

Pariksha Parv 2.0

Psychological Aspects of Exam. Stress & Test Anxiety

Prof. HK Laldinpuii Fente

Head of Department of Psychology, Mizoram University

MSCPCR-SCERT-NCPCR

4th February, 2020

Test Anxiety

- ◆ Test anxiety is a psychological condition in which people experience extreme distress and anxiety in testing situations.
- ◆ While many people experience some degree of stress and anxiety before and during exams, test anxiety can actually impair learning and hurt test performance.

Performance Anxiety:

- ◆ Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety. In situations where the pressure is on and **a good performance counts**, people can become so anxious that they are actually **unable to do their best** (**My Cousin Vinnie, Mizo Idol etc**).
- ◆ Mahni ah thil tihtheihna a awm a, mahse enghelh nasat lutuk avang a tihthat theih miahloh
- ◆ A high school basketball player becomes very anxious before a big game. During the game, he is so overwhelmed by this stress that he starts missing even easy shots.
- ◆ During a work presentation, a businessman freezes up and forgets the information he was going to present to his co-workers and manager.
- ◆ While people have the skills and knowledge to do very well in these situations, their excessive anxiety impairs their performance.

Severity

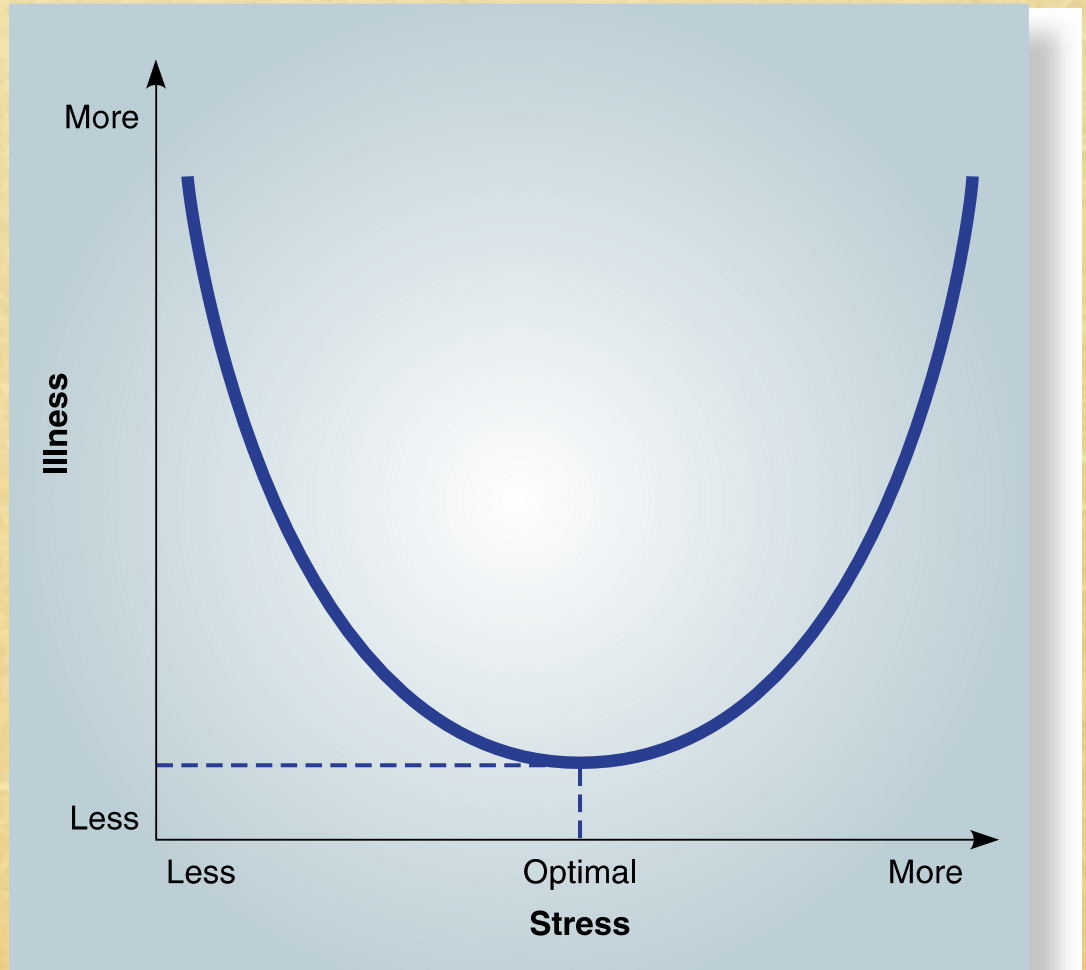
- ♦ The severity of test anxiety can vary considerably from one person to another. Some people might feel like they have "butterflies" in their stomach and while others might find it difficult to concentrate on the exam.
- ♦ A nasat lutuk chuan Mental health professionals te pan tur for pharmacotherapy / psychotherapy. A nasa lutuk lo chu zirtirtute leh nu leh pa te tanpuina inenkawlina a pawimawh hle a ni

