



STRESS

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the body's natural response to physical, emotional, or psychological pressure or a perceived threat.

TYPES OF STRESS:

Acute Stress: when the body senses a threat and responds automatically by producing increased levels of cortisol and adrenaline causing a "fight or flight" reaction. E.g. stress experienced right before a presentation or exam.

Chronic Stress: stress brought about by things in everyday life e.g. bills, jobs, school.

Eustress: stress that is caused by positive life events like making new friends, getting married, a promotion at work, and graduation.

Distress: stress caused by aspects of daily life that have negative connotations, like problems at work or school, financial struggles, recovering from an injury.

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS:

- Feelings of anxiety, fear, irritability, anger, loss of confidence.
- Having a difficult time making decisions, confusion, repetitive thoughts or worries.
- Difficulty breathing, muscle tension, racing heartbeat, dry mouth, headaches, chest tightness
- Fatigue, difficulty sleeping, unhealthy habits (e.g., drinking more coffee or alcohol than usual, eating too much or too little, biting nails)

Stress can help us stay alert, increase our focus and improve our performance. However, too much stress or prolonged stress can have negative effects on our energy, motivation, mood, balance and/or health.

TYPICALLY, STRESS GOES AWAY AFTER THE STRESSOR IS GONE. HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS:

- Relaxation techniques to help lower blood pressure, heart rate, breathing rate and stress hormones. Examples include meditation, guided imagery, yoga or deep breathing exercises.
- Set small, manageable goals. Creating goals and tracking your progress can help maintain a sense of control and optimism during stressful times.
- Challenge unhealthy thinking. Identify negative thoughts (e.g. "I should have done better!") and try to replace them with healthy or positive thoughts (e.g. "I wish I did better but I tried my best.")
- Take time out for self-care.
- Reach out and connect with others. Whether it's in-person or virtual, spending time and talking to others can increase resiliency and positive thinking, and help clear your mind.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STRESS AND ANXIETY?

When the symptoms of stress linger and someone experiences ongoing apprehension or fear in the absence of a stressor, they may be experiencing anxiety. In other words, symptoms of anxiety are very similar to symptoms of stress except they continue to be experienced even when there is no clear reason or cause. Stress may cause feelings of anxiety but anxiety develops from a complex set of factors including brain chemistry, personality and life events.

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