

Stress Overload and Symptoms

Stress doesn't always look stressful

Three most common ways people respond when they're overwhelmed by stress:

1. **Foot on the gas** – An angry or agitated stress response. You're heated, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.
2. **Foot on the brake** – A withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.
3. **Foot on both** – A tense and frozen stress response. You "freeze" under pressure and can't do anything. You look paralyzed, but under the surface you're extremely agitated.

Cognitive Symptoms	Emotional Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Memory problems ▪ Inability to concentrate ▪ Poor judgment ▪ Seeing only the negative ▪ Anxious or racing thoughts ▪ Constant worrying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moodiness ▪ Irritability or short temper ▪ Agitation, inability to relax ▪ Feeling overwhelmed ▪ Sense of loneliness and isolation ▪ Depression or general unhappiness
Physical Symptoms	Behavioral Symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aches and pains ▪ Diarrhea or constipation ▪ Nausea, dizziness ▪ Chest pain, rapid heartbeat ▪ Loss of sex drive ▪ Frequent colds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eating more or less ▪ Sleeping too much or too little ▪ Isolating yourself from others ▪ Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities ▪ Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax ▪ Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

Dealing with Stressful Situations

- **Learn how to say "no."** Know your limits and stick to them.
- **Avoid people who stress you out.** If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can't turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time or end the relationship entirely.
- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way.
- **Start a stress journal.** Each time you feel stressed, keep track of it in your journal. As you keep a daily log, you will begin to see patterns and common themes.
- **Adjusting your attitude.** How you think can have a profound effect on your emotional and physical well-being. If you see good things about yourself, you are more likely to feel good; the reverse is also true. Eliminate words such as "always," "never," "should," and "must."
- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control—the behavior of other people. Focus on the things you can control such as how you react to problems.
- **Learn to forgive.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Forgive and move on.
- **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.
- **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.
- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week.
- **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 continue to snack on nutritious meals throughout the day.
- **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.

Resource: <http://www.helpguide.org/>