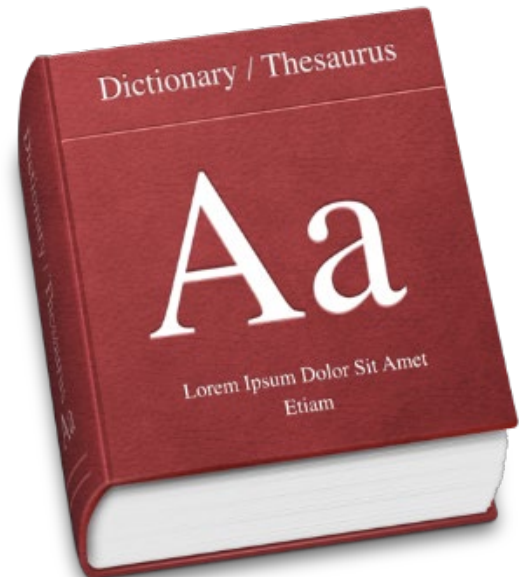


Understanding Stress and Stress Management techniques



What is the definition of Stress

- I am not going to tell you the answer!
- Look in a dictionary!



Only Joking! Here is some information...



- Stress Noun: Pressure or tension exerted on a material object: "the distribution of stress is uniform across the bar".
- Verb: Give particular emphasis or importance to in speech or writing.
- Synonyms –
 - *noun.* accent - pressure - emphasis - strain – tension
 - *verb.* emphasize - accentuate - accent - underline – underscore
 - Information from Dictionary.com



And....

- Definition of **stress**

NOUN

- 1 - pressure or tension exerted on a material object
- 2 - state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances: *he's obviously **under** a lot of **stress***

[in combination]: stress-related illnesses

[count noun] something that causes a state of strain or tension: the stresses and strains of public life

- 3 - particular emphasis or importance: *he has started to **lay** greater **stress on** the government's role in industry.*



VERB

- 1 *[reporting verb]* give particular emphasis or importance to (a point, statement, or idea) made in speech or writing:

[with object]: they stressed the need for reform

[with clause]: she was anxious to stress that her daughter's safety was her only concern

[with direct speech]: 'I want it done very, very neatly,' she stressed

[with object] give emphasis to (a syllable or word) when pronouncing it: *in French, the last syllable is usually stressed*

- 2 *[with object]* subject to pressure or tension: *this type of workout does stress the shoulder and knee joints*
- 3 *[with object]* cause mental or emotional strain or tension in: *I avoid many of the things that used to stress me before (as adjective **stressed**) she should see a doctor if she is feeling particularly **stressed out***

[no object] informal become tense or anxious; worry: *don't stress—there's plenty of time to get a grip on the situation*

Symptoms of Stress

- Stress affects us all in some form. It can occur when being told off by your parents, or tough times at school, when managing your finances or relationships.
- Some stress is ok – in fact it can be beneficial and help you cope under pressure, but too much stress can make you sick, both physically and mentally.

Stress in Simple Terms



- Stress is the body's reaction to a challenging situation. When you feel threatened, chemical reactions occur in your body to prevent injury. This is called a 'fight' or 'flight' response.
- Your heart may begin to beat faster, your breathing may become heavy, your muscles may tighten and your blood pressure can rise.
- Stress can be different for different people in the same or different circumstances. It can also be good for you, such as a penalty shootout, or when reacting on the road to brake fast.

Symptoms of Stress



Stress can affect many aspects of your life, such as emotions, behaviour, thinking ability and physical health.

Stress is handled different by each person and therefore the symptoms can vary.



Emotional Symptoms



- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated and moody
- Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control
- Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless and depressed
- Avoiding others





Physical Symptoms

- Low energy
- Headaches
- Upset stomach, including diarrhoea, constipation and nausea
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Insomnia
- Frequent colds and infections
- Loss of sexual desire and/or ability
- Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear
- Cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Excess sweating
- Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth



Cognitive Symptoms

- Constant worrying
- Racing thoughts
- Forgetfulness and disorganisation
- Inability to focus
- Poor judgement
- Being pessimistic or seeing only the negative side



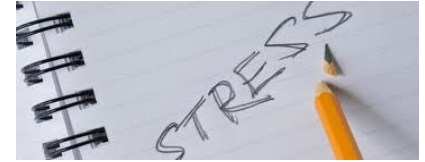
Behavioural Symptoms



- Changes in appetite - either not eating or eating too much.
- Procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities.
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs or cigarettes.
- Exhibiting more nervous behaviour, such as nail biting, fidgeting and pacing.
- Anger, losing your temper.



