

# HOPE

## Lesson 1

### Stress management

**Stress** is a reaction of the body and mind to any unpleasant or challenging events in life that require attention or action. It is a kind of reaction or change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain. Some responses like being irritated, frightened or anxious can cause headache or stomach ache. Most people consider stress as a negative experience. But in reality, it can also be a positive experience. Everyone experiences some degree of stress in their lifetime, it is how we respond to stress makes a big difference to our overall well-being.

The positive response of stress to our well-being is called “Eustress” while the harmful consequence of stress is called “Distress”. **Eustress** or positive stress stimulates you to go on thus you grow and improve. Who would not want to grow and improve?

On the other hand, **Distress** or the negative stress often causes poor performance and even real physical diseases like cancer, immune disorder, etc. The perception of stress as positive or negative response varies from person to person. One single event might result to a positive response to someone while it could be a negative response to another person.

## What is Stress?

“The word “stress” is a commonly used term in today’s vernacular, and most people appear to have an intuitive sense of what it means. Stress is difficult to precisely define as it is often used interchangeably with a variety of other terms, such as anxiety, pressure, or strain (Broman-Fulks, 2015). Stress refers to a collection of physiological, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive reactions that occur in response to environmental demands. As we interact with the world around us, we must make

observations of environmental threats, challenges, and demands and attempt to cope with any issues that may come up. Other times, the demands of the environment can seem unmanageable, such as when you have to take three exams on the same day, and result in feelings of physical tension, negative thought patterns, and unpleasant emotional experiences (Sherrod, 2019).

A “**stressor**” is any event or stimulus that causes stress. However, what serves as a stressor for one person may not be the same for another. For example, being asked to attend a social event may create stress for someone who perceives that they lack the necessary social skills to fit in, whereas another person who feels comfortable in social situations may not experience any stress. Stressors can take many forms, ranging from the daily hassles of life to significant life changes.

## Body Responses to Stress

When threatened by environmental dangers, changes, or demands, humans experience a variety of physiological and psychological changes. Once a threat has been recognized and appraised as dangerous, the individual evaluates available coping resources. If the demands of the situation are deemed to be greater than the available coping resources, an “alarm” or “fight or-flight Response” is generated. During the fight-or-flight response, the body prepares for action, generally consisting of either confrontation or avoidance of the threat.

The sympathetic nervous system is activated, and hormones, including adrenaline and noradrenaline, are released into the bloodstream. Heart and respiration rates accelerate, and blood pressure increases, enabling the body to quickly circulate oxygen-rich blood to the brain and large muscles of the body. Blood is redirected away from the extremities to the core, and digestive processes are slowed. Muscles tend to become tense, eyes dilate, and hearing becomes more acute. Sweat glands activate to cool the body, and the skin often becomes paler or flushed (Sherrod, 2019).

If the person is able to successfully manage or avoid the stressor, the body begins to return to homeostasis. However, chronic exposure to stress or recurrent confrontations with stressful stimuli can have a negative consequences on the individual.

## **PHYSICAL SIGNS**

- Muscle tension
- Headache
- Pounding Heart
- Shortness of breath
- Increase sweating
- Dry mouth
- Skin rash
- Grinding teeth, nail biting

## **EMOTIONAL SIGNS**

- Anger, Irritability
- Impatience
- Nervousness

- Forgetfulness
- Inability to concentrate
- Negative thinking
- Excessive worrying
- Loss of interest
- Self-criticism
- Frequent crying

### **BEHAVIORAL SIGNS**

- Loss of appetite
- Overeating
- Drug abuse
- Sleep problems
- Restlessness
- Hurrying and talking too fast
- Criticizing others
- Reckless behavior
- Fidgeting

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNS**

- Constantly irritable with other people
- Feeling of being a failure
- Difficulty in making decision
- Loss of interest in other people
- Having a hard time to concentrate

### **Benefits and Costs of Stress**

Although we generally think of stress as something to avoid, stress is a natural, adaptive response that serves a protective function. At moderate levels, stress helps alert us to potential threats in the environment and enables us to focus our attention on resolving the threat (Sherrod, 2019).

Although some stress is beneficial, prolonged, or intense stress can be associated with a variety of negative physical and psychological outcomes. For example, moderate amounts of stress help to focus our attention, while excessive stress leads to diminished attention, concentration, decision-making, and shortterm memory. High stress can also lead to a variety of emotional disturbances, including irritability, depression, and anxiety disorders.

Indeed, many researchers consider stress a core component of the cause of emotional disorders. Chronic high stress is associated with serious physical health concerns, including cardiovascular disease, hypertension, immunosuppression and more frequent illnesses, sexual dysfunction, gastrointestinal disorders, and recurrent headaches.

It is important to recognize that exceptionally low levels of stress can have negative consequences as well. For example, when arousal levels are too low, people generally experience boredom, poorer cognitive and physical performance, procrastination, and lack of attention to detail (Sherrod, 2019).

## **Stress Management**

The goal of stress management is not to eliminate all stress. Rather, stress Management techniques are designed to keep stress levels within an optimal range. Engaging in healthy lifestyle behaviors can help to reduce stress and maximize the likelihood of living a long, healthy life. The following stress management techniques have been consistently supported by empirical research:

- physical activity and exercise;
- healthy eating;
- adequate sleep;
- relaxation, mindfulness and meditation;
- laughter, self-expression and social support;
- cognitive restructuring

### **A Prescription for Stress Management**

Try the following to maximize your ability to cope with stress:

1. Exercise Regularly
2. Eat a Healthy Diet
3. Sleep
4. Practice Relaxation
5. Express Yourself
6. Reframe

### **REFERENCE**

<https://quizlet.com/340717421/wellness-literacy-module-6-flash-cards>

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