

# Stress



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Stress is something everyone experiences sometime throughout their life; it is essential. This essay will first define stress and comment on both good and bad stress. Secondly, it will give examples of physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms of stress. Thirdly, it will discuss common causes of stress and give an understanding of the difference between internal and external causes of stress. Fourthly, it will explain unmanaged stress and describe consequences of unmanaged stress.

Finally this essay will suggest a variety of strategies for reducing stress. If you were told that there is a 2000 word essay due by the end of the day you would immediately begin to 'stress'. Stress can be defined as "our generalized reaction to any event, person, place or thought, memory or belief which requires us to cope or adapt" (Winegrowers & Allen, 1997, p. 9). There are three stages people undergo when under stress. The first stage is: the alarm stage where the body switches into overdrive... The second stage, is the resistance stage, all the heightened physical and mental responses help create increased activity so that the challenge can be met, but here is only so much strength and endurance that a person can muster before he or she goes into the third stage: exhaustion. (Prefer, 1996, p. 4) One thing that must be remembered is that stress can affect us both negatively and/or positively. A certain amount of stress is good for people. It can positively affect someone by adding interest and giving us a sense of motivation to life.

For instance if you have a test in two weeks it can make you feel motivated and excited to do the test; even feeling a sense of achievement once it's done. This motivation makes you want to study hard to achieve high. People can also have a small amount of stress when needed to cross the road or

when driving a car. Before crossing the road you look both ways, on full alert looking for oncoming cars. People do the same thing when driving, always being aware of other cars and pedestrians. This stress can make people feel alert and vigilant; our mind and body are actively aware of the surrounding environment.

This stress allows someone to get across the road safely and clearly focus on driving. But the amount of stress people can hold is limited. When stress levels are on overload or it has reached its maximum capacity it can have a negative affect people. The mind and body begin to feel exhaustion and stress overload. If someone has a test and they begin to stress too much about it. They begin to lose concentration as it becomes hard to focus and they start to feel irritated and frustrated because our mind and body are not doing what they want.

According to Smith and Seal (2013), as a result of pressure and stress overload lasting too long someone can begin to feel exhaustion. This can happen when there is an on-going family conflict or strain on any relationships. The ability to cope no longer holds up as we begin to feel upset and our body slowly gives in until we eventually breakdown. In worst case scenario, this stress can lead to depression. Symptoms of stress can affect all aspects of your life including physical, emotional and mental aspects.

There is a chain reaction. Its starts with the physiological affect. If you think "I'm going to be late for work" then you begin to feel nervous, worried and anxious. This furthers on to the behavioral reaction; beginning to drive faster or speed. From this the physical reaction occurs, where you may begin to get

sweaty alms, dry mouth and a faster heart rate (Stresses. Com, 2009).

Physical stress symptoms are caused through the sympathetic nervous system. This system affects our inner organs and blood chemistry.

According to Prefer (1996), the sympathetic nervous system is what makes us feel physical symptoms such as aches and pains, fast heartbeat, breathlessness and restless, sweating, nauseous, loss of sex drive, gaining/losing weight and stomach problems. These affects are caused when there is an increase in adrenalin, blood sugar and perspiration, when the bodies' muscles tense, pores' open and when the bladder loosens. This can positively affect someone such as an athlete. They will receive a spur of adrenalin, higher energy level and faster reaction time which is perfect for performance levels.

But it is " when the sympathetic nervous system is stimulated repeatedly over a period of time... You wear down your inner organs" (Prefer, 1996, p. 27). Physical symptoms of stress are also known as the dumb response. The same symptoms and reactions can come from two totally different situations. For instance, if you are getting married you may experience sweaty palms, butterflies in your tummy and a racing heart. The same homonyms can be seen if there were to be a death of a family member. Your body does not differentiate between good stress and bad stress (Winegrowers ; Allen, 1997).

Stress can cause an emotional response which is dependent on how we react to a situation or change. With a certain amount of stress someone may feel excited, happy and eager. This can be positive as it helps with what needs to

be done. But some people may have negative reactions such as feeling panic, moodiness, irritability and anger. An excessive amount of emotional stress can always affect our way of coping. If someone feels too much negative emotion espouses or an excessive amount of emotional response, it can lead to depression, constant feeling of failure, excessive worrying and a constant feeling of withdrawal.

