stress and it is time to take appropriate action. In the absence of organic disease, all such symptoms are remediable. Note: Some of the above symptoms can arise from other (e.g. nutritional) causes, but usually these are combined with stress factors.

Source: Humberside County Council Training Course.

APPENDIX 6

Assessing Stress; symptoms, scores and grades

Score 1

Duodenal or stomach ulcers
Migraine
Blood pressure Heart trouble
Aches in jaw and neck muscles
Indigestion (for longer than a week)
Loss of temper
Overwork
Coronary thrombosis

Score 2

Recurring headaches
Sleeplessness
Periods of depression
Feeling of stress
Irritability
Anxiety
Long periods of tiredness
Tension
Tendency to leave things to the last minute

Score 3

Dread of going to work
Lack of interest in work
Fear of health breakdown

Total score	Interpretation
0-2	No or very slight stress
3-6	Slight stress
7-12	Moderate stress
13-17	Severe stress
18 and over	Very severe stress (requiring medical treatment)

Adapted from Goodwin Stress At Work p53

APPENDIX 7

The Holmes-Rahe Social Adjustment Scale

The Holmes- Rahe Scale assigns values (based upon the sample being told that marriage represents 50 points) attributed by a sample of 394 individuals to the life events concerned. Each event is given a score which reflects the amount of social readjustment required to accommodate to the change.

Tick those events which you have experienced in the last year

Events	Scale of impact
Death of spouse	100
Divorce	75
Marital separation	65
Jail term	63
Death of close family member	63
Major personal injury or illness	53
Marriage	50
Dismissal from work	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Retirement	45
Major change in health or behaviour of family member	44
Pregnancy	40
Sex difficulties	39
Gain of new family member	39
Major business readjustment	39
Major change in financial state	38
Death of a close friend	37
Change to different line of work	36
Major change in number of arguments with spouse	35
Taking on a major mortgage or HP loan	31
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
Major change in responsibilities at work	29
Son or daughter leaving home	29
Trouble with in-laws	29
Outstanding personal achievement	28
Partner begins or stops work	26
Begin or end school	26
Change in living conditions	25
Revision of personal habits	24
Trouble with boss	23
Major change in work hours or conditions	20
Change in residence	20
Change to a new school or college	20
Major change in recreation	19
Major change in church activities	19
Major change in social activities	18
Taking on a small mortgage or loan	17
Change in sleeping habits	16
Major change in number of family get-togethers	15
Major change in eating habits	15

Vacation	13
Christmas	12
Minor violations of the law	11
Grand total	

Scoring

150 or less: a relatively low susceptibility to stress

150-300: a 50% chance of major health breakdown in the next two years

over 300: an 80% chance of major health breakdown

Modified from: T.H. Holmes and H Hahe, 'The Social Readjustment Rating Scale',
Journal of Psychosomatic Research, Volume 11 1967)

APPENDIX 8

Life Events

Place a cross (X) in the 'Yes' column for each event which has taken place in the last two years. then circle a number on the scale which best describes how upsetting the event crossed was to you, e.g. 10 for death of a husband.

Event	Yes	Scale
Bought house		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Sold house		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Moved house		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Major house renovation		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Separation from loved one		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
End of relationship		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Got engaged		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Got married		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Marital problem		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Awaiting divorce		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Divorce		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Child started school/nursery		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Increased nursing responsibilities for elderly or sick person		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Problem with relatives		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Problems with friends/neighbours		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Pet-related problems		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Work related problems		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Change in nature of work		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Threat of redundancy		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Changed job		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Made redundant		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Unemployment		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Retired		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Increased or new bank loan/mortgage		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Financial difficulty		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Insurance problem		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Legal problem		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Emotional or physical illness of close family or relative		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Serious illness of close family or relative requiring hospitalisation		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Surgical operation experienced by family member or relative		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Death of husband		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Death of family member or relative		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Death of close friend		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Emotional or physical illness of yourself		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Serious illness requiring your own hospitalisation		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Surgical operation on yourself		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Pregnancy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Birth of baby	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Birth of grandchild	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Family member left home	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Difficult relationship with children	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Difficult relationship with parents	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Cooper Stress Survivors p51

