

Mental Health (An Introduction)

Understanding Stress

- Eustress
- Distress

Coping with Stress

What is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behavior could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

Early Warning Signs

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual

- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

Positive mental health allows people to:

- Realize their full potential
- Cope with the stresses of life
 - Work productively
- Make meaningful contributions to their communities

Ways to maintain positive mental health include:

- Getting professional help if you need it
 - Connecting with others
 - Staying positive
- Getting physically active
 - Helping others
- Getting enough sleep
- Developing coping skills

Understanding Stress

Eustress vs. Distress



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graph TD; A[Eustress vs. Distress] --> B[Positive Stress]; A --> C[Negative Stress]
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Positive Stress

Negative Stress



Eustress

Eustress, or positive stress, has the following characteristics:

- **Motivates, focuses energy.**
- **Is short-term.**
- **Is perceived as within our coping abilities.**
- **Feels exciting.**
- **Improves performance.**



Distress

Distress, or negative stress, has the following characteristics:

- **Causes anxiety or concern.**
- **Can be short- or long-term.**
- **Is perceived as outside of our coping abilities.**
- **Feels unpleasant.**
- **Decreases performance.**
- **Can lead to mental and physical problems.**

Examples of **negative** *personal stressors* include:

- The death of a spouse.
- Filing for divorce.
- Losing contact with loved ones.
- The death of a family member.
- Hospitalization (oneself or a family member).
- Injury or illness (oneself or a family member).
- Being abused or neglected.
- Separation from a spouse or committed relationship partner.

- Conflict in interpersonal relationships.
- Bankruptcy/Money Problems.
- Unemployment.
- Sleep problems.
- Children's problems at school.
- Legal problems.

Examples of **positive** *personal stressors* include:

- Receiving a promotion or raise at work.
- Starting a new job.
- Marriage.
- Buying a home.
- Having a child.
- Taking a vacation.
- Holiday seasons.
- Retiring.
- Taking educational classes or learning a new hobby.