

# STRESS MANAGEMENT

## TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY



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## FOR EFFICIENCY



## PREFACE

Ever had a misunderstanding with a colleague at work and your entire day was filled with strife and tension? Had a good time the previous night and forgot to compile the reports, got up late in the morning, only to find your team jittered and anxious?

In a more personal setting, you realize your partner is receiving strange text messages and phone calls past 10:00 am, how does that make you feel? Or perhaps, you found your fifteen-year-old rolling a pint of marijuana in the basement and you're just on your way out to catch up with an old friend.

Stress is a common issue in everyday life. If you asked different people, from different ethnicities, and geographies, they'll explicate a different experience all narrowing down to the same thing. What they might overlook is how this thing called stress affects their efficiency whether it's at work or in other personal hustles.

In this text, we'll be helping you understand stress from a psychological perspective, symptoms, and effects, and what to do whenever you find yourself drowning in this common psychological strain.

## THE KEY MESSAGE?

Instead of stress working against you, by understanding it, you can use it to be prolific, improve your performance, and your overall elasticity to stressful situations.



## CHAPTER ONE: WHAT IS STRESS?

As highlighted hitherto, there are a plethora of definitions of stress if you asked various people. But from an expert's perspective, a Hungarian named Dr. Hans Selye adopted the term Stress from physics in his research, "the Body's General Adaptation Syndrome to Environmental Demands" which referenced Human Behavior.

Since then, various disciplines in medicine have settled on the explication of stress as a response of the body triggered by unexpected environmental demands. That said, stress can be a result of either a negative or a positive cause. For instance, a contract you've been yearning for slipped up from your company and ended up to your competition. That could be a form of negative stress, but when it comes to positive stress, let's say your partner, whom you love, of course, proposed to you. Awesome! But are you ready to commit yourself to someone for the rest of your life?

## THE ROLE OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

As of 2021, the research carried out on the body's response to stress is not just profound but also diverse. This comes as no surprise in the complexities of the processes of our human bodies. To put it simply, the Nervous System plays an integral part in response to stress.

It's branched into:

**A) Central Nervous System (CNS):** This is made up of the Spinal Cord and the Brain.

**B) Peripheral Nervous System (PNS):** Transmits information from body cells to the CNS and vice versa. Comprises of the nerve cells and nerve fibers.

- **Autonomic Nervous System (ANS):** It's a part of the PNS and it ensures organs function efficiently.



## ONCE THE BODY PERCEIVES A THREAT AND GOES TO FLIGHT OR FIGHT MODE,

ANSs (Further branched into Sympathetic and Parasympathetic) responds by mustering all bodily energy through the stimulation of the sympathetic system.

In this mode, you experience;

- Heavy breathing for extra oxygen for more energy
- Dilated pupils to effectively scan the surrounding
- Contraction of blood vessels in the occasion of a bleeding

Once the threat has been neutralized, the other ANSs system – Parasympathetic takes control by giving you a sense of relief hence normalizing your physiological processes.

The hypothalamus is responsible for regulating the ANS system. This defensive flight or fight response gets triggered due to the influx of hormones released in the body.

Perhaps we humans in the modern civilization aren't often faced with real-life perils compared to the early man, but this defensive response is the default way of reacting to a stressful situation whether it's arguing with a spouse or the imminent prospect of getting hit by a speeding car.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### TYPES AND CAUSES OF STRESS

#### A. Types

Causes and types of stress could seem identical, but don't get stirred into the mix. Types of stresses could be influenced by factors such as age, demographics, and occupation. Here are the four types of stress.



**A) Acute Stress:** This is what you might identify as having a bad day. It could range from issues related to your job, family, friends, or regrets from the past and fears in the future. After the ANS responds to such types of stresses, you should be able to get back to normalcy.

**B) Episodic Acute Stress:** Better referred to as cumulative stress, it's tension accumulated over a lengthy time. It could range from hectic professions, regular child or abuse from a partner or tension from the government i.e. Coups.

**C) Chronic Stress:** This could be the buildup of cumulative stress if not treated. In most cases, it could result in severe mental disorders such as chronic depression to suicidal thoughts.

**D) Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):**

This stems from severe life-threatening events mostly related to soldiers serving in long and violent operations. It could also be rooted in people with sexual assault histories, severe child or marital abuse, or civilians experiencing government instability.

## B. Causes

As outlined earlier, stressors depend on various factors. Furthermore, stressors cannot be highlighted as a whole for one. One might not have any financial constraints, but could be suffering from a chronic illness. Another might get a job post as at a lucrative position in a well-off firm yet requiring them to move from to a different town.

The factor is age is also coherent since an adult's stressors could not at all affect a teenager. Stressors too could either be positive stressors such as the example outlined about a rewarding job post requiring the person to move to a different city or the most common, negative stressors.

