

**The Science of Happiness and Wellbeing**  
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**Lecture – 26**  
**Reconnecting Happiness - Beyond Pandemic**

Welcome again. The other topic we discussed about stress and coping style and we wanted to let you know that why in the science of happiness and wellbeing we need to study stress and coping style. To reiterate the point of view that I had already spoken, let me tell you that presence of positive traits and absence of negative traits are equally important for our well being. By simply having positive traits, we may not be able to sustain our level of happiness.

Therefore, it is very important that we also understand the causes behind stress and how best we can cope with it without losing our positive traits. So with this notion we will talk about today about reconnecting happiness and beyond pandemic. The reason behind choosing this topic is really contemporary in the sense that when we talk about stress, we know that everybody does not suffer from stress.

Although it is a very normal phenomenon and a universal occurrence. But when pandemic came up almost everybody in this world, we get to know today that we have 8 billion people in this earth and probably everybody had some degree of stress and agony. Now it's time to reconnect happiness, because the kind of stress that we have suffered in between needs to be reconnected with happiness.

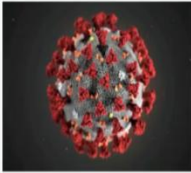
Therefore, today's talk will primarily focus on reconnecting happiness post pandemic. Before we do that, we would like to first know that why we develop such stress during COVID-19 in outbreak what are the principal reasons behind stress, what forces us to change the lifestyle and coping style, and what best we can do? After hopefully the pandemic has gone back or gone out of our sight, although it is still present in the population to some extent.

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**C**oncepts  
covered

What happens ...

- when are we forced to make significant changes in our life-style?
- when are we forced to make changes in our personal coping style?
- when are our resources depleted for making such changes?



Source: Getty image




So, the question that we will be asking that when we are forced to make certain kinds of change in our lifestyle, what happens? Every day you do certain things every day you go to office and then suddenly you are forced not to go to office or school or colleges or do something what you are used to do in a day to day affair and if you are forced to change your lifestyle, you are also forced to change your coping style as well that is how to cope with the new situation new environment.

For example, you are not supposed to even touch the fate of your parents because of the fear of Covid-19. How did we actually cope with such environment? And if such kind of stress retains or remains over a period of time is close to 2 and half years our resources get depleted, whatever resources we have biological, social, psychological, ecological, every resources get depleted. So what really happens with us, we will get to know about it, but before that, we would like to know what are the key concepts we are going to discuss?


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**K**eywords

- Lifestyle
- Coping style
- Contamination obsession
- Co-habitation stress
- Biological rhythm



Source: Getty image




And as I told you, we will discuss about lifestyle we will discuss about coping style, we will discuss about contamination obsession. Contamination obsession is something where you are not actually contaminated by a virus, but you feel that probably something is going to happen with you and then we will discuss about the cohabitation stress. Cohabitation stress is a stress where you actually remain proximated physically with your family members.

But then you feel that it is too much for you so that is called co-habitation stress and because of the entire set of changes in our lifestyle and coping style, we also developed some problem with our biological rhythm. Biological rhythm is very important for our happiness, because it controls your metabolic system it controls your sleep wakefulness cycle, it controls your digestive system, it controls everything, your biological system.



And if you are biologically completely arrhythmic or dysrhythmic then obviously is going to affect your state of mood temperament and happiness. So we will discuss these points. First, we will discuss what are the changes that did happen with our lifestyle changes.

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## Life-style changes post-covid-19...

- The way we use technology (*overindulgence*)
- ...way we learn lessons (*e-learning*)
- ...we exercise our freedom (*no nuisance*)
- ...we uphold our personal hygiene (*face mask*)
- ...we secure personal finance (*new age poor*)
- ...we get breaking news (*half-truth*)
- ...we stay informed (*daily counts in e-portals*)

Source: see list

And we will like to know what kind of lifestyle changes we did have maybe will not discuss every point in great detail. But this is generically, the changes that we had we all faced like that way we use technology because if you have got a mobile phone, if you look at the TV, if you have got something to do with the laptop, you use a technology because you develop proximity stress with family members. So you pay more attention to those technological I mean gadgets.

