

# An Overview of Stress Management

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### Abstract

*Stress is extremely complex. The state of the body and that of the mind are closely related. When we start to examine what that "something" is, it gets complex. Stress produces a state of physical and mental tension and frustration. Stress is not necessarily something bad, it is also positive and all depends on how we take it. If the mind is relaxed we can see, the muscles in the body will also be relaxed. Some stress can be useful. Stress is a normal, general and universal reaction to life events. It is what you feel when life demands more than you handle. Stress occurs too long or too often which causes problems. It can affect our normal daily routine. Too much stress increases the risk for mental and physical illness and weakens immune system. Stress problems are highly common with many people reporting experiencing extreme levels of distress or negative stress.*

*Being "stressed out" is thus a common or universal human phenomenon that has an impact on almost everyone. When we have lot to do to, we tend to feel much more stressed out. Most people use the word stress to refer to negative experiences which leave us feeling submerged and unpleasant. Only few people enjoy the feeling of being overwhelmingly stressed in the face of great change. Our experiences and feeling of stressed varies in intensity between high, medium and low. People do not like experiencing the peak of stress. Meditation and yoga is recognised as a form of mind-body medicine and a very good relaxation technique. Even exercising has a very good benefit in relaxing the mind and body. We tend to ignore the difficulties of how and why stress makes us feel depressed, exhausted and function the way it does.*

*Suitable and appropriate amount of stress can actually stimulate passion for work, tap hidden abilities and even provoke, ignite inspirations. Stress can make a person creative, productive and constructive, when it is identified and well managed.*

**Keywords:** Stress, Anxiety, Depression, Stress management

### Aim

To understand the effect of stress and manage it more effectively.

### Objective

To identify situations that cause stress, identify emotional, physical and mental effects of stress; be more knowledgeable on the techniques/methods to lower stress.

### Stress

Stress is the reaction of the body to any change that requires an adaptation or response.

Stress can be defined as the degree to which a person feels overwhelmed or unable to cope up as a result of pressure and frustration that are unmanageable

The body responds to these alterations with psychological, bodily and emotional responses. Stress is a common and normal part of life one can exhibit and experience stress from internal and external environment, body and thoughts.

## Types

**Eustress** – can be defined as stress that is healthy and positive and needed to motivate the individual to do work.

It enables concentration, attention, increases performance, and it's a short term.

**Distress** – is an extreme anxiety, sorrow, pain. Its a negative torment stress caused by adverse events.

Loss of motivation, mental instability, imbalance, decreases performance and it's a short or long term.

## How Does Stress Affect Health?

The human body is always prepared to experience stress and responds to it in a suitable way. It always depends on how the individual perceives stress. The stress can be both positive and negative.

Stress continues without relief, relaxation and leads to a condition called distress. It leads to noticeable behavioural or physical, or social, and intellectual responses to the stimulus.

## Physical or Behavioural Responses of Stress, Includes

- Upset stomach, loss of appetite.
- High blood pressure.
- Sleeping problems/ insomnia.

## Emotional or Social Responses of Stress, Includes:

- Mental health issues such as frustration, depression, anxiety and conflict.
- Lacking motivation and awareness.
- Being restless and irritable.

## Cognitive Responses to Stress, Includes

- Remembering things often.
- Losing creativity and skills.
- Thinking a lot much about the past.

## Causes

The most frequent reasons for “stressing out” includes three main categories:

- i. The unsettling effects of change.
- ii. The feeling that they have lost personal control.
- iii. The feeling that an outside force is threatening the person.

The National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH] has noticed some common stressors for college students: -

- Exposure to people, ideas and temptations.
- Changes in the social life of the person.
- Being alone and facing the challenges in the environment.
- Financial responsibilities.

**Signs:** Anxiety, irritability, frustration or anger, social withdrawal, irrational or obsession and compulsive behaviour, difficulty concentrating in any task, trouble communicating with others.

**Symptoms:** Fatigue, low energy, insomnia, upset stomach, hard time sleeping, variation in blood pressure fast heartbeat or breathing, muscle aches.

