

***Assignment - 1***

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**Stress**

Stress can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain. Stress is your body's response to anything that requires attention or action.

Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way you respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to your overall well-being.

Sometimes, the best way to manage your stress involves changing your situation. At other times, the best strategy involves changing the way you respond to the situation.

**Signs:**

Stress can be short-term or long-term. Both can lead to a variety of symptoms, but chronic stress can take a serious toll on the body over time and have long-lasting health effects.

Some common signs of stress include:

* Changes in mood
* Clammy or sweaty palms
* Decreased sex drive
* Diarrhea
* Difficulty sleeping
* Digestive problems
* Dizziness
* Feeling anxious
* Frequent sickness
* Grinding teeth
* Headaches
* Low energy
* Muscle tension, especially in the neck and shoulders
* Physical aches and pains
* Racing heartbeat
* Trembling

**Related:** [Common Symptoms of Too Much Stress](https://www.verywellmind.com/common-symptoms-of-too-much-stress-3145238)

**Identifying Stress:**

Stress is not always easy to recognize, but there are some ways to identify some signs that you might be experiencing too much pressure. Sometimes stress can come from an obvious source, but sometimes even small daily stresses from work, school, family, and friends can take a toll on your mind and body.

If you think stress might be affecting you, there are a few things you can watch for:

* **Psychological signs** such as difficulty concentrating, worrying, anxiety, and trouble remembering
* **Emotional signs** such as being angry, irritated, moody, or frustrated
* **Physical signs** such as high blood pressure, changes in weight, frequent colds or infections, and changes in the menstrual cycle and libido
* **Behavioral signs** such as poor self-care, not having time for the things you enjoy, or relying on drugs and alcohol to cope

**Causes:**

There are many different things in life that can cause stress. Some of the main sources of stress include work, finances, relationships, parenting, and day-to-day inconveniences.

Stress can trigger the body’s response to a perceived threat or danger, known as the fight-or-flight response.﻿ During this reaction, certain hormones like adrenaline and cortisol are released. This speeds the heart rate, slows digestion, shunts blood flow to major muscle groups, and changes various other autonomic nervous functions, giving the body a burst of energy and strength.

When the perceived threat is gone, systems are designed to return to normal function via the relaxation response. But in cases of chronic stress, the relaxation response doesn't occur often enough, and being in a near-constant state of fight-or-flight can cause damage to the body.

Stress can also lead to some unhealthy habits that have a negative impact on your health. For example, many people cope with stress by eating too much or by smoking. These unhealthy habits damage the body and create bigger problems in the long-term.

**Related:** [What Are the Main Causes of Stress?](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-the-main-causes-of-stress-3145063)

**Impact of Stress:**

The connection between your mind and body is apparent when you examine the impact stress has on your life.

Feeling stressed out over a relationship, money, or your living situation can create physical health issues. The inverse is also true. Health problems, whether you're dealing with high blood pressure, or you have diabetes, will also affect your stress level and your mental health. When your brain experiences high degrees of stress, your body reacts accordingly.

Serious acute stress, like being involved in a natural disaster or getting into a verbal altercation, can trigger heart attacks, arrhythmias, and even sudden death. However, this happens mostly in individuals who already have heart disease.

Stress also takes an emotional toll. While some stress may produce feelings of mild anxiety or frustration, prolonged stress can also lead to burnout, anxiety disorders, and depression.

Chronic stress can have a serious impact on your health as well. If you experience chronic stress, your autonomic nervous system will be overactive, which is likely to damage your body.

**Stress-Influenced Conditions:**

* Diabetes
* Hair loss
* Heart disease
* Hyperthyroidism
* Obesity
* Sexual dysfunction
* Tooth and gum disease
* Ulcers

Related: [The effect of stress](https://www.verywellmind.com/effects-of-stress-10-helpful-things-to-know-3145254)

**Treatment:**

Stress is not a distinct medical diagnosis and there is no single, specific treatment for it. Treatment for stress focuses on changing the situation, developing stress coping skills, implementing relaxation techniques, and treating symptoms or conditions that may have been caused by chronic stress.

Some interventions that may be helpful include therapy, medication, and complementary and alternative medicine (CAM).

**Psychotherapy**

Some forms of therapy that may be particularly helpful in addressing symptoms of stress including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). CBT focuses on helping people identify and change negative thinking patterns, while MBSR utilizes meditation and mindfulness to help reduce stress levels.

**Medication**

Medication may sometimes be prescribed to address some specific symptoms that are related to stress. Such medications may include sleep aids, antacids, antidepressants, and anti-anxiety medications.

**Complementary and Alternative Medicine**

Some complementary approaches that may also be helpful for reducing stress include acupuncture, aromatherapy, massage, yoga, and meditation.

**Stress Management**

While it may seem like there’s nothing you can do about stress at work and home, there are steps you can take to relieve the pressure and regain control.

**Identify the sources of stress in your life:**

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life. This isn’t as straightforward as it sounds. While it’s easy to identify major stressors such as changing jobs, moving, or going through a divorce, pinpointing the sources of chronic stress can be more complicated. It’s all too easy to overlook how your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors contribute to your everyday stress levels.

Sure, you may know that you’re constantly worried about work deadlines, but maybe it’s your procrastination, rather than the actual job demands, that is causing the stress.

To identify your true sources of stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses:

* Do you explain away stress as temporary (“I just have a million things going on right now”) even though you can’t remember the last time you took a breather?
* Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life (“Things are always crazy around here”) or as a part of your personality (“I have a lot of nervous energy, that’s all”)?
* Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?

