

# STRESS:

## REACTING TO THREAT AND CHALLENGE

- the phenomenon of stress, **people's response to events** that **threaten or challenge them**.
- Whether it is a paper or an exam deadline, a family problem, or anything.
- **life is full of circumstances and events known as stressors** that produce threats to our well-being.
- **Even pleasant events**—such as planning a party sought-after job—can produce stress, although negative events result in greater harmful consequences than positive ones.



# THE NATURE OF STRESSORS:

- Stress is a very **personal thing**. Although certain kinds of events, such as the death of a loved one or participation in military fight, are **universally stressful**, other situations may or may not be stressful to a specific person.
- For people to consider an event stressful, **they must perceive it as threatening or challenging** and must **lack all the resources** to deal with it effectively.
- Consequently, the same event may at some times be stressful and at other times provoke no stressful reaction at all



# CATEGORIZING STRESSORS

- What kinds of events tend to be seen as stressful?
- There are **three general types of stressors**:
  1. **Cataclysmic events,**
  2. **Personal stressors,**
  3. **Background stressors.**



# CATEGORIZING STRESSORS

- **Cataclysmic events**: are **strong stressors** that **occur suddenly** and typically **affect many people simultaneously**.
- Disasters such as storms or cyclone, plane crashes as well as terrorist attacks are examples of cataclysmic events that can affect hundreds or thousands of people simultaneously.



- cataclysmic events involving **Natural disasters** may produce less stress in the long run
- One reason is that natural disasters have a clear resolution. Once they are over, people can look to the future knowing that the worst is behind them.
- In contrast, **Manmade disasters**, terrorist attacks like the one on the World Trade Center in 2001 or APS attack are cataclysmic events that produce considerable stress.
- Terrorist attacks are deliberate, and victims (and observers) know that future attacks are likely. Government warnings in the form of heightened terror alerts may further increase the stress.



# PERSONAL STRESSORS

- The second major category of stressor is the **personal stressor**.
- Personal stressors include **major life events** such as the death of a parent or spouse, the loss of one's job, a major personal failure, or even something positive such as getting married.
- Typically, personal stressors **produce an immediate major** reaction that soon tapers off. For example, stress arising from the death of a loved one tends to be greatest just after the time of death, but people begin to feel less stress and are better able to cope with the loss after the passage of time.
- Learned helplessness



# POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, OR PTSD

- **Some victims** of major catastrophes and severe personal stressors **experience posttraumatic stress disorder**, or PTSD, in which a person has experienced a significantly stressful event that has long-lasting effects **that may include re experiencing the event in vivid flashbacks or dreams.**
- Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder also include **emotional numbing, sleep difficulties, interpersonal problems, alcohol and drug abuse, and in some cases suicide.**
- For instance, the suicide rate for military veterans, many of whom participated in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, is twice as high as for nonveterans



# BACKGROUND STRESSORS

- Background stressors, or more informally, **daily hassles**, are the third major category of stressors.
- Exemplified by standing in a long line at a bank and getting stuck in a traffic jam, **daily hassles are the minor irritations of life that we all face time and time again.**
- Another type of background stressor is a **long-term, chronic problem**, such as experiencing **dissatisfaction with school or a job, being in an unhappy relationship, or living in crowded quarters without privacy**





# THE HIGH COST OF STRESS

- Stress can produce both **biological and psychological** consequences.
- Often the most immediate reaction to stress is biological.
- Exposure to stressors generates **a rise in hormone Cortisol secretions by the adrenal glands**, an increase in heart rate and blood pressure.
- **Decrease in happy hormones**
  - Dopamine. Praise, work done, feeling happy
  - Serotonin. ... Exercise brisk walk
  - Oxytocin. ...spending time with loved ones



- However, **continued exposure** to stress results in a **decline in the body's overall level of biological functioning** because of the constant secretion of **stress-related hormones**. (Cortisole)
- Over time, stressful reactions can promote deterioration of body tissues such as **blood vessels and the heart**.
- Ultimately, we become **more susceptible to disease** as our **ability to fight off infection is lowered**
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# WHY IS STRESS SO DAMAGING TO THE IMMUNE SYSTEM?

- One reason is that stress may decrease the ability of the immune system to respond to disease, permitting germs that produce colds to reproduce more easily or allowing cancer cells to spread more rapidly.
- In normal circumstances, **our bodies produce disease-fighting white blood cells called lymphocytes.**
- Our bodies can produce them at an extraordinary rate—some **10 million every few seconds.**
- **Stress may decrease this level of production.** Another way that stress affects the immune system is by over stimulating it. **Rather than fighting invading bacteria, viruses, and other foreign invaders, the immune system may begin to attack the body itself and damage healthy tissue.**

