Introduction

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| There are many reasons why I chose to do my project on stress. Stress is a topic that applies to everyone. Everybody experiences stress everyday of their lives. Whether it be meeting a deadline or even doing your homework, stress plays an important part in our lives. So much researched have been done on stress and  yet, The true meaning has not been clear to me. There are many causes that lead  to stress and yet I do not know how to avoid it or relieve myself of it. My doing this  project I hope to become familiar with the causes of stress that affects me the most  so that I can deal with them in the future. I also believed that learning these  methods will help me coup with the stress that I will face in the future. This project  was a way to compare myself to others in my dilemma.  Being in my junior, I have experience immense amounts of stress  throughout the year. This year was probably the most important year in my  academic career for so much relies on how I perform this year. Taking four  advanced placement classes has put even more stress than I needed. These  classes have been keeping me up until 1 AM on a regular basis. With the AP tests  coming up, it will be likely that I would stay up past that studying for the tests. My  parents have high expectations of me. Ever since I was in middle school, my  parents have urged me to do my best so that I could goo a university such as  Berkeley. The pressure has amounted so much that I failed in the goal they had  for me.  I know that stress can lead to health problems and by researching this topic  I am hoping to find ways to control and manage my stress so that I don't burn out  from it. I have seen people in these situations who have crashed underneath the  great stress they were under. I personally have felt the early stages of burn out  and I hope that I can decrease the stress by educating myself on how to relieve it.  Many people recognize stress as something bad that happens in their life.  Whether it be getting fire from a job or a death in the family, people believe that  stress is synonymous with worry. This is true but the true definition of stress is any  changes that occur in your life. Anything that causes a change in your life causes  stress. It doesn't matter if it is a "good" change, or a "bad" change, they are both  stress. Even if you imagine something that will happen or worry about something,  it can cause stress.  Many people do not realize what happens to their body when they are  under stress. "On a typical day in the brain, trillions of messages are sent and  received. The messages that are happy, up beat messages are carried by the  brain's Biogenic Amine Endorphin System. There are three brain chemicals that  this system carries and transports: serotonin, noradrenalin, and dopamine also  known as the "happy messengers". Other messages are somber and quieting.  They are carried by the brain's "sad messengers". Most nerve centers receive  input from both types of messengers. As long as this input is balanced, everything  runs along on an even keel. Stress, however, causes problems with the brain's  happy messengers." (Mind tools) When life is smooth, the happy messages keep  up with demand. But when too much stress is placed on the brain, the happy  messengers begin to fall behind on their deliveries. "As the stress continues, the  happy messages begin to fail. Important nerve centers then receive mostly sad  messages, and the whole brain becomes distressed. The person enters a state of  brain chemical imbalance known as overstress." (Burns, Steven) Overstress  makes people feel terrible. With sad messages overwhelming the happy  messages, a person feels" overwhelmed" by life. People complain of being tired,  unable to fall asleep or to obtain a restful night's sleep. They have plagues of  aches and pains, lack of energy, lack of enjoyment of life. They feel depressed,  anxious, or just unable to cope with life.  "Our ability to deal with stressful conditions is called the stress tolerance  level. Your stress tolerance level is determined in your genetic inheritance. Most of  us have inherited sufficient stress tolerance to allow us to weather the stresses of  daily living." (Mind tools) We still feel well and enjoy life. Yet, each of us, at some  time has experienced short periods of brain chemical imbalance. Ten percent of  the population experience stress at very low levels due to their low tolerance  levels. What we would consider normal stress, this level of stress overwhelms  them and puts them in a stage of overstress. The constantly feel tired and cannot  not sleep at night. Just imagine how life would be living with a low tolerance level.  There are many different types of situations that can cause stress in your  life. "Emotional stress is when arguments, disagreements, and conflicts cause  changes in your personal life. A major source of stress comes when you put too  much work for yourself. This is when you are pressured or you pressure yourself  to perform at under stressful conditions over a long period of time. Sooner or later,  the energy drain on your system will cause the body to fall behind in its repair  work. " (Health Education) There will not be enough time or energy for the body to  fix broken cells, or replace used up brain neurotransmitters. Changes will occur in  your body's internal environment. If nothing is done to reduce the level of stress,  permanent damage can be done to your body. Your personality can cause stress  in your life. "One aspect that cause stress is perfectionism, where the  perfectionist's extremely or impossibly high standards can cause stress.  Excessive self-effacement, where you constantly pay attention to the needs of  others can lead to dissatisfaction when no-one looks after your needs." (Health  Education) Another personality trait that can cause stress is anxiety. Anxiety  occurs where you are concerned that circumstances are out of control. In some  cases being anxious and worrying over a problem may generate a solution.  Normally it will just result in negative thinking.  The food you consume can contribute to the level of stress you are  experiencing. "Caffeine raises your levels of stress hormones, making it more  difficult to sleep, and can make you more irritable. Bursts of sugar from sweets or  chocolate can make you feel more energetic in the short term." (Health Education)  However your body reacts to stabilize abnormally high sugar levels by releasing  too much insulin. This causes a serious energy dip shortly after the sugar high.  Too much salt raises your blood pressure and puts your body under chemical  stress. As well as these specific sources of stress, you may experience stress if  you eat an unbalanced or unhealthy diet. You may find that some dietary  deficiency or excess causes discomfort and illness which generates stress. If you  are obese, then this causes physical stress on your internal organs and emotional  stress as your view of yourself declines. Many of the stresses you experience may  come from your job or from your lifestyle. These may include: too much or too  little work, having to perform beyond your experience or perceived abilities, having  to overcome unnecessary obstacles time pressures and deadlines and much  much more.  There are many symptom that can help you recognize that you are under  stress. Short term physical symptoms occur as your body adapts to perceived  physical threat, and are caused by release of adrenaline. Although you may  perceive these as unpleasant and negative, they are signs that your body is ready  for the explosive action that assists survival or high performance. Some of these  conditions include: faster heart beat, increased sweating, cool skin, cold hands  and feet, feelings of nausea and etc. Short term stress can also interfere with your  performance. It interferes with your judgment and makes it difficult to take the time  to make good decisions. It can make your work seem boring and uneventful. It  causes difficult situations to be seen as a threat, not a challenge. Short term stress  can promote negative thinking, damage self-confidence, narrow attention, disrupt  focus and concentration and make it difficult to cope with distractions.  Long term stress can lead to even more harmful physical and mental  conditions. These occur where your body has been exposed to adrenaline over a  long period. One of the ways adrenaline prepares you for action is by diverting  resources to the muscles from the areas of the body which carry out body  maintenance. This means that if you are exposed to adrenaline to a long period of  time, you are risking your health and even causing it to deteriorate. There are  many symptoms that you can look for in order to prevent further damage to your  body. Some of these are change in appetite, frequent colds, illnesses such as:  asthma, back pain, digestive problems, headaches, and skin eruptions; sexual  disorders, aches and pains, feelings of intense and long-term tiredness |