

# Stress Less



## What is Stress

The most commonly accepted definition of stress is that it occurs **when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize**. In becoming stressed, people must make two main judgments:

- First, they must feel threatened by the situation;
- Second, they must doubt that they can meet the threat.

How stressed they feel depends on the damage they think the situation can do them, and how closely their resources meet the demands of the situation. **Perception is key to this.**

Responses to stress can be physical, emotional and psychological. These responses were used to either 'fight or flight' danger centuries ago however we still feel these symptoms when confronted with stressful situations:

Modern day stressors can come from work life, personal life or home life. Understanding what stresses you out and your response to

stressful situations can help you manage stress.

Left unchecked, stress can cause long term damage to your heart (increased likelihood of a heart attack), digestive system, immune system, sleep patterns, sexual function and fertility, moods and can lead to substance abuse.

The hormones that are affected when we get stressed are :

- Serotonin: affects the way we sleep
- Dopamine and endorphins: controls 'pleasure centre' and happiness feelings and our perception of pain.
- Nor adrenaline : is responsible for setting our energy levels

This is why we often have trouble sleeping, concentrating, feel lethargic and may feel sad or unhappy. If stress is affecting your life or someone around you, talk to a friend, HR or your GP. **Signs of Stress**

Dilation of pupils	Goose bumps
Inc. sweating	Inc. saliva
Inc. muscle tension	Inc. heart rate
Inhibition of digestion	Inc. hearing

## Life Events that can cause stress

- Death of spouse
- Divorce
- Jail term
- Personal injury
- Retirement
- Pregnancy
- Sexual Difficulties
- Change in financial status
- Career change
- Personal achievement
- Change in living conditions
- Trouble with boss
- Trouble with workmates
- Change in residence

Q: When have you been most stressed?  
Q: What did you do about it?  
Q: Do you know your stress target organ?

## Tips for Managing Stress

**Exercise regularly** - regular exercise is a great way to manage stress. You should do some form of exercise that causes you to feel puffed afterwards. A leisurely stroll to the bus stop is not enough! Have at least 20 minutes of exercise three times a week.

**Avoid conflict** - avoid situations that make you feel stressed as much as you can. Avoid unnecessary arguments and conflict if you find them stressful (although ignoring a problem is not always the best way to reduce stress).

**Relax** - make sure you give yourself

some time to relax each day and try to spend time with people who make you feel good about yourself.

**Eat well** - a nutritious diet is important. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables and avoid sweet and fatty foods.

**Sleep** - a good sleep routine is essential. Do something calm and relaxing before you go to bed, like listening to music or reading, if you have difficulty falling asleep.

**Enjoy your life** - it's important to make time to have some fun. Laugh at yourself!

### Fast Facts

- 1:3 Adults suffer from stress
- Stress claims in the workplace have increased by 40% in the last 4 years
- Stress is caused by the 'fight or flight response'
- Nearly 1:3 people are more scared of public speaking than of dying
- People who suffer from stress also have a greater chance of headaches due to muscle tension