Things that Influence your Stress Tolerance Level



- **Your support network** – A strong network of supportive friends and family members is an enormous buffer against life's stressors. On the flip side, the more lonely and isolated you are, the greater your vulnerability to stress.
- **Your sense of control** – If you have confidence in yourself and your ability to influence events and persevere through challenges, it's easier to take stress in stride. People who are vulnerable to stress tend to feel like things are out of their control.
- **Your attitude and outlook** – Stress-hardy people have an optimistic attitude. They tend to embrace challenges, have a strong sense of humor, accept that change is a part of life, and believe in a higher power or purpose.
- **Your ability to deal with your emotions** – You're extremely vulnerable to stress if you don't know how to calm and soothe yourself when you're feeling sad, angry, or afraid. The ability to bring your emotions into balance helps you bounce back from adversity.
- **Your knowledge and preparation** – The more you know about a stressful situation, including how long it will last and what to expect, the easier it is to cope. For example, if you go into surgery with a realistic picture of what to expect post-op, a painful recovery will be less traumatic than if you were expecting to bounce back immediately.

Consequences of Long Term Stress

- Mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety and personality disorders
- Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks and stroke
- Obesity and other eating disorders
- Menstrual problems
- Sexual dysfunction, such as impotence and premature ejaculation in men and loss of sexual desire in both men and women
- Skin and hair problems, such as acne, psoriasis, eczema and permanent hair loss
- Gastrointestinal problems, such as gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD), indigestion, gastritis, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)



Learn How to manage Stress

- You may feel like the stress in your life is out of your control, but you can always control the way you respond. Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems.
- Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, taking care of yourself, and making time for rest and relaxation.

Learn How to Relax

- You can't completely eliminate stress from your life, but you can control how much it affects you.
- Relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing activate the body's relaxation response, a state of restfulness that is the opposite of the stress response.
- When practiced regularly, these activities lead to a reduction in your everyday stress levels and a boost in your feelings of joy and serenity. They also increase your ability to stay calm and collected under pressure.

Stress management strategy #1: Avoid unnecessary stress

- Not all stress can be avoided, and it's not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed. You may be surprised, however, by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.
- **Learn how to say “no”** – Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, refuse to accept added responsibilities when you're close to reaching them. Taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.
- **Avoid people who stress you out** – If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can't turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.
- **Take control of your environment** – If the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic's got you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.
- **Avoid hot-button topics** – If you get upset over religion or politics, cross them off your conversation list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it's the topic of discussion.
- **Pare down your to-do list** – Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the “shoulds” and the “musts.” Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

Stress management strategy #2: Alter the situation

- If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Figure out what you can do to change things so the problem doesn't present itself in the future. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.
- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will likely remain the same.
- **Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.
- **Be more assertive.** Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them. If you've got an exam to study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk.
- **Manage your time better.** Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused. But if you plan ahead and make sure you don't overextend yourself, you can alter the amount of stress you're under.

Stress management strategy #3: Adapt to the stressor



- If you can't change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.
- **Reframe problems.** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.
- **Look at the big picture.** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- **Adjust your standards.** Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with “good enough.”
- **Focus on the positive.** When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

Stress management strategy #4: Accept the things you can't change

- Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.
- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control—particularly the behaviour of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- **Look for the upside.** As the saying goes, “What doesn't kill us makes us stronger.” When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.
- **Share your feelings.** Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.
- **Learn to forgive.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

Stress management strategy #5: Make time for fun and relaxation



- Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you'll be in a better place to handle life's stressors when they inevitably come.
- **Healthy ways to relax and recharge**
 - Go for a walk. Spend time in nature.
 - Call a good friend. Sweat out tension with a good workout.
 - Write in your journal. Take a long bath.
 - Light scented candles. Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea.
 - Play with a pet. Work in your garden.
 - Get a massage. Curl up with a good book.
 - Listen to music. Watch a comedy.

*** Remember you are entitled to 1 exercise session outside a day! Use it but take precautions – remember social distancing and wash your hands!**

- Don't get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.

- **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress. - remember face time and whatsapp video calling!
- **Do something you enjoy every day.** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.
- **Keep your sense of humour.** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

Stress management strategy #6: Adopt a healthy lifestyle



- You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.
- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and you'll sleep better.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don't avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.
- **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

What to do?

- If you or someone you know is stressed, go and seek medical advice (telephone your doctor).