Common stressors could include:

### Positive Stressors

- A birthday party surprise
- Job vacancies requiring you to move out; possibly leave your loved ones and friends
- Your partner proposing to you
- oA meeting scheduled with your employer where he wants to offer you a raise and you're wondering what wrong you've done



### Negative Stressors

- Child or spouse abuse
- Financial constraints
- Work overload
- Accidents
- Diseases
- Family or sibling wrangles

Having said that, how someone has adapted over time to deal with problems is a factor as well as their ability to cope with minor and major forms of stress.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRESS AND EFFICIENCY

Once you fall victim to stress, it affects you physically, emotionally, cognitively, and how you normally behave.

This is caused by the influx of hormones secreted from the pituitary glands to the bloodstream where you'll experience high blood pressure and sweating. The aim of this is to supply you with enough energy to either deal with the threat or run away from it.

Your emotional response would depend on the magnitude of the stressor, but your normal state will surge to irritability, shock, then sadness, and depression. If the source of stress is acute, aggression and loss of focus will be present, but if it's more of a chronic stressor, you'll fall into a depressive state where you'll be withdrawn and silent.

Whether stressed or overstressed, your cognitive functions get impaired and this is the point where most of your efficiency gets abridged.

The levels of your focus lessen; hence you cannot focus for long extents.

Most of your blood will be channeled towards other body organs therefore your brain will lack the capacity to operate efficiently.

This is the point your ability to make good judgments is impaired and in most stressful situations, your utmost levels of efficiency and cognitive capacity are required.

# WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS



When it comes to stress relief, various methods can be applied whether it's in the event of the stressor or before the stressor to help you manage stress effectively. As you might probably expect, they'll require you to alter your way of life either adopting new habits or dropping old ones that deter you from dealing with stress effectively.

## 1. Lifestyle Change

It would not set the right precedent if we started with measures such as medication and treatment. Acute stress can be handled efficiently before growing to become chronic. Hence, if you're experiencing anxiety attacks and elongated periods of sadness for the first time,

then it might be the time to make lifestyle assessments and importantly, evaluate what type of disorders you might be having;

Here are common types of anxieties you might experience either congenital or acquired over time due to situations or personality changes;

- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** When you're having a thought or behavioral pattern you can't control, this might be as a result of OCD. These obsessive thoughts or habits might be trivial.
- **General Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** Ruminating over events that haven't happened could cause this anxiety.

- Other people happen to worry about issues inherently and they fall under this category.
- **Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD):** This involves being too shy to an extent you avoid public spaces as well as addressing crowds.
- **Anxiety Attacks:** Phobias related to anxiety attacks include agoraphobia which makes someone avoid both open places as well as closed places.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder:** Isolation and withdrawal, fear, irritability, and nightmares are some of the symptoms of PTSD. This results from fearful or life-threatening situations.



Healthy habits aimed to alleviate such sorts of stress include;

- Eating a healthy diet
- Getting regular exercise
- Meaningful connections with supportive people
- Getting out of abusive relationships

## 2. Meditation

Meditation is a simple exercise that requires you to bring your attention to your breath for a specific set of times. Once you feel your mind drifting away in thoughts, you acknowledge these thoughts then bring your focus back to your breath.

Additionally, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi popularized another Eastern practice known as Transcendental Meditation which is similar to meditation, other than you silently chant tailor-made Mantras through a meditative state spanning to 20 minutes. These methods are highly efficient in grounding you at the moment through Mindfulness, significantly helping you control stress both short-term and long-term.

## 3. Relaxation Techniques

Because there are muscular constrictions when the body goes on fight or flight mode, relaxation techniques help you take control of the effects of the hormones released in the bloodstream.

These could be applied in the event of the stressor, and they comprise of methods such as Meditation, Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique, and Transcendental Meditation.

## 4. Psychotherapy

In general, psychologists and psychiatrists are the professionals in the medical field who help people cope with stress whether it's acute or chronic. Furthermore, you can as well improve your cognitive efficiency through these professionals.

Methods such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) are some of the common treatments for stress and other chronic mental conditions. Another strong and effective method is known as hypnosis.





## 5. Drugs and Prescriptions

For persons in need of immediate relief, prescription medication such as benzodiazepine and antidepressants could be effective only if prescribed by a professional.

Nonetheless, they might be accompanied by side effects, hence, if not an emergency, go for the stress management methods aforementioned.

On the other end of the scope are other self-prescribed 'medication' such as Marijuana, hard drugs, and alcohol. These lead to dependence and later addiction which creates a problem on top of another. Furthermore, combining these drugs with prescriptions is another practice specialists highly discourage.

However, there might be an exception. There are other forms of psychoactive, often found in South America, known as psychedelics. Since your consciousness is subjective to them, they can be classified as antidepressants however much they're identified as spiritual.

## BOTTOM LINE

Stress has and will always be a part of life. However much it causes negative feelings, it could be channeled to the right causes such as growth, personal improvement, and on this topic, efficiency in work and finding solutions to problems.

Nonetheless, this is if one learns to control themselves through stressful situations, finds ways to foresee and avert possible stressors, and ultimately, cultivate positive feelings such as optimism and happiness.