

Feeling stressed?

Do you feel like time is always against you and that you are juggling too many demands? Are you constantly on the edge? Feeling restless and losing sleep worrying over this or the other? If you answered yes, then chances are that you are stressed.



So what exactly is stress?

Stress is anything that causes us to worry but as far as our body is concerned, change of any nature is considered as stress.

Stress can either be good or bad. Good stress can motivate us however stress overload can have a bearing on our health and general well being. When one is going through intense and prolonged pressure this can trigger stress overload which may in turn weaken the body's immune system.

The events that provoke stress are called **stressors**, and they can be anything like deadlines, traffic jam, noise, diet, exams, bills etc.

Guidelines for Coping with Stress

Not only does a high level of stress mess your emotional balance but it also puts your entire physical health at risk. It is not only important to change the way you deal with stress but also learn ways to cope it.

1. Accept that stress is a natural and inescapable part of life for anyone who lives life to the full. Longing for a stress-free life is unrealistic but you can learn to cope better with it.
2. Keep an inventory, so to speak, of things and situations that you find stressful, and why you find them so. Such an inventory serves 3 purposes: It may help discover a pattern of things and events that cause you to feel stressed; it provides self-knowledge and it cuts through the turbulent stream of emotions that are an inseparable part of stress. Thus you become more like an observer of your own stress.
 - ✓ Identify things that you can change
 - ✓ Avoid or eliminate stress triggers
 - ✓ Shorten exposure to these triggers
 - ✓ Avoid stressful places or situations
3. Highlight certain 'unrealistic rules' - the "must never/must always" rules. Ever notice that any time you break these rules you end up with disruptive emotions like anger, guilt, shame and embarrassment. You may also have these unrealistic rules for other people and have these emotions if they break the rules.

These emotions spoil your interpersonal relations and cause further stress.

- ✓ Reduce the intensity of your emotional reaction to stress
 - ✓ Work at adopting a more moderate view of things
 - ✓ Do not be too critical of yourself
4. Communicate clearly about your feelings by describing them accurately, rather than demonstrating them without inhibition. For example rather than losing your temper and demonstrating your anger in word and deed, it is better to tell the other person that what has happened made you furious. Look for a support group to discuss your stress.
- ✓ Become aware of your stressor, emotional feelings
 - ✓ Change your perception of problems: they sometimes seem bigger than they actually are
 - ✓ Think of your problems as challenges and how you can overcome them
5. Laughter is undeniably an antidote to stress. Bring humour to bear on the situation in appropriate ways. Humour helps people to distance themselves from the stressful situation and become less intensely involved. Surround yourself with positive people and those who make you laugh



6. Physical exercise like walking, dancing etc is an excellent way of tempering the body's reaction to stress. The body will react less drastically to stressful situations, so that it is better able to mobilise its defence.
7. It is a good idea to prepare yourself for stressful situations. This is called stress inoculation. There are stress inoculation programmes which gradually increase people's resistance to stress.
- ✓ Do not try and change everything overnight
 - ✓ Strive for long term results, not quick fixes
 - ✓ Learn how to deal with stressful situations
 - ✓ Death and family problems
 - ✓ Establish a support system for yourself
 - ✓ Someone you can trust or visit your psychologist / psychiatrist if you are not coping and need help
8. Get enough rest. That may sound impossible in today's fast paced world. But ever notice how lethargic, switched off and moody you are when you are tired or have hardly slept? For you to get rejuvenated you need adequate rest and this includes getting at least 7-8 hours of sleep every day.
9. General health and stress resistance can be enhanced by a diet rich in a variety of whole grains, vegetables, and fruits. Avoid excessive alcohol, caffeine and tobacco intake.