APPENDIX 9

Stress Symptom Inventory

The following lists are common problems associated with too much stress. Mark the frequency with which you have experienced each of these problems during the past two months with the following symbols:

X - haven't had this problem

O- occasionally

F- frequently

C - constant or nearly constant occurrence

Physical

overeating
tension headaches
migraine headaches
tension
fatigue
insomnia
weight change
colds
muscle aches
constipation
pounding heart
accident prone
early morning awakening
teeth grinding
rash
nervousness
foot-tapping
finger drumming
increased alcohol, drug,
tobacco use
menstrual distress
high blood pressure
indigestion
low-grade infections
cold hands and feet

Emotional

anxiety
frustration
the 'blues'
mood swings
bad temper
nightmares
crying spells
irritability
'no one cares'
depression
nervous laugh
worrying
easily discouraged
little joy

Spiritual

emptiness
loss of meaning
doubt
unforgiving
martyrdom
looking for magic
loss of direction
needing to prove self
cynicism
apathy

Mental

forgetfulness
dull senses
poor concentration
low productivity
confusion
lethargy
whirling mind
no new ideas
boredom
spacing out
negative self talk
not enjoying self often

Relational

isolation
intolerance
resentment
loneliness
lashing out
hiding
clamming up
nagging
distrust
fewer contacts with friends
lack of intimacy
comments from others that
you seem tense
using people

Adapted from 'Structured Exercises in Stress Management Vol. 1' Nancy Louing Tubesing and Donald A. Tubesing, Editors, Whole Person press, 1983

Ross & Altmaier, Intervention in Occupational Stress P140

APPENDIX 10

The Cooper Occupational Stress Ratings

In order of the most stressful groups of jobs:

***extremely stressful job

**very stressful job

*above average stressful job

Six experienced stress researchers independently evaluated each job on a 10 point scale, from least stressed (1) to most stressful (10). Each score represents the mean average of these ratings.

1. Uniformed professions		Ceramic technology	4.0
Armed forces	4.7	Food technology	4.0
Civil aviation(pilot)	7.5***	Printing	5.6*
Merchant navy	4.8	Plastics and rubber	4.5
Fire brigade	6.3**	Textiles/clothing	4.5
Police force	7.7***	technology	
Prison service	7.5***	Timber/furniture	4.3
Ambulance service	6.3**	technology	
Average	6.4	Leather/footwear	3.8
		technology	
2 Arts and communications		Mining	8.3***
Art and design	4.2	Construction/building	7.5***
Broadcasting	6.8**	Brewing	4.0
Journalism	7.5***	Average	5.1
Museum personnel	2.8		
Photographer	4.6	5. Caring professions	
Publishing	5.0*	Nursery nursing	3.3
Musician	6.3**	Social work	6.0**
Acting	7.2***	Teaching	6.2**
Film production	6.5**	Youth and community	4.2
Professional sport	5.8*	work	
Librarian	2.0	Church	3.5
Average	5.3	Psychologist	5.2*
		Average	4.7
3 Commerce/management			
Advertising	7.3***	6. Health	
Management	5.8*	Chiropody	4.0
Marketing/export	5.8*	Dentistry	7.3***
Market research	4.3	Dietetics	3.4
Personnel	6.00**	Environmental health	4.6
Public relations	5.8*	Doctor	6.8**
Purchasing and supply	4.5	Nursing/midwifery	6.5**
Sales and retailing	5.7*	Occupational therapy	3.7
Secretary	4.7*	Optician	4.0
Company secretary	5.3*	Osteopath	4.3
Work study/O and M	3.6	Pharmacist	4.5
Average	5.3	Vet	4.5
4 Industrial production		Physiotherapy	4.2

