

# Stress - A Silent Killer ?



Don't let it harm you..



## What is Stress

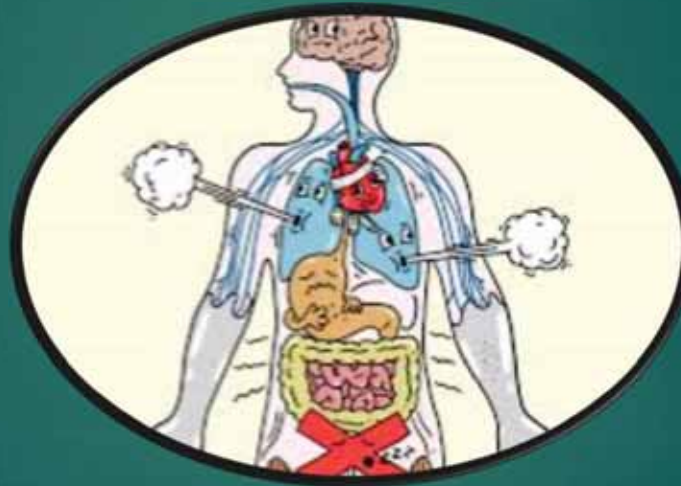
Stress can be best described as "a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse, demanding or challenging circumstances."

It exists in all living beings, in varying proportions. But those with a higher intensity of continued stress can suffer from some severe conditions of fatigue, depression & severe mental trauma, if it's left unattended for long.

## How it happens

From a scientific perspective, Stress is the body and mind's reaction to new situations and problems.

- The body turns up the metabolism with a burst of energy and then braces to react.
- The mind becomes focused and vigilant.
- If there is danger it is a good thing; it alerts the mind & helps act properly. If there is no danger the result is unnecessary wear-and-tear.
- The damage is both psychological and physical when the body's reactions don't match the situation.



During stress the nervous system reacts with chemical releases, hormones prepare the brain for action as it draws more oxygen, muscles tighten, the heart beats harder, and breathing accelerates.

The body also suppresses the immune, excretory, and reproductive systems, and it's all to prepare for action.

A return to a normal state is drawn out when stress becomes routine, for example, with job and family problems.

## Stress – Causes & Types

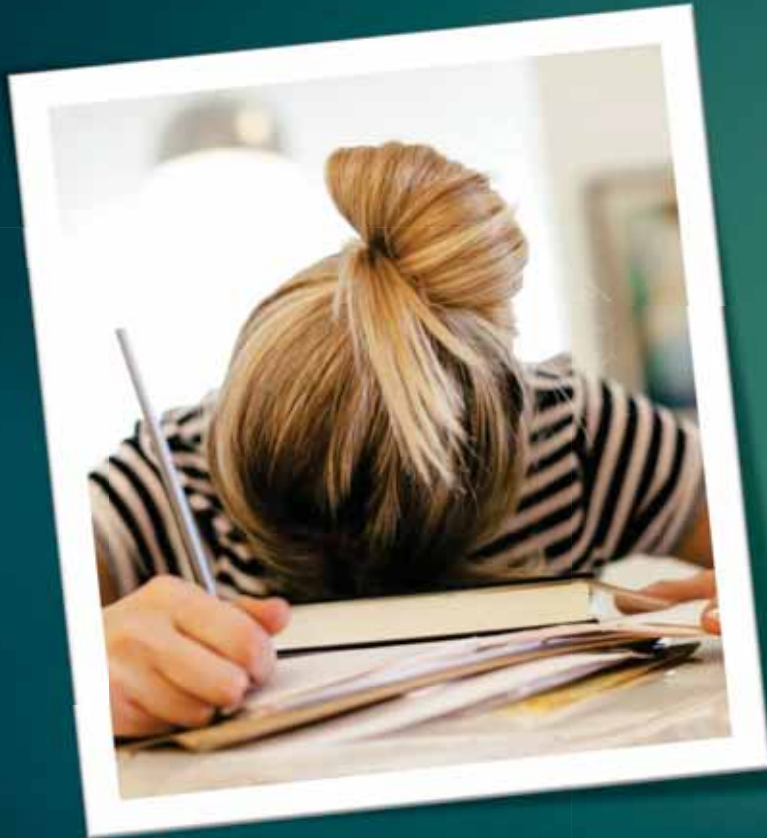
Stress is caused by a stress causing factor or 'stressor'. '**Anxiety**' is the stress that continues after the stress is gone.

There are two main types of stress:

- **Acute Stress** – A short term stress that goes away quickly. It also occurs when you do something new or exciting.  
For e.g: A small domestic fight or a feeling after a harsh braking of a vehicle.
- **Chronic stress** - This is stress that lasts for a longer period of time. For e.g: prolonged financial problems or illnesses, losses in business, troubles at work, etc.