Yerkes – Dodson Law (1908)

- ♦ A little bit of nervousness can actually be helpful, making you feel mentally alert and ready to tackle the challenges presented in an exam.
- ♦ The Yerkes-Dodson law suggests that there is a link between arousal levels and performance. Essentially, increased arousal levels can help you do better on exams, but only up to a certain point. Once these stress levels cross that line, the excessive anxiety you might be experiencing can actually interfere with test performance.

Figure 1.3

Relationship between stress and illness is a complex one. Illness can result from too *little* stress, just as much as it can result from too much stress.



STRESS



Stress Definition

Stress—a complex series of reactions, both psychological and physical, in response to demanding or threatening situations

Stressors—events that produce physical and psychological demands on a person (like exams, tests etc)

Some background

- ♦ Walter Cannon 1930 – Fight or flight response
- ♦ Hans Selye 1956 – **Physiological responses to stress**...his rats developed “substantial enlargement of the cortex of the adrenal glands;; an almost total disappearance of eosinophil cells (a kind of white blood cell); and bleeding ulcers in the lining of the stomach and duodenum.”
- ♦ Eustress – good stress “Only the dead have no stress”
- ♦ General Adaptation Syndrome

Stress Reactivity

Walter Cannon 1930 – Fight or flight response

- ✦ The **fight-or-flight** response is termed *stress reactivity*, includes
 - ✦ increased muscle tension;
 - ✦ increased heart rate;
 - ✦ elevated blood pressure;
 - ✦ increased neural excitability;
 - ✦ less saliva in the mouth;
 - ✦ increased sodium retention;
 - ✦ increased perspiration;

- ✦ change in respiratory rate;
- ✦ increased serum glucose;
- ✦ increased release of hydrochloric acid in the stomach;
- ✦ changes in brain waves;
- ✦ And decreased urination.
- ✦ This reaction prepares us for swift action when such a response is warranted.
- ✦ When we build up stress products that we don't use, this stress reaction becomes unhealthy.

G.A.S

- ◆ Hans Selye (1956) summarized stress reactivity as three-phase process – **General Adaptation Syndrome**:
- ◆ *Phase 1: Alarm reaction.* The body shows the changes characteristic of the first exposure to a stressor. At the same time, its resistance is diminished and, if the stressor is sufficiently strong (severe burns, extremes of temperature), death may result.
- ◆ *Phase 2: Stage of resistance.* Resistance ensues if continued exposure to the stressor is compatible with adaptation. The bodily signs characteristic of the alarm reaction have virtually disappeared, and resistance rises above normal.
- ◆ *Phase 3: Stage of exhaustion.* Following long-continued exposure to the same stressor, to which the body has become adjusted, eventually adaptation energy is exhausted. The signs of the alarm reaction reappear, but now they are irreversible, and the individual dies.

Causes of Stress

- ✦ There are **several different theories** about what causes stress and its effects on illness and disease
- ✦ **Life-Events Theory**
 - ✦ Holmes and Rahe: **stress occurs when a situation requires more resources than are available...** lists of **major** stressful life events such as the death of a loved one.. **the more stress events a person experiences, the greater is his or her stress.**
- ✦ DeLongis et al., they consider **routine** stressful life events more significant than major ones that happen infrequently... **daily hassles,, daily uplifts,** as counteracting some hassles.
- ✦ Allostatic Load: as **systems become taxed and dysregulated,** they begin to exhibit **imbalances** in the primary mediators of the stress response, such as glucocorticoids etc. **Chronic dysregulation** is believed to confer cumulative physiological risk for disease and disability by **causing damage to tissues and major organ systems.**

✦ **Hardiness Theory**

✦ focus not on how many stressful events you experience but on your **attitude** toward those events.

