

IDENTIFY, UNDERSTAND, and MANAGE STRESS!

Where does stress come from?

Stress is your body's reaction to the demands of the world, and stressors are events or conditions in your surroundings that may trigger stress. Our lives are full of stress and understanding the types and sources of stress is an important part of stress management. Where does stress come from?

There are two main types of stress:

1. **Acute stress.** Also known as the fight-or-flight response, acute stress is your body's immediate reaction to a significant threat, challenge or scare. The acute-stress response is immediate, it's intense, and in certain circumstances, it can be thrilling. Examples of stressors that may cause an acute-stress response are a job interview, a fender bender or an exhilarating ski run.
2. **Chronic stress.** This results from long-term exposure to acute stress. The chronic-stress response is much more subtle than is the acute-stress response, but the effects may be longer lasting and more problematic. The stressors that may lead to chronic stress are the nagging, day-to-day life situations that often seem unrelenting. This includes relationship problems, work difficulties and financial woes.

Symptoms of stress: Persistent stress can lead to many adverse health problems, including:

- **Physical symptoms**, such as headache and fatigue
- **Mental symptoms**, such as poor concentration
- **Emotional symptoms**, such as irritability and depression
- **Social symptoms**, such as isolation and resentment

KNOW YOUR STRESSORS!

External exasperations:

External stressors are events and situations that happen to you. While you may have control over some of these stressors and how much you let them affect you, there are times when they extend beyond your control. Some examples include:

- **Major life changes.** These changes can be positive — a new marriage, a planned pregnancy, a promotion or a new house. Or they can be negative — the death of a loved one or going through a divorce.
- **Environment.** These stressors could include a noise disturbance, such as a barking dog, or excessive light, as from a billboard across the street.
- **Unpredictable events.** This category could include an increase in monthly bills, an uninvited houseguest or a pay cut.
- **Family.** The occasional spousal spat, a teenager who refuses to cooperate or a nagging mother-in-law can all contribute to stress.
- **Workplace.** Perhaps an overwhelming workload or an impossible boss.
- **Social.** For example, a blind date or making a speech to a room full of co-workers.

Internal irritations:

Not all stress stems from things that happen to you. Some of the stress response can be self-induced. Those feelings and thoughts that pop into your head and cause you unrest are known as internal stressors. Examples include:

- **Fears.** These can be things, such as a fear of flying or heights, or more-subtle apprehensions such as participating in a discussion with a group of strangers at a meeting.
- **Uncertainty.** Stemming perhaps from a looming restructuring at the office or waiting for medical test results.
- **Attitude.** Having a negative view of the world can be stressful, since you create an unpleasant environment in which to live.
- **Unrealistic expectations.** A perfectionist or controlling personality may lead to unnecessarily high stress levels. Overscheduling and not planning ahead can lead to worries.

Stress is here to stay

Not a day in your life goes by without encountering a situation or event that may trigger stress. And that's OK. By identifying and understanding the sources of your stress, you learn to better manage it. So what stresses you out?