



Stress and Stress Management

What is stress?

Stress may be defined as any demand that requires some kind of physical or emotional adjustment.

A stressor (an event that produces a stress reaction) can be positive or negative. Examples of positive stress include holidays / travel, giving a presentation, getting married, job promotions and buying a house. Sources of positive stress are associated with outcomes expected to be mostly positive, and with some sense of personal control over that outcome. On the other hand, negative stressors are associated with outcomes expected to be mostly negative with little personal control over that outcome. Expectation and control are therefore the two key elements that distinguish the stress.

Stress is often caused not so much from what is actually happening, but rather by our **perception** of what is happening or what might happen. Some sources of stress are seen as negative by almost everyone, e.g. death of a loved one, divorce, loss of a job. Most everyday stressors, however, need not be as distressing as we make them.

Whether we perceive stressors as negative or positive has important implications for our health. The hormonal changes that occur in response to positive stressors are less harmful than those produced by negative stressors. Under many conditions these physiological responses to positive stress help us to cope more effectively with the source of stress. Negative health consequences associated with stress, such as decline in the immune system function, are more often associated with negative stress.

Ten Key Strategies For Managing Stress

1. Understand what stress is and how it affects you.
2. Improve your decision-making ability.
3. Master the ability to relax.
4. Maintain good physical health.
5. Enhance your self-concept.
6. Be positive.
7. Build relationships.
8. Learn to communicate effectively.
9. Manage your time effectively.
10. Cultivate a sense of humour.

You can do your best for yourself and others if you allow time to look after your own needs. Take time out each day to do something for you - do this without feeling guilty. Think positively - expect to like people, to be successful, to enjoy life - and you will!

Smile!



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