

## Stress

Stress is prevalent in the typical MIT student's everyday life. From difficult problem sets to UROP's to internship or job searching, students constantly have a full plate of things to be stressed about. However, stress has not only negatives but benefits as well, and I believe that wisely utilizing the benefits that come with stress will, in the end, improve an individual's performance and the individual. I believe that if people avoid minimize the amount of stressful situations they are encountering, attempting to view situations as not stressors but learning experiences, and \_\_\_\_, they will maximize the most they can get out of stress.

Stress has been found to negatively affect immune system functionality. The body has specific mechanisms that occur when one is stressed, and it can be unhealthy if the body continues to exert the stress response. Several studies have shown occurrences of stress affecting the immune system. For instance in a particular study, "wounds of women who experienced a high level of stress by caring for a relative with Alzheimer's disease took 9 days longer to heal than the wounds of women of similar age and economic status who were not engaged in such caregiving (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1995)" (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 369), showing that even after disregarding some important aspects of the women that could possibly be a factor, the immune system of people who were dealing with less stress had quicker immune system response. Using this evidence, I believe that although stress can be used to motivate an individual, push an individual to try his or her hardest given the current constraints, and can serve as a way to improve an individual, constant stress can have a negative effect on the body. Therefore, I think that people

should minimize the amount of stressful situations they encounter and do their best to avoid such situations; for instance, this could mean not going partying all weekend and pulling an all-nighter Sunday and instead studying earlier at a less stressful pace, or letting a small quarrel with a friend pass instead of having it deeply stress an individual for days. Through wise decision making, stressful situations can be avoided when possible, and this could help with the body's function, including the immune system.

Through psychological studies, it was also found that "many psychological, social, and even physical stimuli are stressors only if you perceive them to be stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)" (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 364). This means, for instance, that if one does not think a situation is as bad as it actually is, it becomes less of a stressor than before. For instance, if one is stressing about catching up on five psychology lectures, but instead of viewing it solely as something very stressful but also viewing it as a fascinating task because of all the things that could be learned from these lectures, the situation can be registered by the individual as less of a stressor or not a stressor as compared to originally, and consequently, the stress response will be not as strong. The stress response exerted too long can cause harm to the body as it overtires itself and functions as it should in a stressful environment. I believe that by trying to perceive situations less as stressors and more as something that can benefit themselves in the long run, people can reduce negative effects that the stress they are feeling and the stress response their bodies are exerting.

In addition, people's thoughts can influence the functioning of their bodies, and therefore, if people attempt to be more positive, this could reflect in their bodies' response to stress. It was shown in a study that "Thoughts and feelings--our expectations,

motives, and emotions--also affect our immune systems" (Kosslyn & Rosenberg, 369). If people try their best to be more positive about stressful situations, have reasonable expectations, understand where their emotions are coming from, and re-evaluate a situation with a different point of view, I believe the negative effect a large number of stressors could have on an individual is minimized. For example, by being more positive about a situation, the situation is viewed by the individual as less of a stressor and therefore the body exerts less of a stress response, which can hurt the body if exerted for too long of a time period. In addition, having reasonable expectations instead of high expectations that are unlikely reduce any unnecessary stress.

Constant stress is not healthy for the body, but there are ways students can minimize the negative effects of stress and bring out the positive effects. This includes in general reducing the number of stressful situations they encounter if possible, attempting to view situations less as a stressor, and being more positive about situations deemed stressful. I believe that these are important to getting the most out of stressful situations. MIT students' lives can be seen as constantly having work and worrying about and juggling several things currently. However if they try their best to avoid any unnecessary stressful situations and rethink the situation with a more positive, constructive point of view, students can maximize the learning and growth that comes with being stressed about classes, projects, problem sets, exams, and more and become improved individuals.

## Works Cited

Kosslyn, Stephen M., and Robin S. Rosenberg. "Introducing Psychology: Brain, Person, Group (4th Edition) (Mypsyhlab)." *Introducing Psychology: Brain, Person, Group (4th Edition) (Mypsyhlab)* - AbeBooks. Pearson Learning Solutions, 01 Jan. 1970. Web. 17 May 2017.