

Stress!

And How to Deal With It Effectively



What is Stress?

“Why do you ask?”

Because, if you don't know what stress is, it's hard to manage.

What Stress isn't...

**When asked to define stress, most
folks describe events -
like tests, finances, people who
bother them, etc.**

**But, that doesn't really define
stress
at a basic level.**

Here's the Official Definition: **(are you ready for this?)**

**Stress is the non-specific response
of the body to any perceived
demand.**

“Uh-huh. Can I go home now?”

That Non-Specific Response:

- Your heart beats faster
- You breathe faster
- You feel an adrenaline rush
- Your muscles tighten up
- Blood moves from the center of your body to your limbs
- Your pupils dilate

“When Does That Response Happen?”

Every time your body perceives a demand

Sometimes it's a small response (like when you open your eyes in the morning)

Sometimes it's a big response (like when you realize you're about to get hit by a car)

“So I’m OK because I can handle each little thing.”

Well, not necessarily. Small stress responses can be additive – that is, if a lot of little things are happening at the same time, you may feel a great deal of demand at that particular moment.

“Like having three tests, no time to study, having deadlines at work, needing to get to soccer practice, having a fight with my boyfriend, my parents are coming up to visit, and not having enough money to get by?”

That would be a good example.

“But I heard stress can be good for
you.”

You know that saying “Everything in moderation”?
It turns out that each of us has a level of stress that is
optimal for us. That is, at that particular level, we
work most efficiently and feel good.

“I hear a “but” coming...”

And here it is....

Most people find that too much or too little stress hinders their performance and their sense of well-being.

Too little stress = bored, unmotivated

Too much stress = overwhelmed, fearful, frozen

Moderate stress = energized, on-task, efficient

“OK, so how do I get in ‘the zone’?”

We’ll actually look at that in a bit, but first you need to know that the zone may change.

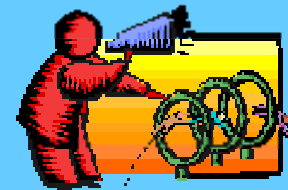
“This is getting complicated.”

Check out the next page.

The “Floating Levels”

How much demand you feel and how it affects you depend on many things which boil down to two variable dimensions.

1. How much demand is there at any moment in time for me?
2. How well am I able to cope with those demands at that time?



What Influences Demands?

Experience

- The more you have with a particular demand, the more, on average, you feel you can handle it, so the demand tends to be less.
- New tasks tend to be more demanding, because we may not know if we can be successful.

Number of Demands

- Remember, the number of demands is additive.

What Influences Coping?

Skills

- The more skills you have across a wide variety of dimensions, the more you will feel that you can handle whatever comes your way.

Health

- The more fit you are, physically and emotionally, the more energy you will have to devote to dealing with each demand.

So, Let's Recap

- Stress is a non-specific response of the body to any perceived demand
- Your ability to cope with stress depends on your physical and mental health at that moment
- Your ability to cope also depends on the experience and skills you have in dealing with that particular stress

“OK, fine. Now what?”



How to Deal With Stress:

First for the general considerations....



General Issue #1

Stress management works best when it is a lifestyle and not a response to a particular event.

“Oh darn, does that mean there’s ‘stress management homework’ every day?”

Only if you want to be good at it....

General Issue #2

Physical health is the basis for all good things...

Yes, eating right, sleeping right and getting moderate exercise are the building blocks of good stress management.

General Issue #3

**There are 3 things we think we can control:
the environment, other people and
ourselves. Guess which one you have the
most control over?**

“But if only ... my teacher wouldn't give me so much homework, I'd be o.k.”

“...my friends would be nicer to me, my stress would go away.”

“...I could just get the school to bend that rule just this once.”

And now, The Specifics!



You Can Try To Change the Environment

You may be able to change the environment to try to reduce the amount of demand.

Examples:

- turn off your cell when you need to concentrate
- organize your room and desk area so that you can find things
- put a “do not disturb” sign on your door

You Can Try To Change Other People

Most of us have figured out this is not very productive.

- other people just don't seem to want to change for us
- even if they say they do, they don't ever change
- even if they change, it takes so long, we can't wait

You might want to consider other techniques besides this.

You Can (!) Change Yourself #1



Remember, demand is usually determined by our lack of skills or our experience using the skills we have.

So.....

You Can (!) Change Yourself #2

...the first thing to do is take an inventory of our skills and decide whether we need to learn new skills or practice the ones we have so we are better at them.

Inventory, Then Act

“To be or not to be...”

No, act as in DO SOMETHING!

- where can you go to learn that new skill?
- are you willing to take the time and practice?
- skills to be learned can be physical, intellectual, or emotional

Remember, if you keep doing the same thing,
you'll keep getting the same results

Practice, Practice, Practice

In almost every case, if you're going to get good at something, you get good at it by practice.

The more you practice, the better you get.

How People Fail to Manage Stress

#1

1. “If I ignore it, it will go away.”

“It” may, but there will likely be more right behind it.

How People Fail To Manage Stress

#2

2. “Other people cause my stress.”

You control your response to other people.

3. “Next time I’ll do it differently.”

Unless you plan for changing what you do and learn new skills, chances are you’ll do the same thing.

How People Fail To Manage Stress

#3

4. “If I just push a little harder...”

Physical and mental health is the basic foundation of all stress management

How People Fail To Manage Stress

#4

5. “If I just learn this one new thing, I’ll be fine.”

Stress management is a lifestyle, not a single event, that incorporates daily physical and mental health and lifelong learning of new skills to become more competent at responding to the demands of life.

The BIG Recap #1

1. Stress is a nonspecific response of the body to any perceived demand.
2. Too much stress or too little stress affects performance negatively.
3. Things about which we have little experience or few skills to handle are perceived as more demanding.
4. Stressors are additive at any point in time.

The BIG Recap #2

5. The foundation of stress management is a healthy lifestyle.
6. You can learn new skills which will make you more able to handle demand.
7. You can practice the skills you have to become more efficient at using them.

Useful Skills for College and Where to Learn Them #1

Study Skills – including textbook reading, time management, note taking and test taking.

Academic Learning Center
Library 331, ext. 3300

Office of First Year Programs
Rotunda 388, ext. 3517

Useful Skills for College and Where to Learn Them #2

Personal Management Skills –

Stress, anxiety, depression, time management, etc.

Relationship Skills –

changing the way you relate to people

The Counseling Center

Byrne, ext 2152

Useful Skills for College and Where to Learn Them #3

Physical Fitness –

Cardio, weights, intramurals, etc.

McCann Fitness Center
Strength and Conditioning Coach
Ext 2482

Interesting Sites

Brochures by counseling centers across the country on a variety of topics, including stress management:

<http://ub-counseling.buffalo.edu/vpc.html>

Information on nutrition and healthy choices:

<http://www.balancemindbodysoul.com/>

Thanks for Visiting. We hope it
was helpful



Credit:

Adapted by the Marist College Counseling Center from an original powerpoint
by Dr. Don Rosen, Director of Counseling, Texas Womens' University



*Don't forget
the peace.*