### **Steps to Relieve Stress**

1. Get moving: Listen to some music, take dog for a walk, go out for an entertainment or relaxation.
2. Avoid: people who stress you out. Alter the situation.
3. Adapt to the stressor: adjust your standards. Practice gratitude.
4. Accept the things you cannot change: learn to forgive, share your feelings.
5. Manage your time better: don't over commit yourself.
6. Make some time for fun and relaxation: do something you enjoy everyday like playing or working.
7. Maintain balance with a healthy lifestyle: eat a healthy diet, reduce sugar and caffeine, get enough sleep.

**Management of Stress:** It is a wide spectrum of approach and psychotherapy planned at managing a person's level of stress usually high level of stress.

The different levels of stress are readily measurable, using various psychological tests, which are usually used in polygraphs.

### **Types of Stress Management**

#### **Acute Stress**

A short time stress which occurs due to pressure, meeting deadlines pressures or a small/ minor accident, high level physical activity or similar things. Symptoms accompanying this type of tension or pressure are lower body ache, headaches, back pain, rapid heartbeat or body pain.

#### **Chronic Stress**

It is a chronic stress that exists for days, weeks, months, or even years. This stress is due to conditioning, poverty, marriages, chronic illness and successive failures in life. People suffering from this type of stress get engaged and used to it and may not even realize that they are under chronic stress.

#### **Merits**

- Sleep better.
- Be in a better mood.
- Control your weight.

#### **Demerits**

- Stress can promote more disease.
- Make you gain weight.
- Stress weakens your immune system.

**Critical incident stress management:** It is a normal response to an irrelevant abnormal situation. If left untreated it leads to lower production, increase use of health care benefits.

Incident may occur immediately or after few hours or days.

- Fatigue, fear.
- Anger, chills, nausea.
- Flashbacks, confusion.

Stress management techniques: it can be helped by:

- Changing how a person perceives a stressful situation.
- Removing or changing the source of stress.
- Learning alternative ways of coping with stress.

Symptoms of distress: symptoms of stress fall into 3 categories but it is interrelated- physical, mental and emotional.

- Headache, anxiety, sleep disturbances/ sleep disturbances.
- Gastrointestinal problems.

Stress can cause serious physical disorders. It increases hormones such as adrenaline and corticosterone, which affect digestion and metabolism, immune reactions and other responses.

It leads to increase in heart rate, blood pressure, variation in blood circulation and physical demands on internal organs.

**Depression:** Individual inability to deal with stress can often lead to clinical depression.

Depression can have severe effects on eating habits, ability to work and study and how you feel and think.

According to NIMH, following symptoms are signs of major depression:

- Decreased energy, fatigue, insomnia, being ‘slowed down.’
- Sadness, rejection, anxiety.
- Weight changed either loss or gain.
- Depression and Suicide attempts.

**Diagnosis:** A doctor will typically diagnose stress by asking an individual about their symptoms and life events.

Stress depends on many factors thus diagnosing stress is much challenging.

Stress and its effects are diagnosed through a behavioural, comprehensive, face-to-face interview and stress-oriented.

**Treatment:** Helping the person to relax include aromatherapy and reflexology.

**Medicines:** Doctors usually prescribe an antidepressant. Antidepressants can also have adverse and chronic effects.

## Conclusion

Stress can have positive or negative reaction far beyond provisional feelings of pressure. Stress should be high or moderate. To avoid stress daily exercise and meditation, yoga is necessary. No one is immune to stress. Modulate your behavioural pattern. Stress can have many harmful effects on the body. Stress is manageable and it needs efforts. Realistically, stress can never be totally taken out from a person’s life.

Managing stress can help decreased the stress and make feel healthier and happy. Maintain control on self in terms of cognition and action. Different relaxation technique can help in reducing the stress. Thinking positively and keep a positive attitude or optimistic towards life. Learn to deal with stress in healthy ways through stretching, massage therapy, managing, exercise and/or breathing/ meditation techniques.

At the end of the study, we conclude that though there are signs of stress and it is affecting the behaviours, it can be controlled and reduced effectively and should be known how to manage/ handle it.

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