Until you accept responsibility for the role you play in creating or maintaining it, your stress level will remain outside your control.

**Practice the 4 A’s of stress management:**

When deciding which option to choose in any given scenario, it’s helpful to think of the four A’s: avoid, alter, adapt, or accept.

**Avoid unnecessary stress:**

It’s not healthy to avoid a stressful situation that needs to be addressed, but you may be surprised by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

***Learn how to say “no.”*** Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress. Distinguish between the “shoulds” and the “musts” and, when possible, say “no” to taking on too much.

***Avoid people who stress you out.*** If someone consistently causes stress in your life, limit the amount of time you spend with that person, or end the relationship.

***Take control of your environment.*** If the evening news makes you anxious, turn off the TV. If traffic makes you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.

***Pare down your to-do list.*** Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you’ve got too much on your plate, drop tasks that aren’t truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

**Alter the situation:**

If you can’t avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

***Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.*** If something or someone is bothering you, be more assertive and communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you’ve got an exam to study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk. If you don’t voice your feelings, resentment will build, and the stress will increase.

***Be willing to compromise.*** When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you’ll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.

***Create a balanced schedule.*** All work and no play is a recipe for burnout. Try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime.

**Adapt to the stressor:**

If you can’t change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

***Reframe problems.*** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.

***Look at the big picture.*** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.

***Adjust your standards.*** Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with “good enough.”

***Practice gratitude.*** When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

**Accept the things you can’t change:**

Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can’t prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it’s easier than railing against a situation you can’t change.

***Don’t try to control the uncontrollable.*** Many things in life are beyond our control, particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.

***Look for the upside.*** When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.

***Learn to forgive.*** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

***Share your feelings.*** Expressing what you’re going through can be very cathartic, even if there’s nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation. Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist.

**Get moving:**

When you’re stressed, the last thing you probably feel like doing is getting up and exercising. But physical activity is a huge stress reliever—and you don’t have to be an athlete or spend hours in a gym to experience the benefits. Exercise releases endorphins that make you feel good, and it can also serve as a valuable distraction from your daily worries.

While you’ll get the most benefit from regularly exercising for 30 minutes or more, it’s okay to build up your fitness level gradually. Even very small activities can add up over the course of a day. The first step is to get yourself up and moving. Here are some easy ways to incorporate exercise into your daily schedule:

* Put on some music and dance around.
* Take your dog for a walk.
* Walk or cycle to the grocery store.
* Use the stairs at home or work rather than an elevator.
* Park your car in the farthest spot in the lot and walk the rest of the way.
* Pair up with an exercise partner and encourage each other as you work out.
* Play ping-pong or an activity-based video game with your kids.

**Connect to others:**

There is nothing more calming than spending quality time with another human being who makes you feel safe and understood. In fact, face-to-face interaction triggers a cascade of hormones that counteracts the body’s defensive “fight-or-flight” response. It’s nature’s natural stress reliever (as an added bonus, it also helps stave off depression and anxiety). So make it a point to connect regularly—and in person—with family and friends.

Keep in mind that the people you talk to don’t have to be able to fix your stress. They simply need to be good listeners. And try not to let worries about looking weak or being a burden keep you from opening up. The people who care about you will be flattered by your trust. It will only strengthen your bond.

**Make time for fun and relaxation:**

Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by carving out “me” time. Don’t get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you’ll be in a better place to handle life’s stressors.

***Set aside leisure time.*** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don’t allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.

***Do something you enjoy every day.*** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.

***Keep your sense of humor.*** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

***Take up a relaxation practice.*** Relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing activate the body’s relaxation response, a state of restfulness that is the opposite of the fight or flight or mobilization stress response. As you learn and practice these techniques, your stress levels will decrease and your mind and body will become calm and centered.

**Manage your time better:**

Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you’re stretched too thin and running behind, it’s hard to stay calm and focused. Plus, you’ll be tempted to avoid or cut back on all the healthy things you should be doing to keep stress in check, like socializing and getting enough sleep. The good news: there are things you can do to achieve a healthier work-life balance.

***Don’t over-commit yourself.*** Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. All too often, we underestimate how long things will take.

***Prioritize tasks.*** Make a list of tasks you have to do and tackle them in order of importance. Do the high-priority items first. If you have something particularly unpleasant or stressful to do, get it over with early. The rest of your day will be more pleasant as a result.

***Break projects into small steps.*** If a large project seems overwhelming, make a step-by-step plan. Focus on one manageable step at a time, rather than taking on everything at once.

***Delegate responsibility.*** You don’t have to do it all yourself, whether at home, school, or on the job. If other people can take care of the task, why not let them? Let go of the desire to control or oversee every little step. You’ll be letting go of unnecessary stress in the process.

**Maintain balance with a healthy lifestyle:**

In addition to regular exercise, there are other healthy lifestyle choices that can increase your resistance to stress.

***Eat a healthy diet.*** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.

***Reduce caffeine and sugar.*** The temporary “highs” caffeine and sugar provide often end with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you’ll feel more relaxed, and you’ll sleep better.

***Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.*** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don’t avoid or mask the issue at hand, deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.

***Get enough sleep.*** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

References

* [What Is Stress, Signs, Identifying Stress, Causes of Stress, Impact of stress, and Treatment](https://www.verywellmind.com/stress-and-health-3145086)
* [Stress Management](https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-management.htm)