The way you learn lessons, that is all meetings, all classes, lessons, everything is based on e-learning. The way we exercise our freedom, I mean, you have the freedom to go out anytime in an era where there was no pandemic, but during pandemic, you did not have any freedom, even if you want to indulge something on some activity, which may not be required. But you feel that is part of your nuisance behaviour in you want to indulge in that and you could not do that so you did not have the freedom.

Your personal hygiene changed in a big way you had to wear a face mask all the time you cannot touch anything. If you touch anything you used to use some kind of hand sanitizer. The way you secure your personal finance because you have got all the money but you cannot make use of it. Because you cannot go out and there is no way that you can spend it. We call it as new age poor.

The way you used to get the breaking news, almost all breaking news are half-truth you know most breaking news are half-truth, but you have to absorb that and the way you as informed about everything, the daily counts of something called virus affecting everybody in a big way.

So, even the children used to keep account of all these things. So post to covid-19 we had to change those lifestyle once again we are not going back to pandemic era.

My point of emphasis is that when we changed ourselves in 2 and half years on a particular habit then we need to change it once again with 2 and a half years back, we did change ourselves and now after 2 and a half years, we have to change ourselves once again. When something develops, as a part of your habit, then your mind does not work instantly. So you need to make a lot of effort in order to change the habit once again, we will discuss about it, how the habit can be changed and how it has to be taken care of in a slightly later manner?

But let us first understand what are the changes that 2 place in our coping style because habit, physical habits, biological habits can be changed forcefully. By changing your mental state and your coping state or coping style becomes even more difficult let us see one at a time.

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Coping style changes post covid-19...

- The way we find our personal space (*co-habitation stress*)
- The way we trust each other (*social paranoia*)
- The way we follow daily routine (*procrastination*)
- The way we experience tragedy (*secondary trauma*)

Source: see list

First of all, the way we find our personal space that is we call it cohabitation stress, because we are not used to stay back home with all the members all the time 24 by 7 we call it cohabitation stress or proximity stress that we had 2 proximate. So as a result of which there had been some kind of apathy, we develop for each other within the family member. We call it cohabitation stress that is a coping style problem.

Then the way we trust each other the trust is not about finance, the trust is not about any activity which may otherwise threaten you apart from the disease. So we develop a social paranoia anybody we are going to talk during that period we believe that probably the person


may be a carrier of the virus. So our whole perspective even for the best of the friends we tend to avoid each one of us each one of I mean, amongst us in order to avoid some kind of virus.

I mean there are extreme cases where you actually stop touching anyone. So it is also a coping style change. The way we follow the daily routine is also a problematic thing because every day you get up at some point of time maybe 6 O'clock maybe 7 O'clock children get up at early morning, because they have to go to school they get up at a particular point and if a they get to know that well they do not have to go to school, they will lie down on the beam, or if you know that you do not have to finish a work within home within a particular period, then you try to stretch it as much as possible because you believe that you are good enough of time and you are really not under pressure of any kind of work. So, if there is no pressure is equally bad if there is pressure probably it is equally bad both get your stress because procrastination is a sort of mental phenomenon where you lose all kinds of your alertness you believe that let us delay the work and it would be get done.

And as a result of which what happens you even forget your proper sleeping time you even forget your bedtime rituals, you go to bed sleep for double the time what you used to sleep earlier but you still do not feel rejuvenated because you believe that well there is nothing to do hereafter. Therefore, the way we understand all these things created some kind of secondary trauma you may not be directly affected.


But during the delta wave we have seen how many people have died in the country how people almost nearly many families actually lost one of their members and you will also get to know many of your relatives when no more especially those who have got comorbid diseases and those were very aged, they passed away and that created some kind of stress may not be directly linked to you but it created some kind of secondary trauma. So it created a coping style problem how to cope with it with the painful news, I call it as a news fatigue over a period of time.

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How does it impact us?

- Contamination obsession
- Loss of time anchors (locked down)
- Loss of biological rhythm, sleep
- Become suggestible to possible cure
- Anxiety about testing or treatment



Source: see list



So in which way it did impact us? It did impact us in various ways. In summary we may tell that we developed a proximity stress, we developed belongingness barrier, we developed compassion fatigue, because of our continuous interaction with people who are either proximated or who are having some kind of dreadful memory, who has got some kind of I mean anxiety in the face.