✦ For example, – if you perceive potentially stressful events as a *challenge* instead of as a *threat*, less stress will result. This buffering effect—buffering between stress and the development of illness and disease—is termed *hardiness*

✦ **Social Support Theory**

✦ stress occurs when there is not enough social support available to respond to the event effectively. Social support may take many forms eg. financial assistance, being there etc

Our situation?

- ◆ We live in a test-conscious, test-giving culture in which the lives of people are in part determined by their test performance.

(Sarason et al., 1960, p.26). The above quotation was published in 1960, and it concerns the testing culture in the US at that time.

- ◆ Present-day climate faced by schoolchildren in the India. Pu Modi a a kaitho hial anih hi

Our Scene

- ♦ Suicide cases not too high but instances are there. In titha viau a ni angem aw? Nge Mizo te hi kan ambitious lutuk lo?
- ♦ Research a va chakawm em!
- ♦ However, our cps and psychias have had a lot of experience in treating the sequelae of exam stress and test anxiety (I hope Dr. Ruth will share)
- ♦ One research in the dept of psychology...and the results?
 - ♦ The two components of Test Anxiety namely Worry and Emotionality indicate inverse relationship with Self-esteem.
 - ♦ Girl students experience higher level of Test Anxiety compared to their male counterparts
 - ♦ Luck Chance and powerful others (External) of LOC +r with *worry and emotionality*

Why very little research?

- ◆ Yet despite first appearing in the literature in 1914 (Follin et al., cited in Spielberger & Vagg, 1995),
- ◆ The study of the stress and anxiety surrounding examinations and other forms of assessment has been largely ignored even in Mizoram.
- ◆ One in the dept of psychology... WHY???

How I Topped the Boards and You Can Too!

- ♦ written by Gaurav Sood. Sood, who topped his own board exam in 2008, with a near perfect 99 per cent, and is currently studying at Oxford.
- ♦ Study not for an exam, but for the knowledge. Study not because you have to, but because you want to. Don't study for the marks, study for the learning.
- ♦ But as poetic as all of that sounds, the fact of the matter is that, for most of us, that strategy doesn't work. That perspective is great for our long-term personal development, but for our purposes, we need to set it aside for a while. Just a while. You see, there are very few who will be able to sustain that optimum level over the course of their lives, where they have enough in the tank to crack every examination they take or jump every hurdle that comes their way.
- ♦ Most of us will have our ebbs and flows, and our highs and lows. Picture yourself at the start of a race, knees bent, waiting for the sound of that pistol. It's a marathon, not a sprint. What's your strategy? Do you go racing out of the blocks at full speed and try to sustain that for the next few hours? Or do you hold back for some time and then give it everything you've got in the final hurdle?

Attentional Bias



- ◆ When you are trying to make an important decision, do you always consider all of the possibilities? While we might like to think that we take all the alternatives into consideration, the reality is that we often overlook some options and possible outcomes. In some cases, our attention becomes focused on just a few of the options while we ignore the rest. This tendency represents a type of cognitive bias known as an attentional bias.
- ◆ this tendency might have an evolutionary basis. In order to ensure survival, our ancestors were more likely to survive if they paid greater attention to risky things in the environment and ignored things that did not pose a threat.
- ◆ If you have ever been in a frightening situation and experienced what is often referred to as "tunnel vision" in which you became hyper-aware and acutely focused on a specific threat, you can probably see how this tendency can be helpful.
- ◆ As you might imagine, this type of bias can have a dramatic impact on the decision-making process and can lead people to make bad or inaccurate choices. KHUA HMULO KAN TIH ANG CHI KHA

Attentional Bias

- ♦ Examination stress occurs so frequently in the lives of student that the neural mechanisms induced by examination stress in test-anxious individuals was studied.
- ♦ Result: examination stress resulted in attentional bias and functional perturbations of a brain circuitry that reacted rapidly to test-related threat in high test-anxious individuals.