## Stress – Causes & Types



Some of the most common causes of stress can be identified as under:

1. Failures at work
2. Inability to carry out given tasks
3. Competition / peer pressure
4. High expectations
5. Responsibilities
6. Concerns with future / success
7. Financial concerns / instability
8. Poor health / serious ailment
9. Emotional moments/grief such as loss of someone close
10. Marital / domestic issues
11. Others, for instance, Pregnancy related stress commonly seen in women.

## Stress – Signs & symptoms



As stated earlier, a persisting stress is a potential health hazard & can cause many types of physical and emotional symptoms. At times, one may not realize these symptoms are caused by stress. Here are some signs which suggests that stress may be perhaps affecting your physical &/or mental:

- ▶ Frequent diarrhea or constipation
- ▶ Forgetfulness / memory loss
- ▶ Frequent aches and pains
- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Loss of energy or focus
- ▶ Muscular aches, especially neck pain
- ▶ Tiredness
- ▶ Loss of sleep
- ▶ Excessive indulgence in alcohol, smoking or even drugs to relax
- ▶ Weight loss or gain

## Stress – Effects on health

### HOW STRESS AFFECTS THE BODY

#### BRAIN

Difficulty concentrating, anxiety, depression, irritability, mood, mind fog

#### CARDIOVASCULAR

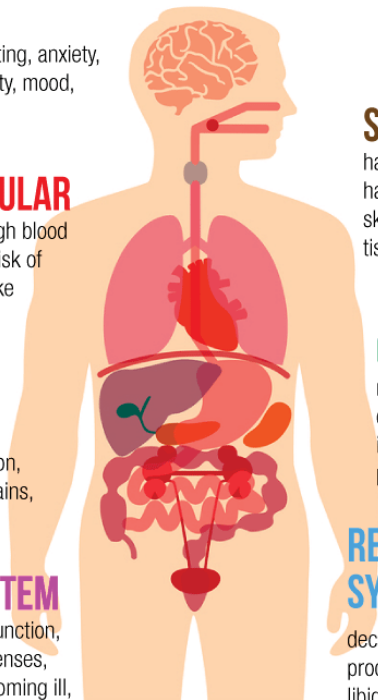
higher cholesterol, high blood pressure, increased risk of heart attack and stroke

#### JOINTS AND MUSCLES

increased inflammation, tension, aches and pains, muscle tightness

#### IMMUNE SYSTEM

decreased immune function, lowered immune defenses, increased risk of becoming ill, increase in recovery time



#### SKIN

hair loss, dull/brittle hair, brittle nails, dry skin, acne, delayed tissue repair

#### GUT

nutrient absorption, diarrhea, constipation, indigestion, bloating, pain and discomfort

#### REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

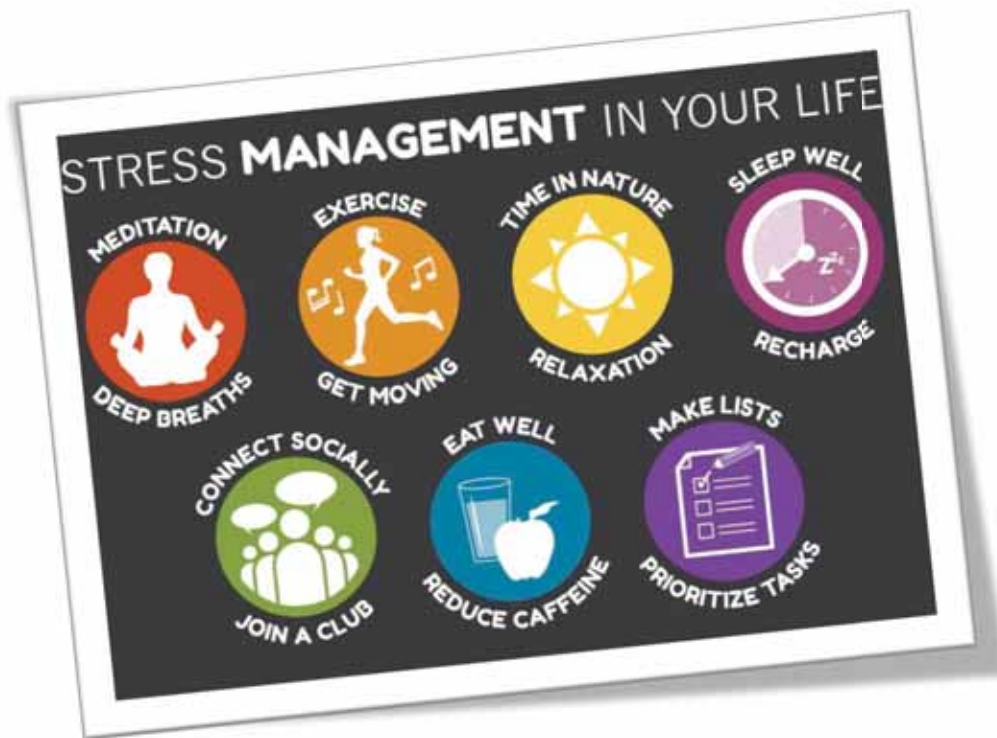
decreased hormone production, decrease in libido, increase in PMS symptoms