Radiographer	4.0	Sports/recreation admin	3.5
Remedial gymnast	3.5	Average	4.2
Speech therapy	4.0		
Average	4.6	11 Financial areas	
7. Personal service industries		Accountancy	4.3
Catering/hotel business etc.	5.3*	Banking	3.7
Travel industry	4.8	Building societies	3.3
Hairdressing	4.3	Insurance	3.8
Beauty therapy	3.5	Actuary	3.3
Average	4.5	Stockbroker	5.5*
		Average	4.0
8 Public service industries		12 Environment	
Post and telecommunications	4.0	Farming	4.8
Gas	4.0	Forestry	4.8
Electricity	4.6	Horticulture	3.8
Water	4.0	Nature conservancy	3.2
Public transport	5.4*	Average	3.9
Average	4.5	13 Technical specialities	
9. Professional services		Biologist	3.0
Architect	4.0	Chemist	3.7
Barrister	5.7*	Computer programmer	3.8
Solicitor	4.3	Engineer	4.3
Surveyor	4.3	Geologist	3.7
Estate agent	4.3	Laboratory technician	3.8
Average	4.4	Metallurgist	3.8
10 Public administration		Operational researcher	3.8
Civil service	4.4	Packaging	3.8
Diplomatic service	4.8	Patent work	4.2
Local government	4.3	Physicist	3.4
Town and country planning	4.0	Biochemist	3.6
		Statistician	4.0
		Linguist	3.6
		Astronomer	3.4
		Average	3.7

Cooper et al Living with Stress p87

APPENDIX 11

Meditation Technique

Using a Mantra

A mantra is a particular word or phrase that is repeated over and over again as an aid to stilling and calming the mind. Many religious and mystical traditions use repetitious phrases as part of their rituals and sometimes the mantra is a sacred sound of expression. Examples of mantras drawn from various traditions are as follows :

- om (pronounced 'aum') This is probably the best known of all mantras and the most widely used.
- om namah shivaya This is a traditional Indian mantra and translates, roughly as 'I honour my own self or, more literally, 'I bow to Shiva'.
- om mani padme hum This is usually translated as 'The jewel in the lotus'.
- la ilaha illa llah This is a line from the Koran and means 'There is no God but Allah'.
- kyrie eleison This is a Greek phrase, used widely in the Christian tradition.

The following phrases could be used as Christian mantras:

- Be still and know that I am God.
- Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me.

Stoll (1989), adapting the work of Benson (1984), offers a series of phrases that can be used in contemplation and meditative work. She divides these up according to various religions, as follows:

For Roman Catholic and other Christian traditions:

- Variations on the prayer: 'Our Father who art in heaven' or 'Hallowed be Thy name'.
- Phrases from the Hail Mary: 'Hail Mary, full of grace.....'
- A phrase from Mary's Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55: 'My soul magnifies the Lord'.

For Protestants:

- Psalm 23: 'The Lord is my shepherd'.
- Psalm 100: 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord'.
- Jesus' teachings or words: 'My peace I give to you' (John 4:27) or 'Love one another'(John 15:12)

Other meaningful passages from the New Testament, such as 'The peace which passes all understanding' (Phil. 4:7) or 'We have the mind of Christ' (1 or. 2:16).

For Jewish people:

- The Hebrew word for peace: Shalom.
- The Hebrew word for one: Echod.
- Passages from the Old Testament such as 'You should love your neighbour' (Lev. 19:18) or God said 'Let there be light' (Gen. 1:3).
- Phrases that conform to King David's practice of meditating on God's promises, precepts, law, works, wonders, name and decrees.

For Moslems:

- The word for God, 'Allah': 'The Lord is wondrous kind.....'

- Adahum 'One God', the words of the first Moslem who called the 'faithful' to prayer.

For Hindus and Buddhists:

- The Bhagavad-Gita, the Hindu Scriptures, says, 'Joy is inward'.
- Part of a favourite invocation of Hindu priests: 'Thou are everywhere' and 'Thou art without form'.
- Buddhist literature contains phrases like these: 'Life is a journey and 'I surrender indifferently'.

Still others prefer single words or even meaningless sounds. Words and expressions that have been used as mantras include: peace; love; harmony; be here now; I am one.