TA definition recap

- ◆ Test Anxiety " A specific form of anxiety, compromising a combination of cognitive and physiological responses, and aroused in testing situations or similar situations involving personal evaluation" (Cizek and Burg, 2006, p.129). "A scientific construct, referring to a set of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioral responses that accompany concern about negative consequences or failure on an exam of similar evaluative situation" (Zeidner, 1998, p. 17).

TA definition recap

- ◆ Narrow definitions focus on fear of failure (emphasising how performance is judged),
- ◆ or evaluation anxiety (emphasising how test anxiety can be located with other, so called, subclinical anxieties including sports performance, public speaking, and so forth).
- ◆ These emphasize a social dimension where the performance is judged by others.
- ◆ Spielberger's (1966) notion of 'ego threat' offers a potentially broader definition by including threats to self-esteem and the consequences of performance success or failure, in addition to potential derogatory judgement by others.

components of test anxiety

- ◆ Zeidner (1998) outlines three :
- ◆ cognitive: the negative thoughts and depreciating self-statements that occur during assessments (e.g. 'If I fail this exam my whole life is a failure') and the performance-inhibiting difficulties that may arise from anxiety (e.g. recalling facts and difficulty in reading and understanding questions)
- ◆ affective: the person's appraisal of their physiological state (such as tension, tight muscles and trembling);
- ◆ behavioural: poor study skills, avoidance and procrastination of work.

Relationship between test anxiety and examination stress.

And they the same?

- ◆ First, in a lot of cases test anxiety and examination stress are treated as the same thing. Some studies examine the influence of examination stress on grade (e.g. Struthers et al., 2000) and measure students' perceptions of worry in such a way that is **indistinguishable** from that of test anxiety.
 - ◆ Second, as stress is defined in a much broader way than anxiety, it is possible to conceptualise examinations as stressful by virtue of their own properties or functions without having to refer to perceived worry and arousal (e.g. Denscombe, 2000).
 - ◆ Third, Exam stress is also used as an umbrella term for any negative affect associated with examinations: time pressure, the exhaustion of having to sit multiple of examinations in a single day or consecutive days, interference on relationships and social activities and social and family demands etc
 - ◆ **Conclusion:** The test anxiety construct is too narrow to capture these features of examination stress, but at the same time, owing to its lack of specificity, this broad notion of examination stress is not always helpful.
- VAWIINA INLO DAHKAWP TE HI A FUH HLE A NI

What causes examination stress?

- ♦ Research generally suggests that examinations are stressful for four reasons (Denscombe, 2000; Putwain, in press):
consequences; markers of self-esteem; judgements from others; and fear appeals by teachers . (MIZO AH A NI VE em?, RESEARCH CHIAN A CHAKAWM KHAWP MAI. STRESSFUL KAN TI EM TIH TE PAWH)
- ♦ Consequences: examinations are stressful because of their educational and/or occupational consequences, for example achieving sufficient GCSE grades for college, grades are required for a 'good' particular job (4 first class in MZU).

What causes examination stress?

- ◆ Markers of self-esteem: students judge themselves on the basis of their grades, a good grade resulting in high esteem. To a greater or lesser extent there has been **an internalization of the message that esteem can be enhanced through educational achievement.**
- ◆ Judgements from others, such as parents .

Fear appeals by teachers

- ♦ (UK a an study a ni a, kan inbihchian na atan lets have a look): the repeated messages communicated to students over the importance and timing of the GCSEs by their teachers were identified as a trigger for the development of stress in some students.
- ♦ Although the fear content of such messages (e.g. 'Unless you get five GCSEs you won't get into college') may have been intended as a **motivational strategy** by teachers, it did not always have the desired affect. The sceptical among you might wonder if there is an element of self-interest in teachers making fear appeals, since GCSE performance data are used to rank schools in league tables and, in some cases, as evidence of teacher effectiveness.

Impact on performance

- ◆ Whether one adopts a test anxiety or examination stress perspective, they have both been associated with a negative impact on examination performance (regardless of differences in highly TA or low TA students).

