

THERE IS STRESS IN OUR LIVES

The Body Seeks To Protect Us By Responding To Pressure

Disagreement over where to eat. You need to come up with an idea for your arts & crafts project in one hour. You catch a glass as it's about to slide off the table. You have to go for an MRI. What do all these diverse situations have in common. They cause stress.

Stress is the body's response to pressure or demand - real or perceived. It is how we mentally, physically and emotionally react to situations and change. It is one of the ways our body protects us.

However, everyone has a personal limit as to how much stress they can handle. Whatever that limit is, when that line is crossed, stress creates wear and tear on the body and its systems. It is estimated that up to 90% of doctor's visits are for conditions in which stress plays at least a small role. That's why stress management has become a hot topic of conversation and an important part of a healthy lifestyle.



Good relationships and exercise can help build your emotional and physical reserves, helping you negate the effects of stressors.

POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE

All stress is not the same. Some is good for you, or at least necessary. And some is all negative. Here are two examples.

- ◆ **Eustress** - A helpful form of stress that prepares the heart, muscles and mind to deal with physical and/or mental challenges. Eustress can help you twist a tight lid on a jar or come up with an answer on Jeopardy.
- ◆ **Distress** - Response to the adjusting or altering of routine, taking a person out of their comfort zone. Distress can come from concerns about health or a traffic jam.

Stress can be created by situations that demand too much response and overwhelm. Or it can be caused by situations that create little response.

- ◆ **Hyperstress** - Too much challenge, to the point of overload.
- ◆ **Hypostress** - Too little challenge, leading to boredom and restlessness.

HOW MUCH?

Stress can vary in degree of concentration and how long it lasts. The two following categories take both these elements into consideration.

- ◆ **Acute Stress** - This is the most common and most recognizable form of stress. It is the immediate response to a situation - scare, threat or challenge. It is intense and it may even be thrilling. You sense exactly what is causing the stress and after the situation is over, the stress subsides.
- ◆ **Chronic Stress** - The result of long-term exposure to acute stress, usually based on intractable situations - financial problems, relationship issues, dealing with poor health, etc. It tends to be subtle, wearing you down (mentally and physically) over an extended period of time. In fact, what makes this type of tension so dangerous is that people who suffer from chronic stress tend to get used to it, adjust their lives to it, and/or accept it.

(Sources: MayoClinic.com, HelpGuide.org)



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