P Burnard 1991 Coping with Stress in the Health Professions

APPENDIX 12

Stress Management

How Vulnerable Are You to Stress?

In modern society, most of us can't avoid stress. But we can learn to behave in ways that lessen its effects. Researchers have identified a number of factors that affect one's vulnerability to stress -- among them are eating and sleeping habits, caffeine and alcohol intake, and how we express our emotions. The following questionnaire is designed to help you discover your vulnerability quotient and to pinpoint trouble spots.

Rate each item from 1 (always) to 5 (never), according to how much of the time the statement is true of you.

Be sure to mark each item, even if it seems not to apply to you -- for example, if you don't smoke, check off 1 next to item 6.

-----		Always	Sometimes	Never
1	I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day	1	2 3 4 5	
2	I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.	1	2 3 4 5	
3	I give and receive affection regularly.	1	2 3 4 5	
4	I have at least one relative within 50 miles, on whom I can rely.	1	2 3 4 5	
5	I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week	1	2 3 4 5	
6	I limit myself to less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.	1	2 3 4 5	
7	I take fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week.	1	2 3 4 5	
8	I am the appropriate weight for my height.	1	2 3 4 5	
9	I have an income adequate to meet basic needs.	1	2 3 4 5	
10	I get strength from my religious beliefs.	1	2 3 4 5	
11	I regularly attend club or social activities	1	2 3 4 5	
12	I have a network of friends and acquaintances.	1	2 3 4 5	
13	I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters	1	2 3 4 5	
14	I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, teeth.	1	2 3 4 5	
15	I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.	1	2 3 4 5	
16	I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems -- for example, chores and money.	1	2 3 4 5	
17	I do something for fun at least once a week.	1	2 3 4 5	
18	I am able to organise my time effectively.	1	2 3 4 5	
19	I drink fewer than three cups of coffee (or other caffeine-rich drinks) a day.	1	2 3 4 5	
20	I take some quiet time for myself during the day.	1	2 3 4 5	

To get your score, add up the figures and subtract 20. A score below 10 indicates excellent resistance to stress. A score over 30 indicates some vulnerability to stress; you are seriously vulnerable if your score is over 50.

You can make yourself less vulnerable by reviewing the items on which you scored 3 or higher and trying to modify them. Notice that nearly all of them describe situations and behaviours over which you have a great deal of control. Concentrate first on those that are easiest to change -- for example, eating a hot, balanced meal daily and having fun at least once a week -- before tackling those that seem more difficult.

Source: University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter, August, 1985. Scale Developers: Lyle Miller and Alma Dell Smith of Boston University Medical Center.

APPENDIX 13

Meditation - Monday Morning

About this time I always feel that I shall never get through everything that I have to do. There are always people to see, letters to write, plans to be made, and then there is all the moving about. As fast as space begins to appear it is immediately filled up with something else which is important.

Yes Lord, it all does appear to be important and necessary. I cannot let people down, leave letters unanswered, make no plans. In one sense I feel committed to do all these things that come to me. I try to believe that they come to me from you. The only peace of mind I get in the middle of all the rush and clatter, is that I am doing something that is not only important, but that you want me to do it.

But why is it that there seems to be no time to pray, but there always seems something else to be done. Whenever I make a resolution about it, it is broken as soon as I begin.

Sometimes I wonder if only **some** of the work is absolutely necessary, and comes from you, and whether the rest of it I have taken on just to prove that I am occupied in important business. Perhaps I say 'yes' sometimes when I could say 'no', and I do not allow the space and time to exist.

In the end Lord - it is not so much what I do, as what kind of person I am who is doing it. If I could give more time to being still and talking to you, then perhaps I would do things with more love and less rush and clatter.

Help me Lord to give you time: to leave space in my day for quiet and prayer. Help me to put you first in my life, and after that the work that you have given me to do.

Picture meditation
Mirfield Publications,
House of the Resurrection,
Mirfield.