Metacognition and coping

- ♦ First, metacognition and coping play a central role in the Zeidner and Mathews' (2005) self-regulatory model. The basic idea is that it is not anxiety per se that is responsible for a negative impact on performance, but how a student copes with or responds to that anxiety. One such factor that has received some attention in the maintenance of clinical anxiety is the tendency to catastrophise (Weems et al., 2001). In the context of test anxiety, this could manifest such that if one question cannot be answered, the person believes they will fail the whole exam and their whole life will become a failure.
- ♦ Second, students are prepared extremely thoroughly for examinations in English schools through planned compulsory revision in lessons, optional revision at lunch time and after school, in the Easter holidays, repeated examination practice using past papers (Putwain, 2008c). The processing efficiency model would predict such practices should reduce the effects of anxiety on cognitive resources through rehearsal and increasing familiarity.
- ♦ Third, there are different types of highly test-anxious students (Zeidner, 1998, presents a typology of six categories) who vary in their susceptibility to the negative influence of test anxiety. Including them all in a single analysis may hide the fact that for some students there is a much stronger effect than for others. A similar line of reasoning is advanced by Mathews et al. (1999), who suggest that test anxiety may be characterised primarily by metacognitive beliefs or a maladaptive coping style.

Implications from researches

- ◆ 1. Early identification of highly test-anxious students is difficult, as test-anxious responses may not manifest until high stakes examinations (such as Matriculation). Practitioners should look out for signs such as procrastination and loss of interest in academic work. (Levels of aspiration examples like Pepee)
- ◆ 2. How should highly test-anxious students be supported? Changing the examination conditions – personal and situational
- ◆ 3. Should anxiety be the main focus of intervention or support? Might the student be better served by targeting the factors that lead to a high test-anxious response in the first place: **improving study and test-taking skills, improving academic self-concept (perhaps through addressing attributions for success or failure MINDSETS) or more individual subject-specific tuition. This kind of approach requires a recognition that a student might be become test-anxious for a variety of reasons.**

◆ MINDSETS

- ◆ **FINNA** chungchanga kan RILRU PUT HMANGIN KAN THILTIHTHEIHNA A NGHAWNG NASA EM EM KNOWN AS MINDSETS (Carol Dweck later after intell)
- ◆ What is FINNA (INTELL)..THEORY TAM TAK like we just saw
- ◆ CATTELL'S FLUID CRYSTALIZED INTELL THANDAN
- ◆ EQ IQ

guess

- ◆ How much do you think intelligence is due to effort (thawh rah) and ability (theihna hrim hrim)
- ◆ Intelligence= _____% effort _____% ability

mindset

- ♦ New research shows that the brain is more like a muscle—it changes and gets stronger when you use it. And scientists have been able to show just how the brain grows and gets stronger when you learn.
- ♦ Children's Brain Growth
- ♦ Another thing that got scientists thinking about the brain growing and changing was babies. Everyone knows that babies are born without being able to talk or understand language. But somehow, almost all babies learn to speak their parents' language in the first few years of life. How do they do this?
- ♦ The Key to Growing the Brain: Practice!

Mindset

- ◆ Mindset the research of Carol S. the research of Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D. , Ph.D.
- ◆ Belief about ability Affects decisions related to learning
- ◆ Fixed mindset– intelligence is trait
- ◆ Growth mindset mindset – intelligence can be trained;
- ◆ the brain is a “growth organ growth organ”

CONCLUSIONS

- ◆ Occasional stress can -
Help you assess situations and motivate you to take action.
Help in fight or flight response. Push the body to adapt to it.
- ◆ Chronic stress can -
Change neural pathways in the brain as it is constantly trying to cope. Cause mental illnesses like depression or anxiety in the long run.
- ◆ Myth: Exams are meant for scoring marks.
- ◆ Fact: The idea behind learning something new is to be able to apply it in our lives. Subjects like science and maths are forms of knowledge that we learn, and exams help you assess how much you know or understand about the topic.