And as a result of which we develop some kind of contamination obsession that something is going to happen with. Obsession is something where you repeatedly feel that something is going to happen nothing happens but you feel that something is going to happen. You lose the time anchor that is your during lockdown period you do not have to wake up at a particular time you do not have to take lunch at a particular time you do not take dinner at a particular time.

So you lost the time anchor it did affect the children much more we will discuss about it slightly later, you lose the biological rhythm and sleep wakefulness pattern as I said biological rhythm is very important thing in our biological system or resources. It is biological rhythm is also called circadian rhythm. It is a rhythm of 24 hours and the rhythm actually is regulated by the sunrise and sunset and some kind of circulation in the brain called melatonin.

So melatonin is something which actually helps you sleep and get up once the sun rises. The whole sleep wakefulness cycle is regulated by biological rhythm and there are people most

people are morning type that is nearly 90 percent of the people are morning type they would retain their cognitive capabilities and alertness during morning time. But 10% of the people are evening type, evening type people actually retain much more alertness during night.


Of course, they are very few in number but most often we have got a biological rhythm which is morning type. Since there was no fast segregation between morning and evening during that COVID period you actually lost the biological rhythm. So, your digestive system your sleep wakefulness cycle your metabolic system your vascular system everything had gone for a massive change.

Therefore, we need to understand how to get rid of it you become suggestible a possible cure, because you are always suggestible that something is going to happen and if it happens what to do so you need to control you do not have a concept of negotiable fate at that point of time. Because since everybody is suffering, you believe that I must be able to control myself. So either with medicine, either with alternative medicine, either by doing something which will help you get rid of this pandemic COVID-19 problem.

You started doing so many things with you and of course the anxiety about testing and treatment, you don't know that what will happen with you, if there is a testing it may be positive because you may not have the symptoms but you still can carry that virus and the treatment protocol as well. Vaccination has created a lot of hesitation people did not have enough energy and enough knowledge about it. So therefore, what really happened a lot of people develop lot of hesitation as well. So in this way it really impacted us in a big way.


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## What can we do?

- Do not question uncertainty: Avoid untested stories
- Let's unlearn old habits, change to covid-appropriate behavior & set it as 'default'
- Do not look for paradoxical happiness or get into 'optimism bias'
- Stay informed but do not obsessively ask for suggestions
- Maintain the rhythm of sleep-wakeful cycle



Source: see list



Now, what can we do now? Now that we do not have pandemic, what can we do? My first suggestion is that do not question uncertainty, any untested stories must be avoided. If we keep on listening to breaking news which are mostly have truth, we will get suggestible developed suggestibility and because of that suggestibility will develop secondary trauma. We need to unlearn the old habits.


And if there is a COVID appropriate behaviour we still do, I mean even at this point of view which is November 2022 everything airport and railway station you get the announcement that you please wear the face mask and probably that is the regulation still going on. So you need to be very careful what is called a COVID appropriate behaviour and you can set it as a default. Some people of course believe that nothing is going to happen now and they jump into paradoxical pleasure.

That is wherever there is a danger they develop some danger awareness and try to see whether anything happens to them or not. We have already learned about optimism bias these people have got a lot of optimism bias they believe that nothing is going to happen with them. Everything else is going to happen with others, this optimism bias can also be avoided. We need to be informed about what is happening in terms of virus, I am not referring to only COVID virus, it can be any kind of virus we need to have a check.

Since we have a pandemic world over we need to be checked it may be a pandemic, it may be endemic, it may be epidemic. I am talking about a lifestyle and a coping style, where any one


of these things happens we must keep a check on that. We must not obsessively check what is going to happen rather we must try to understand I mean, what are the possible ways logically rather than adding lot of panic and fear about it? And we need to maintain the sleep wakefulness cycle as well.

