

STRESS MANAGEMENT

STRESS

Stress is a positive, motivating force that affects us throughout life. It makes us more alert, vigilant and aware of danger. Like an electric current, stress increases arousal, gives us energy and improves our performance.

Stress is also defined as a negative emotional state occurring in response to events that are perceived as taxing or exceeding a person's resources or ability to cope, fatigues the body systems, & causes physical/behavioral problems.

In scientific terms, stress is defined as the psycho-physiological (involving both mental and physical body processes) response of the body to something that is thought of as pleasant or unpleasant by the person experiencing it.

COMMON STRESSORS

- Unwanted Unemployment
- Negative Attitudes and Beliefs
- Lack of Relaxation
- Psychological Stress
- Financial Pressure
- Death of Loved ones
- Toxins
- Infection
 - Acute & Chronic
- Repeated Stresses
- Emotional Stress
- Allergies
- Over Exertion
- Smoking
- Lack of Sleep
- Poor eating habits
- Sugar & white flour products
- Wound healing
- Lack of / Excessive Exercise
- Lack of Good Food
- Prescription / Non-Prescription Drugs
- Martial Stress
- Caffeine
- Coffee
- Fear

FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT RESPONSE

The body responds positively or negatively, when a person is affected by a stressor. For most people, the immediate response to most stressors is usually the same. This response is sometimes called the **fight-or-flight response**, and is a very basic protective response. It prepares the body to either fight the cause of the stress or run from it. The following points detail the physiological response to stress by our body:

- Increased amounts of sugars and fats are released into the bloodstream to supply fuel for quick energy.
- The breathing rate is increased to add to the supply of Oxygen in the blood.
- Heartbeat & blood pressure is increased to ensure sufficient blood to all cells.
- The blood-clotting mechanism is activated to protect against injury.
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Effects of Stress

Physical

- Shortness of Breath
- Muscle Tension
- Headaches
- Heartburn
- Upset Stomach

Behavioral

- Eating Patterns
- Substance Use
- Grinding Teeth
- Nail Biting
- Neglecting Appearance
- Procrastination

Cognitive

- Poor Concentration
- Memory Lapse
- Negative Attitude
- Forgetfulness
- Confusion
- Worrying

Emotional

- Nervousness
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Crying Easily
- Impatience
- Sensitivity

CAUSES OF STRESS

- Stressful Emotions Thoughts and Beliefs
- Psychological Causes
- Bio-ecological Causes
- Personality
- Post-traumatic Stress
- Occupational Stress

STRESS AND GOOD HEALTH

Stress is most often thought of as an unpleasant part of life. Stress, however, can be helpful. Tests have shown that the body's ability to fight certain sicknesses depends, in part, upon stress responses.

Stress responses also help heighten your physical and mental performance. For example, in sports activities, your stress responses give you alertness and energy to do well. If you must take a test or give a speech, being under stress helps motivate you to prepare for the task. Being under stress also helps you to perform the task well.

HEALTH PROBLEMS CAUSED BY

- Bowel Problems
- Peptic Ulcers
- Headaches
- Cardiovascular Problems
- Other health problems like backache, acne, arthritis, asthma & cancer

CHARACTERISTICS OF A HIGH-STRESS

- Having Poor Basic Health Habits
- Being Over-committed
- Being in a Hurry Unnecessarily
- Being Disorganized
- Being Self-centered

GUIDELINES TO PREVENT STRESS

- Follow good Basic Health Habits
- Plan your day
- Keep your commitment realistic
- Put your life in order
- Take an interest in environment
- Slow down
- Let the little things go
- Stop stress before it builds up

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress management is the ability to reduce stress arousal or to cope in a competent manner with stressors. The goal is to manage our stress by diminishing the excess stress in our lives, which discourages us from accomplishing our objectives.

Stress management encompasses techniques intended to equip a person with effective coping mechanisms for dealing with psychological stress, with stress defined as a person's physiological response to an internal or external stimulus that triggers the fight-or-flight response. Stress management is effective when a person utilizes strategies to cope with or alter stressful situations.

Stress management seeks to affect the following three components of stress: (a) frequency; (b) intensity; and (c) duration.

METHODS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

BASIC YOGIC METHODS

Yoga is a scientific system of physical and mental practices that originated in India more than three thousand years ago. Its purpose is to help each one of us achieve our highest potential and to experience enduring health and happiness. Yoga has many effects on our body. It helps in stress reduction, sound sleep, improvement of many medical conditions, lowering blood pressure and heart rate, spiritual growth, reduced muscle tension, increased strength and flexibility and slowed aging process.

Meditation - one of the most important components of a holistic programme of stress management - is the conditioning of the mind to reduce internal arousal. Meditation describes a state of concentrated attention on some object of thought or awareness. It is the art of consciousness, and usually involves turning the attention inward to a single point of reference.

RELAXATION

A **relaxation** technique or training is any method, process, procedure or activity that helps a person to relax; to attain a state of increased calmness; or reduce levels of anxiety, stress or tension. These include the following:

- Autogenic Training: A form of relaxation therapy involving autosuggestion.
- Biofeedback: The use of electronic monitoring of a normally automatic bodily function in order to train someone to acquire voluntary control of that function
- Deep Breathing: The act of breathing deep into your lungs by flexing your diaphragm rather than breathing shallowly by flexing your rib cage.
- Meditation: A state of concentrated attention on some object of thought or awareness.
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR): To voluntarily relax certain muscles in the body in order to reduce anxiety symptoms.
- Pranayama: The regulation of the breath through certain techniques and exercises.
- Visualization: The process of creating internal mental images (internal visualization and imagination).

SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Sport is an activity that is governed by a set of rules or customs and often engaged in competitively. Sports commonly refer to activities where the physical capabilities of the competitor are the sole or primary determiner of the outcome (winning or losing), but the term is also used to include activities such as mind sports and motor sports where mental acuity or equipment quality are major factors.

Recreation or fun is the use of time in a manner designed for therapeutic refreshment of one's body or mind. While leisure is more likely a form of entertainment or rest, recreation is active for the participant but in a refreshing and diverting manner. As people in the world's wealthier regions lead increasingly sedentary life styles, the need for recreation has increased.