PRACTICAL

- ◆ List three things that stress you out about exams

SIGNS OF EXAM STRESS

Physical signs

- Tightness in muscles
- Unexplained headaches

- Insomnia

- Nausea
- Increased heart rate

- Lack of appetite

- Frequent urination

- Upset stomach

Emotional signs

- Mood swings that are out of the ordinary

- Worry

- Panic attacks

- Frustration

- Feeling discouraged

- Feeling deeply sad

- Hopelessness

- Irritability

Signs

- ♦ **Thoughts and behavioral signs**
- ♦ Becoming fidgety
- ♦ Trouble concentrating
- ♦ Negative self talk like “I won’t remember anything in the hall”
- ♦ Avoiding challenging situations
- ♦ Blanking out
- ♦ Myth: I should not feel anxious at all before exams.
- ♦ Fact: A little bit of anxiety helps you assess your preparation and motivates you to learn more. If your anxiety is distracting you from studying and if you are getting thoughts like: “I don’t know what questions will appear in the exam”, “What if I’m not able to answer questions?”, “What if I forget topics that I studied?”, then you may need to talk to someone. (Turn to page 10 to know how)

Practical

- ◆ List out some signs that describe how you are feeling. If you find it difficult to recognize what you are going through, take the help of your elder sibling to recognize what you are going through, or parent/guardian and write them down.

- ◆ If there is mental health support available, take it. Don't hesitate to call ARDSI HELPLINE
- ◆ If there is mental health support available, take it. Don't hesitate to approach your campus counselor for help. With them you can discuss your
- ◆ approach your campus counselor for help. With them you can discuss your fears, or work together to find ways to cope with your stress.

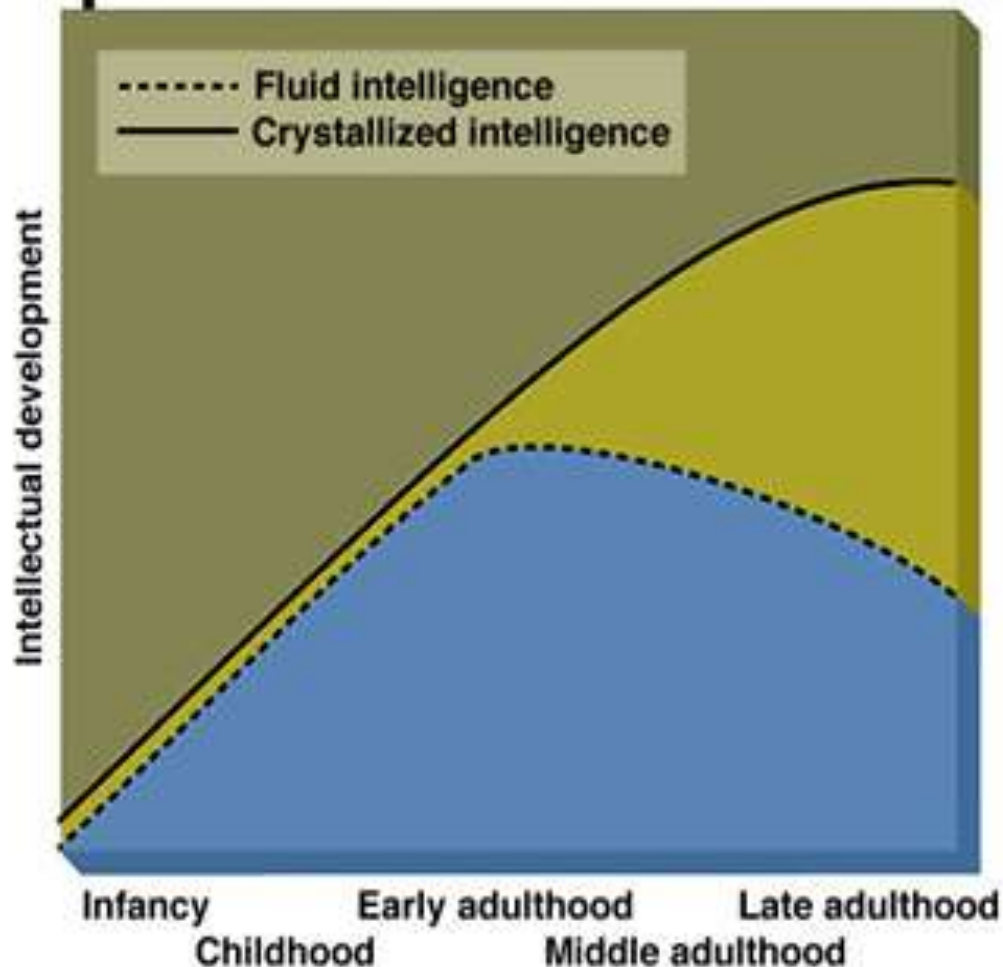
What is Intelligence?