Being under a state of constant stress has its effects on a person's mind & body. The symptoms as stated earlier can go on to become a cause of many health disorders & ailments such as,

- ▶ Hypertension (High Blood Pressure)
- ▶ Diabetes (High blood sugar)
- ▶ Heart (cardiovascular) ailments
- ▶ Obesity
- ▶ Depression / nervousness / anxiety
- ▶ Loss of confidence
- ▶ Insomnia
- ▶ Muscular pains
- ▶ Skin diseases

# Stress Management

## Ways to reduce Stress



Given the potentially harmful effects it has on one's health & the life threatening situation that it can present, stress reduction & management has become a necessity today for a healthy life. When stress seems overwhelming or unmanageable, there are solutions that one must desire.

While professional help & counselling is available for those who desire it, there are several ways & means that one can adopt to manage their stress in life. Here are a few guidelines for your consideration.



# Stress Management

## Ways to reduce Stress



### 1. Identify the source –

Identifying the source/s of stressors helps one devise means & methods of overcoming it. This may not be as easy as it sounds, but needs to be worked upon. To identify your true sources of stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses as they will help figure out the root cause/s.

### 2. Initiate the Change –

Once you have understood the problem, initiate the change that is necessary. The change may be required with a variety of factors such as lifestyle, companions, habits, addictions, work quality, environment, etc.

Prioritize your tasks, do not over commit yourself to anything. Life is not all about achieving success & wealth. It is equally about respecting the laws of nature.

# Stress Management

## Ways to reduce Stress

### Dealing with Stressful Situations: The Four A's

- **Change the situation:**
  - **A**void the stressor.
  - **A**lter the stressor.
- **Change your reaction:**
  - **A**dapt to the stressor.
  - **A**ccept the stressor.



3. Practice the 4 A's of stress management – Avoid, Alter, Adapt & Accept.

a) 'Avoid' - circumstances / people / factors that cause stress. Learn to say 'No'.

b) **Alter** – If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life. Express yourself than concealing it.

c) **Adapt** – If you can't change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

d) **Accept** – Accept the things you can't change. Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.

# Stress Management

## Ways to reduce Stress



**4. Exercise (get moving)** - Physical activity is a huge stress reliever and you don't have to be an athlete or spend hours in a gym to experience the benefits. Exercise releases endorphins that make you feel good, and it can also serve as a valuable distraction from your daily worries. A 30 minutes of exercise regime a day can help keep one active & considerably stress free. A few things you can do,

- Walk / Jog / Cycle daily
- Hit the gym
- Play a sport
- Use the stairs instead of the elevator
- Park the car at the farthest distance & cover the rest by feet

# Stress Management

## Ways to reduce Stress

### 5. Relax the mind, meditate –

Meditation helps relax the tired mind and channelize the thoughts in a positive manner.

Find some 'me' time that will allow you to relax. Take some time off from the routine activities & be with yourself for a while. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you'll be in a better place to handle life's stressors.

Practicing **Yoga** which is the ancient Indian practice of physical, mental & spiritual exercises is a very useful & proven tool of overcoming stress.



# Stress Management

## Ways to reduce Stress



### 6. Connect with People

There is nothing more calming than spending quality time with another human being who makes you feel safe and understood. In fact, face-to-face interaction triggers a cascade of hormones that counteracts the body's defensive "fight-or-flight" response. It's nature's natural stress reliever. So make it a point to connect regularly—and in person—with family and friends.

- Reach out a colleague at work
- Call up &/or meet a close friend
- Make new friends / join social groups
- Go for a walk /coffee with a buddy
- Confide in a close one, a buddy or a relative

Such measure help a great deal in calming a stressed mind.

# Stress Management

## Ways to reduce Stress

### 7. Healthy Eating & Lifestyle–

In addition to regular exercise, there are other healthy lifestyle choices that can increase your resistance to stress.

**Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.

**Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary “highs” caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy.

**Avoid alcohol & smoking.** They may give a temporary relief but can cause a permanent damage to the mind & body.

**Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.





*Remember...*

*Life is by & large simple, it is we who complicate it & cause stress.*

*Stress is not what happens to us. It's our response to what happens. A response that we can change any moment.*

