

Stress Management

Stress is something that most people know well and experience often. It's unavoidable and is a normal part of everyday life.

Stress may result from positive or negative situations. Examples of positive situations can be a job promotion, vacation, marriage or the birth of a child. Stress brought on by a positive cause can provide a feeling of excitement and motivation which is called eustress. But a lot of stress comes from negative events – the loss of a job, a divorce or financial problems, which is called distress or simply stress.

Stress response is commonly known as the fight/flight response. When you perceive a threat, your nervous system responds by releasing a flood of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones rouse the body for emergency action. Your heart pounds faster, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises, breath quickens, and your senses become sharper. These physical changes **increase your strength and stamina, speed your reaction time, and enhance your focus** – preparing you to either fight or flee from the danger at hand.

In emergency situations, stress can save your life. In everyday life situations, the stress response also helps you rise to meet challenges. For example, stress often helps athletes perform better in competition. Stress is what sharpens your concentration during a presentation at work, or drives you to study for an exam when you'd rather be watching TV.

Stress can be physical or mental. The human brain can not distinguish true physical emergencies from daily hassles, deadlines, information overload, difficult decisions, guilt, and worries. The physiological reaction is the same. When it's a physical danger, you can release your stress through physical activity, such as fighting or running away. When the danger is mental, you might not have an avenue to get rid of your stress energy. For short periods of time there is no damage, the situation is survived and you can relax. But stress accumulates. **Beyond a certain point**, when you feel out of control or under constant or intense pressure, **stress starts causing major damage** to your physical health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships, and your quality of life.

Situations that create stress are as unique as you are. Stress results from both your response to an event, and the event itself. Our emotions are controlled by our thoughts. **The stress response is a response of the total organism in the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual domains.** Your genes, health condition, personality, and past experiences – **your overall ability to cope** – influence how you deal with stressful situations. Missing the bus may not bother you, but another person may find this situation extremely stressful. When perceived demands exceed your ability to cope, it creates stress, producing physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral symptoms and leading to a variety of illnesses.

Stress Warning Signs

Physical	Emotional	Mental	Social	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headaches• Indigestion• Stomachaches• Racing heart• Sleep difficulties• Sweaty palms• Weight change• Back pain• Tight neck, shoulders• Fatigue• Restlessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boredom• Edginess• Bad temper• Depression• Anxiety• Worry• Mood swings• Anger• Nervousness• Unhappiness• Irritability• Crying	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Forgetfulness• Poor concentration• Low productivity• Trouble thinking clearly• Inability to make decisions• Thoughts of running away	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isolation• Hiding• Loneliness• Intolerance• Resentment• Distrust• Lack of intimacy• Bossiness• Lower sex drive• Critical attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emptiness• Doubt• Loss of meaning• Loss of direction• Unforgiving• Apathy• Cynicism• Needing to "prove" self

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Everyone needs some challenges in life to keep things interesting. A certain level of stress is normal. The real issue is finding the right balance. Managed stress can help you to be productive and happy.

Acupuncture can provide a safe and effective tool for stress management. It does not change the event causing stress. But it changes your physical and emotional state. **Acupuncture usually produces a feeling of balance and well-being and readies the person for stressful situations.**

Acupuncture can produce a calming or tranquilizing effect. It resets your rattled nervous system to a default state of rest rather than high alert. It relieves negative feelings such as anxiety and depression. And it can be used in many cases not only as an alternative to tranquilizers and antidepressant drugs but also to treat side effects and dependence.

For many stress-related illnesses, **acupuncture** not only relieves the stress, but further **helps your body to achieve homeostasis**. It helps to balance the immune system, nervous system, cardiovascular system, digestive system and endocrine system that are involved in the chronic stress response, and prevent or treat the related illnesses.

Medical Qigong therapy is particularly relaxing. With the guided meditation, it **helps you to reach a state of deep relaxation** to allow the body and mind to rejuvenate. Medical Qigong therapy also **helps you to realize and change the inner factors that cause stress**, such as your thought pattern or your poor health habits. It helps you **to clarify your life goals, learn**

meditation skills, and **improve self stress management abilities**. You will be able to access a sense of peace and calm even in your most stressed-out moments.

Daily Self Stress Management is also important. Everyone is different, what works to reduce stress for you is as individual as you are. You should first identify the stressor, and then you have choices to avoid the stressor, alter the stressor, or adjust your attitude. You could release or relax your fight/flight energy through many different ways. And overall, adopting a healthy lifestyle is important to limit stress and prevent the physical and emotional illnesses it may cause.

References:

Mayo Clinic Family Health Book.

The Superstress Solution. by Roberta Lee.

Let Your Body Win - Stress Management Plain & Simple. by Jacquelyn Ferguson.