- ◆ “The ability to act purposefully, think rationally, and deal effectively with the environment” – Wechsler **KAN DINHMUN/ kan AWMNA HMUN (ENVIRON) A ZIR A FING FEL TAKA NGAIHTUAH THEIHNA LEH AWMZE NEI MUMAL TAKA THIL TIH THEIHNA. FINNA**
- ◆ Intelligence is an inferred process that humans use to explain the different degrees of adaptive success in people’s behavior
 - ◆ The mental abilities that enable one to adapt, shape, or select one’s environment
 - ◆ The ability to judge, comprehend, and reason
 - ◆ The ability to understand and deal with people, objects, and symbols

Cattell's View of Intelligence - Intelligence as a Few Basic Abilities

- ◆ Fluid Intelligence (refers rilru chak)
 - ◆ The ability to think on the spot and solve novel problems
 - ◆ The ability to perceive relationships
 - ◆ The ability to gain new types of knowledge
- ◆ Crystallized Intelligence (refers khawlkhawm)
 - ◆ Factual knowledge about the world
 - ◆ The skills already learned and practiced
 - ◆ Examples
 - ◆ Arithmetic facts
 - ◆ Knowledge of the meaning of words
 - ◆ State capitals

Fluid and Crystallized Intellectual Development Across the Life Span



PIANPUI FINNA (FIN THEIHNA) A CHUAI THIN =fluid Int
TAWNHRIAT FINNA ERAWH A PUNG ZEL=crystallized Int...so intelligence hi a lo
thangthei anih chu !
AI A UPA TE ZAH RAWH / PITAR PUTAR

THUFINGTE Proverbs 16:31; 23:22



(16:31), The silver-haired head is glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness. LU
TUAK CHU ROPUINA LALLUKHUM A NI A, FELNA
KAWNGAH HMUH A NI ANG

(23:22), Listen to your father who begot you, And do not
despise your mother when she is old. I PA, A HRINGTU CHE
THU CHU PAWM LA, I NU CHU A LO TARIN HMUSIT SUH

Coping Strategies

- Coping strategies are behavioral responses and thought processes that people use to deal actively with sources of stress.
 - *Problem-focused* (e.g., planning, confronting, problem solving, time management, journal writing)
 - *Emotion-focused* (e.g., use of defense mechanisms, humor)
 - *Social support* (e.g., seeking assistance from friends, relative, support groups, spiritual help, pets)

following ways induce a lower than usual stress level, temporarily, to

compensate the biological tissues involved; others face the stressor at a

higher level of abstraction:

- ✦ Autogenic training
- ✦ Social activity
- ✦ Cognitive therapy
- ✦ Conflict resolution
- ✦ Cranial release technique
- ✦ Getting a hobby
- ✦ Meditation
- ✦ Mindfulness (psychology)
- ✦ Deep breathing
- ✦ Yoga Nidra
- ✦ Reading novels

- ✦ Prayer
- ✦ Relaxation techniques

- ✦ Artistic expression
- ✦ Fractional relaxation
- ✦ Humour
- ✦ Physical exercise
- ✦ Progressive relaxation
- ✦ Spas
- ✦ Somatics training
- ✦ Spending time with nature

- ✦ Stress balls
- ✦ Natural medicine
- ✦ Clinically validated alternative treatments
- ✦ Time management
- ✦ Planning and decision making
- ✦ Listening to certain types of relaxing music
- ✦ Spending quality time with pets
- ✦ **Techniques of stress management will vary according to the philosophical paradigm.

Relaxation Techniques

- ✦ Bio-feedback
- ✦ Deep breathing
- ✦ Progressive muscle relaxation
- ✦ Meditation
- ✦ Imagery
- ✦ Self-talk
- ✦ Physical exercise
 - ✦ Tai chi
 - ✦ Yoga

Time Management

- ✦ Involves skills that anyone can learn but require commitment & practice
- ✦ Tips for better time management:
 - ✦ Develop a game plan (things to do during the time that you have)
 - ✦ Write down schedules with *planner*
 - ✦ Make the most out of meetings/lectures yourself
 - ✦ Develop an effective work plan – (which one works best for you at what time in the *planner*)

THANK YOU