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What happens... *to children?*

- Lose time anchor by not attending school
- Develop anxiety about parent's health
- Show regressive behavior, desperation
- Develop somatization or seeking attention
- Find difficulty in sleep pattern



Source: see list




So what happens to children, that's a very important thing more often the adults believe that they are only suffering and children do not suffer. But you see the children lose time anchor by not attending to school. Every day they attend the school that in the morning they get up they have a biological cycle, a psychological cycle is social cycle all these cycles get disturbed. They develop anxiety about parent's health, actually they are not much concerned about their own health or the kind of virus they are I mean getting affected to.

They are more concerned about their parents because parents are actually their saviour, parents actually kept security for them. So they are very anxious about the parents. They show regressive behaviour like a nail biting, the kids sitting there develop self-intimacy behaviour they sit without moving here and there because there are a lot of that are less of opportunities for that.


They develop some kind of physical problem, some kind of headache. Because they are not moving out, they are not doing anything and they also find difficulty in their sleep pattern as well.

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## What parents can do...for children

- Talk about the danger in simple language
- Stick to the facts, isolate fake news
- Make suggestions age-appropriate
- Choose a safe & time for conversation
- Offer them thinking tool
- Assist children adhere to 'new' normal



Source: see list





So what to do under such conditions we need to talk to children in simple language we should not use any jargon in order to help them understand what is happening outside and how best we can keep ourselves secure. We must stick to facts and we must let them know what fake news's so that is very important for the grooming of the children under such conditions. And every suggestion that we make must be age appropriate a 5 year old boy or a girl and a 10 year old boy and girl must get advices which are appropriate to their knowledge, experience and of course their level of maturity. So whenever we talk about all these things what best they have to do we must choose a particular place we must not talk to them anywhere everywhere we must find out a safe place and time for conversation otherwise in a social space if we try to help them understand what COVID is all about and how to keep them secure.

They will be panicked because everybody else will inject anxiety in them that we must be very careful. Now the very word we must be very careful will inject some kind of anxiety in children and that will create a lot of problem for them. So it is important that we offer them a thinking tool rather than a tool for developing panic and if there is a situation which has changed which is new normal we must help them how to develop that habit.


That habit development also has biological processes, social process, ecological processes, psychological process and a cultural process. Changing habit for anything is not a very easy thing let us get to know about it first.

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## Forming a new habit...

- It takes 21 days (about 3 weeks) to dissolve an old mental image
- Change of behavior takes about 66 days; habits become automatic for simple tasks
- New habits develop by commitment rather than by pressure or coercion
- Small, incremental improvements make habit stronger rather than drastic action
- Human behavior does not change everyday; we need to rewire the brain



Source: see list




So whenever we form a new habit let us first remember if I have developed a habit for example, brushing teeth I have a habit and if I do not brush it for example this is just a metaphorical example or if I everyday if I get up and say hello and shake hands with somebody in the office and if I don't have to do it, it takes at least 21 days to dissolve in older image at least to initiate this is biologically proven.

And this experiment was done by your surgeon on phantom limb pain, phantom limb is a pain where the patient gets a pain in hand even if the hand is amputated completely, because the brain sends signal for the pain although physically the hand is not available. So from there actually this concept has come that the pain comes at least for 21 days and it actually goes off after 66 days roughly experimentally.

So habit becomes automatic thing after 66 days in general. So if we have to change habit for someone it takes at least 66 days. A new develop I mean, if we have to develop a new habit and if we believe that we can change it drastically overnight it does not happen. It needs to happen systematically, so if somebody has a habit of smoking cigarette and he wants to she wants to get rid of it then it takes time because it can't be done, I mean overnight. The changes must be incremental no drastic action will help. So, human behaviour cannot change every day.


Human skills also cannot change every day no habit can develop every day, we need to rewire the brain and for that reason over a period of 66 days that is 2 months plus it has to be done systematically, and probably thereafter the old image will I mean awake.

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Beyond pandemic...



- Leaving behind 'contamination obsession' may take time
- Our 'baseline' may have changed, habits atrophied
- Our interest may have changed, priorities reset
- We may have been getting comfort in 'flight' syndrome
- Proximity stress may have created belongingness barrier
- We may have 'behavior-fatigue'



So, beyond pandemic the issue is that the contamination obsession will take time. Our baseline has changed because in 2 and a half years our baseline has changed. Our earlier habit got atrophied so new habit has come up, so we have to give them time as I said it takes time. Our interests have changed because we are not going to office, we are not going to school, we have developed a new sets of habit, our priorities have become different.