The behavior of a person can change when someone is under stress. It is when we act or operate differently to what we would normally or without feeling stressed. Behavioral reactions include an increase or start of alcohol, drugs and cigarettes. Many people find that by starting or doing more of these, it helps them relax and feel less stressed. Other behavioral responses include eating more or a loss of appetite, leaping too much or too little, isolating self from others, mood swings, outbursts, procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities and an increase or " an exaggeration of an existing habit" (Prefer, 1996, p. 6). This can include nail biting and pacing. Some of these behavioral habits can put " pressure on relationships with family, co- workers, and others" (Stress Less Living, 2011). The causes of stress vary. Some common causes of stress in the United Kingdom are " Job pressure, money, health, relationships, poor nutrition, media overload and sleep deprivation" (Statistic Brain, 2012). They can be either internal or external. Internal causes of stress refer to self-generated stress. It is stress you cause/inflict to yourself.

It can be by the way you think; some people are perfectionists and have high expectations that may be unrealistic. Another internal cause of stress may be from the choices you make; some people may make bad decisions like

choosing not to attend class or not asking for help when there is an obvious need of it. The actions you take are also an internal cause of stress. For instance you may do something like misplacing the keys when you are in a rush to get to work (A. Kensington, personal communication, April 15, 2013).

All these internal causes can depend on how we react to any external stress-inducing factors. External causes come from outside of us. It is stress caused from factors which you have little or no control of (A. Kensington, personal communication, April 15, 2013). They can be negative external causes like having a relationship breakdown, family difficulties, work or school responsibilities, financial/economic issues and being too busy or having an overload of responsibilities like family requirements (Smith ; Seal, 2012). The mind and body are not built for long term stress.

When our mind and body are experiencing constant stress it physically and emotionally harms a person. It can be explained as: Stress damages virtually every kind of cognition that exists. It damages memory and executive function. It can hurt your motor skills. When you are stressed out over a long period of time it disrupts your immune response. You get sicker more often. It disrupts your ability to sleep. You get depressed. (Medina, 2012, p. 1). It can affect your ability to work as it affects your ability to think and make decisions as well as your motor skills.

You may feel as if you " can't think straight, get distracted/can't focus, get emotional, can't make decisions, can't do things right, frustrated and you take that out on the people around you" (A. Kensington, personal communication, April 15, 2013). Physically you may have trouble sleeping,

experience migraines, over eat or have a loss of appetite. Depression and anxiety are mental consequences you may experience. Not only will unmanaged stress affect you but it will also affect your relationship, family and friends. Being in a relationship you may make your partner feel stressed too or have a relationship breakdown.

It is common that a person with unmanaged stress will release all their frustration and anger at their loved ones. By doing this it can make family members or even children feel as though it is their fault. There are many strategies to manage and reduce stress. One strategy to reduce stress is to change the way you think; changing your attitude towards situations (Smith ; Seal, 2013). If you look at the bigger picture, compromise by taking both sides in to consideration you can alter the how you see a situation stressful. For example if you are having a wedding and the situation is that the cake hasn't arrived n time.

There are two possible ways to think; either become stressed, angry, frustrated and annoyed at why the cake is not there or you could think positive and be happy that everything else for the event is going as planned. The two different ways of thinking shape whether or not you will be stressed or how stressed you will be. You could also refer to humor and instead of anger and frustration. Time management is another strategy to effectively use to reduce stress. By having a student diary, having a wall planner or calendar or using lists can reduce frustration and avoid stress.

Other strategies for reducing stress are changing your lifestyle by having a healthy life style, accepting things you cannot change, avoiding unnecessary

stress; people that make you stressed, knowing your limits, expressing your feeling so you don't bottle them up and making time for relaxation and fun.

In conclusion stress is the reaction to a situation that requires us to adapt; it can be good or bad stress. There are physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms of stress, which happens in link with each other. The causes of stress can be either internal (self-generated) or external; factors that a person has little or no control of.