

STRESS

What is it really?

The feeling of stress is a bodily response to the feeling of being under too much pressure.

When we experience stress our body sets off an internal alarm system that releases stress hormones (cortisol and adrenalin), which prepares the body for action. This impacts our thoughts, feelings and our bodies, often leaving us feeling uncomfortable.

The impact of stress results from **our perceptions** of a situation:

- whether or not we feel we have any control over the problem, and
- whether or not we feel it is in our scope of abilities to manage.

Our perception determines whether the stress is "good" or "bad".

GOOD STRESS

- Motivating
- Increased focus
- Short term
- Within our coping abilities
- Feels exciting
- Improves performance

BAD STRESS

- Causes anxiety and worry
- Short or long term
- Outside of our coping abilities
- Feels Unpleasant
- Leads to mental and physical problems

STRESS VS ANXIETY

Stress

Anxiety

Short term
Specific precursor
Moody
Irritable / Angry
Lonely
Dizzy
Nausea
Unhappy
Feel overwhelmed

Faster heartbeat
Faster breathing
Digestive struggles

Longer term
Precursor may be unknown
Can be due to stress
Restless
Tense
Sweating
Nervous
Feeling of unease or dread

SOURCE OF STRESS

Life Transitions

Marriage
Divorce
Promotion
Laid off
Having a baby
Death
Financial problems

Daily Routines

Traffic
Being late
Deadlines
Daily worries

Expectations

Unrealistic expectations for yourself
Unrealistic expectations from others

Relationships

Unhealthy relationships
Caregiving

Top 10 Sources of Stress

1. Death of a spouse
2. Divorce
3. Separation
4. Imprisonment
5. Death of a loved one
6. Injury or illness
7. Marriage
8. Job loss
9. Marriage reconciliation
10. Retirement

EFFECTS OF STRESS

Impact on 3 systems

The following is not an exhaustive list – you may experience unique responses to stress, take note of these. When you notice these red flags, it is time for you to take a step back and do something about managing your level of, and response to, stress.

The body

Headaches
Chest pain
Pounding heart
Shortness of breath
Muscle aches or pains
Clenched jaw
Grinding teeth
Tight, dry throat
Indigestion
Diarrhea or constipation
Nausea
Frequent colds and flu

Thoughts & Feelings

Anxiety
Restlessness
Worrying
Depression
Sadness
Anger
Mood swings
Insecurity
Lack of concentration
Negative thinking
Feeling overwhelmed
Loneliness

Behavior

Overeating / loss of appetite
Changes in sleep
Neglecting responsibilities
Aggression
Use of drugs / alcohol
Crying
Changes in close relationships
Job dissatisfaction
Decreased productivity
Burnout

BURNOUT

When the stress and pressure is too high for too long, it causes chronic stress and exhaustion. This has significant consequences for your physical and psychological well-being.

Physical consequences:

- hypercholesterol,
- heart disease,
- respiratory complications,
- aches and pains,
- autoimmune disease,
- weight problems, and
- digestive problems

Psychological consequences:

- insomnia,
- potential for alcohol and drug abuse,
- potential for increased prescription medication use, and
- concentration and memory problems

STRESS BUSTERS

CHEAT SHEET

1. Avoid unnecessary stress

2. Change the situation

3. Adapt to the stressor

4. Accept the things you cannot change

5. Make time to rest and relax

6. Practice a healthy lifestyle

7. Manage your time

8. Use in the moment strategies

9. Let go

10. Check your thoughts

11. Assume control

12. Sometimes things will go wrong

13. Avoid "woulda-coulda-shoulda"

14. Avoid comparisons

15. Make a list