Now that there is no pandemic, we have to reset our priority. Maybe many people are getting comfort by sitting back in the room or in the family. They do not want to go to office children do not want to go to school, because we are getting comfort by having some flight syndrome that is we are not facing anybody so that is also possible and proximity stress in this process, create a belongingness barrier. Therefore, we may have lost some kind of sense of belongingness but it will come back we develop some behaviour fatigue it has to be overturned and some habit may come.

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## Some don'ts...

- Do not question uncertainty & avoid untested stories
- Do not speculate too much about the future & avoid making assumptions
- Do not overwhelm your discussion on possible threats & avoid feeding in anxiety





Source: see list



So there are certain dos and do not's some of the do not's is that do not question uncertainty, avoid untested stories. Do not speculate too much about the future and avoid making assumptions a lot of people believe that well something may happen once again. But if I do not have any base behind that we should not try to speculate and if we do not belong to that science of virology, we do not need to speculate at all.


And let us not unnecessarily discuss on the issue of possible threats, because then we will be overwhelmed over a period of time if we continuously discuss the same thing we will be overwhelmed by that and then if I discuss certain situation, which is anxiety provoking, it will inject anxiety to others, we need to avoid such kind of situations these are certain don'ts I recommend.

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## Some do's...

- Our gestures matter: Comforting gestures give us strength
- Allow positive thoughts: Else our body has to bear the burden
- Words matter: Talk about danger in simple language



Source: Getty image




There are certain dos also. Our gestures matter, our comforting gesture gives us lots of strength. So when we meet each other in the morning and if we comfortably speak to each other and at the same time so some kind of empathy to each other through our body language of course it will give us a lot of strength that is the reason we shake hand we say hello to each other, we say namaskar to each other, we say good morning to each other, and that comforting gesture actually matter and it will have its impact throughout the day.

So our gestures matter let us not project our own anxieties through our body language so that others also develop anxiety, because of this contamination obsession. We should allow our positive thoughts to come up else the body has to bear the burden, let me tell you that any thought that enters into our mind a negative thought, a threat a dreadful idea or memory will find expression in our body is not possible that we have developed a thought and it has got no expression in the body it will find that expression in the body.


Therefore, we need to have positive thoughts and positive thoughts has got positive expressions as well and it will impact each one of us whosoever is around us and then finally the words matter the kind of word we are using, what kind of discussions we are making let us talk about danger in simple language we should not avoid talking danger because we have to protect ourselves. But that does not mean we will talk something with a panic mode and a panic state because any anything of that anxiety arousing situation will provoke anxiety and inject phobia or panic in others who are around us.

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## CONCLUSION

- Stress is inevitable, but suffering is optional
- Find pleasure in simple things again; it's a choice
- Fine-tune social relationships – intimacy matters
- Indulge in inner call for kindness





So finally, we can conclude that stress is inevitable we talked about it earlier as well. But suffering is optional. In pandemic everybody has to face some kind of stress, but the suffering is optional. We may not suffer even if there is a stress. We need to find pleasure in simple things. In order to get rid of stress we should not do too many things earlier we did discuss about these things that if there is a stress and if there are so many alternatives will always choose a risky alternative a threat full alternative in order to mask our stress level or anxiety.

Let us not do that let us do simple things again it is a choice is not at all a compulsion. We also need to fine tune our relationship because we developed some kind of barrier in belongingness. We developed some kind of proximity stress amongst each other. We develop some kind of compassion fatigue and behaviour fatigue over a period of time, it is time to rewire everything and it is possible when we indulge in our inner call for kindness, which we discussed earlier as senseless act of beauty.

Where we can indulge in some kind of random act of kindness and that will help us develop some feeling which we call belongingness, attachment, connectedness, intimacy, reciprocation and so in so far we need to review all these things in a matter of time.

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So I have referred about a book which is dealing with the stress therefore and during the covid-19 pandemic you will get some idea about it and there is a lot of web links where you will get the idea how to best deal with such situation. Thank you so much.