

7067 - Stress Management 101



Just about everybody goes through times when they feel under stress, tense, nervous, or unhappy. This is a normal part of life. However, living in a constant state of stress is unhealthy for the mind and body. How you respond to life's demands will ultimately determine your stress levels. Therefore, it is important to identify symptoms of stress, and understand the types and sources of stress in our lives, in order to overcome it.

Why is it important to overcome stress?

When the body is under stress there is an actual *stress reaction* that takes place:

1. The brain perceives a threat: real or imagined. It could be demands at work, or a near-miss situation on the highway. A message is then sent from the brain to the adrenal glands.
2. The message then triggers the adrenal glands to secrete hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, which flood the circulatory system.
3. These hormones (chemicals) released into the blood cause an increase in bodily reactions, increase heart rate, and raise blood pressure- in other words prepare the body for rapid action.

The problem with this is the constant flood of stress chemicals and associated metabolic changes that come with recurrent stressful situations (actual or perceived) can eventually cause harm to many different systems of the body.

Symptoms of Chronic Stress to watch for:

In the Body	Thoughts and Feelings	Behaviour
Headache	Anxiety	Overeating/Undereating
Chest pain	Worrying/Depression	Angry outbursts
High Blood Pressure	Seeing only the negative	Drug abuse
Shortness of Breath	Anger	Excessive drinking
Muscle aches/Back pain	Mood Swings	Social withdrawal
Sex problems	Job dissatisfaction	Crying spells
Clenched jaws	Feeling insecure	Relationship conflicts
Constipation/Diarrhea	Confusion	Decreased productivity
Increases Sweating	Burnout	Blaming others
Sleep problems	Forgetfulness	
Weight gain/loss	Resentment	
Skin breakouts	Guilt	

Source: mayoclinic.com

Know your sources of stress:

External Sources: These are events or situations that happen to you. Sometimes you cannot control what happens to you, but you can decide how you will react to the situation. *Here are some examples of areas that may cause you stress:*

- **Major life changes:** These changes can be positive- a new marriage, job promotion or new home. Or they can be negative- a divorce or the death of a loved one.
- **Environment:** noise disturbances, lighting
- **Unpredictable events:** this could include an increase in monthly bills, or a pay cut
- **Family:** heated situations with family members or relationship problems
- **Workplace:** overwhelming workloads, disputes with co-workers
- **Social:** having to do a presentation at work, forming new relationships

Internal Stressors: Some stress can be self-induced. Negative feelings and thoughts that pop into your head and cause you unrest can be a major source of unnecessary stress.

- **Fears:** this is often from imagining a certain event or situation that you have coming up going as bad as possible. Often, it is not nearly as bad as we imagine it to be.
- **Uncertainty:** this could be from a looming restructuring at the office or waiting for medical test results
- **Attitude:** having a negative view of the world can be stressful, because you are creating an unpleasant environment in which to live
- **Unrealistic expectations:** a perfectionist or controlling personality may lead to unnecessarily high stress levels. Over-scheduling and not planning ahead can lead to worries.