APPENDIX 14
Celtic Style Prayer

I weave a silence on to my lips
I weave a silence into my mind
I weave a silence within my heart
I close my ears to distractions
I close my eyes to attractions
I close my heart to temptations

Calm me O Lord as you stilled the storm
Still me O Lord, keep me from harm
Let all the tumult in me cease
Enfold me Lord in your peace

D Adams Edge of Glory p7

Traditional Celtic Blessing

Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
Deep peace of the shining stars to you
Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you.

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STRESS - A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

1 What is stress?

- (a) Origin of the word and comments regarding definition.
- (b). Uses of the word/theories. - Stress as Stimulus, Response or interaction of the two with individual cognitive interpretation, personality and physical factors as important.
- (c) Measures/indicators of stress - Questionnaires note life events, physical symptoms and behaviour as measures of stress.
- (d) Physical aspects how - we identify emotions, the fight-flight response, long term effects of the exposure to stress in terms of illness
- (e) Life events- social/world context and behavioural stance e.g. relation to assertiveness
- (f) Definition

2 Stress Relating to Work

Work can be positive in giving identity but there can be destructive aspects. Pressures at work - over/under worked, management constraints, insecurity, safety, emotional traumas with examples from industry, medical, commerce, police, forces, social work.

3. Coping mechanisms

Approaches-

- (a) Amelioration of physical impact -relaxation techniques, meditation, physical activity, music, making of relaxation 'corridors'
- (b) Techniques for assertiveness and organisation of time
- (c) Counselling - Aim to assist in problem solving by healthy release/expression of feeling, reinforcing personal strengths, making aware of supports and assuring of ability to cope.
- (d) Employers/organisations are becoming aware of their responsibility to look after employees and of the financial advantage of this which could lead to structural changes to relieve stress

4. Spiritual/theological aspects

. 'The ability to cope is the ability to let go.'

- (a) Methods of worship/prayer are also techniques of secular coping with stress - Meditation by use of mantra, (Benedictine) reflection on stories to allow awareness of insight into self and God (Ignatian) acceptance and commitment to the present situation as a counter to resentful rehearsal of grievance and fear of the future. The public worship situation can also have supportive aspects.
- (b) Trust in God's benevolent sovereignty is an essential feature in the peace and absence of fear God's Love is promised to bring - Biblical examples to encourage fairness/justice of God in face of tragedy, need to be aware of own presumptions and learning potential of stress.- counter feeling of being a helpless victim or responsible for the whole world's problems.
- (c) This is not an abdication of the church's duty to make organisations aware of the unnecessary pain and potential damage they avoidably cause and the duty to see employees as people not work units.

5 Conclusion

Comment regarding the specific pressures and effects of industrial society on the individual - the challenge and potential.

**Summary of Dissertation submitted for MA degree
by Ann Gray BSc
on
Stress - A Christian Perspective**

Over the past 15 years 'stress' is a word which has figured more prominently in common usage and in academic circles and this is related to a number of features of modern life. Stress is a complex concept. The word does not have one simple definition. Its application can be very subjective and laden with value judgements and philosophical overtones. It is important to recognise this.

Psychology and Theology are seen as complimentary to each other, both having human experience as their basic data. Christianity is an incarnational religion. The data from secular psychological research can be used to compliment that experience and practice which Christianity has accrued over the centuries. Much secular research has recognised the need for a basic philosophy as to the meaning of life against which to base a coping strategy for stress. Total stress reduction may not be a desirable end in itself. Some stress can have positive outcomes; some ends may be worth being stressed, even dying, for.

Having a loving, eternal relationship with God is seen as the purpose of life. Unpleasant events should be viewed in the light of their contribution to this. The Christian way of life is to love God, ones neighbour and oneself. What loving ones neighbours and self means in practice will be illuminated by awareness of Christian principles promoting health and wholeness. These are to be promoted above other goals (e.g. profit, status). Some stress is unavoidable and the value of tried and proved Christian spirituality is recognised. Christians are assured of their ability to cope in the strength of and under the sovereignty of God.