



Managing Stress

What are the three types of stress?

What are some healthy ways to cope with stress?

How can I relieve my stress?

What is stress?

Stress is defined as any physiological or psychological state of disruption caused by the presence of an unanticipated, disruptive, or stimulating event. It is a mind-body arousal that can save lives ("fight" or "flight" response), however if it is not properly managed it can lead to illness and disease.

What are the three types of stress?

1. Distress

- Diminishes quality of life and is commonly associated with illness, disease, and mal-adaptation. Some examples include chronic pain, anxiety, and depression. Distress often requires professional counseling.

2. Eustress

- A positive stress that can increase productivity and enhance longevity and life satisfaction. Eustress is sometimes characterized as the burst of adrenaline that helps one finish a final paper, participate in exercise, or conquer other challenges.

3. Astress

- A lack of stress that can cause productivity to nose dive and produce a lack of motivation.

What are stressors?

Stressors are conditions or events (imagined or real) responsible for eliciting generalized physical responses without regard to whether the stress is considered "good" or "bad." Therefore, it is important to note your reaction or response to a stressor determines a positive or negative tone.

Common stressors

Physical

- Hunger
- Lack of sleep
- Headache

Mental

- Waiting in long lines
- Running late

Social

- Living with a roommate
- Disagreeing with someone
- Changing relationships

Emotional

- Death of a loved one

Environmental

- Heat/cold
- Noise
- Hypoxia (insufficient oxygen)

What are some signs and symptoms of stress?

Mental

- Persistent negative thoughts
- Indecisiveness
- Poor memory
- Worrying
- Boredom
- Impaired judgment
- Loss of concentration • Bad dreams
- Hasty decisions

Physical

- Insomnia
- Excessive sweating
- Indigestion
- Constipation/diarrhea
- Rashes
- Nausea • Increased heart rate
- Teeth grinding/jaw clenching • Headaches
- Rapid change in weight
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches/pains
- Frequent illnesses

Behavioral

- Restlessness
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Changes in sleeping, eating, and exercise habits

Emotional

- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Mood swings
- Crying spells
- Tension • Lack of enthusiasm
- Cynicism • Feeling of alienation
- Loss of confidence
- Dissatisfaction

How do I manage my stress?

Managing stress is important to your health and well-being. Some guidelines to help reduce stress levels and/or cope with stressors in a healthy manner include:

1. Exercise

- Participation in some type of physical activity on a daily basis is highly recommended. Don't have 30 minutes? Try 10 minute sessions throughout the day.

2. Relax

- The use of relaxation techniques can help alleviate anger, tension, etc. Examples include: deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided imagery.

3. Change negative thoughts

- Replace negative inner thoughts with more positive, logical ones.

4. Be a problem solver

- Look at the problem often causing the most anger
- Make an effort to have a good attitude about the problem; focus on how to manage the problem rather than trying to find a solution.

5. Communicate

- When angry, slow down and think before responding. Listen to the other person and take their feelings into consideration.

6. Use humor

- Don't dismiss problems, instead humor can be used to face problems in a more beneficial way. Don't take life too seriously!

7. Limit caffeine intake

- An excessive intake of caffeine can cause feelings of anxiety, nervousness, irritability, and/or tremors.

8. Avoid using alcohol or other drugs

- Drink in moderation or not at all.

9. Practice good time management

- Re-evaluate your commitments and responsibilities. Make a manageable "to do" list. Prioritize!

10. Sleep

- Get the sleep you need. College students need 7 - 9 hours of sleep every night. Taking a nap can be a good stress-reducer.

11. Seek help if necessary

- Sometimes help from a professional is needed. Making an appointment is the hardest part.

Stress Relief: The four A's

Avoid: You can simply avoid a lot of stress by planning ahead and rearranging your surroundings.

Alter: One of the most helpful things you can do during a time of stress is attempt to change your situation for the better.

Accept: Sometimes we have no choice but to accept things the way they are. Talk to someone, forgive, and learn from your mistakes.

Adapt: Thinking you can't cope is one of the greatest stressors. Changing your standards or expectations can help you overcome this.

Choose the right technique for you!

References

- Mayo Clinic
- American Psychological Association
- WebMD