

Stress and Coping Mechanisms

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Stress

- Stress is a normal reaction the body has when changes occur, resulting in physical, emotional and intellectual responses.



What is stress?

- Stress is a normal human reaction that happens to everyone. In fact, the human body is designed to experience stress and react to it.
 - When you experience changes or challenges (stressors), your body produces physical and mental responses. That's stress.
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- Stress responses help your body adjust to new situations.
- Stress can be positive, keeping us alert, motivated and ready to avoid danger. For example, if you have an important test coming up, a stress response might help your body work harder and stay awake longer.
- But stress becomes a problem when stressors continue without relief or periods of relaxation.





Body Reaction During Stress?

- The body's autonomic nervous system controls your heart rate, breathing, vision changes and more. Its built-in stress response, the "fight-or-flight response," helps the body face stressful situations.
- Physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms develop.
 - Physical symptoms of stress include:
 - Aches and pains.
 - Chest pain or a feeling like your heart is racing.
 - Exhaustion or trouble sleeping.


- Headaches, dizziness or shaking.
- High blood pressure.
- Muscle tension or jaw clenching.
- Stomach or digestive problems.
- Weak immune system.

Stress can lead to emotional and mental symptoms like:

- Anxiety or irritability.
 - Depression.
 - Panic attacks.
 - Sadness.
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- Often, people with chronic stress try to manage it with unhealthy behaviors, including:
 - Drinking too much or too often.
 - Gambling.
 - Overeating or developing an eating disorder.
 - Participating compulsively in sex, shopping or internet browsing.
 - Smoking.
 - Using drugs.
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What are some strategies for stress relief?


- You can't avoid stress, but you can stop it from becoming overwhelming by practicing some daily strategies:
 - Exercise: (Even a short walk can boost your mood)
 - At the end of each day, take a moment to think about what you've accomplished not what you didn't get done.
 - Set goals for your day, week and month.
 - Consider talking to a therapist about your worries.
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Coping Strategies



Coping means to invest one's own conscious effort, to solve personal and interpersonal problems, in order to try to master, minimize or tolerate stress and conflict.



- The psychological coping mechanisms are commonly termed coping strategies or coping skills.
 - The term coping generally refers to adaptive (constructive) coping strategies, that is, strategies which reduce stress.
 - In contrast, other coping strategies may be coined as maladaptive, if they increase stress.
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Coping Strategies

Two different coping strategies

- Problem-focused strategy
- Emotion-focused strategy

Problem-focused strategy

This strategy relies on using active ways to directly tackle the situation that caused the stress: and need to concentrate on the problem. Here are some examples:

Analyze the situation

Pay attention, avoid taking on more responsibility than you can manage.



Work harder

Stay up all night to study for an exam

Apply what you have already learned to your daily life.

You lose your job for the second time – you now know the steps to apply for a new job

Talk to a person that has a direct impact on the situation

Talk directly to your boss to ask for an extension to the project that is due in one week.



Seeking-understanding coping style refers to finding understanding of the problem and looking for a meaning of the experience.

Seeking help involves using others as a resource to solve the problem.

Avoiding the problem and trying to stay away from the problem or potential solution to the problem.



Emotion-focused strategy

Emotion-focused coping strategies are used to handle feelings of distress, rather than the actual problem situation. You focus on your emotions:

Brood (Worry)

you accept new tasks instead of saying “no”, but you keep complaining and saying it is unfair.

Imagine/Magic thinking

You dream about a better financial situation.



Avoid/Deny

You avoid everything that is related to this situation or you take drugs and/or alcohol to escape from this situation.


Blame

You blame yourself or others for the situation.

Social support

You talk to your best friend about your concerns.



- **Expressing feelings** or engaging in emotional release activities such as exercising or practicing meditation
 - **Seeking-understanding coping style** refers to finding understanding of the problem and looking for a meaning of the experience, and
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- **Seeking help** involves using others as a resource to solve the problem.
- Finally, people might respond to stressors by **avoiding the problem** and trying to stay away from the problem or potential solution to the problem.

