

# Stress and Anxiety

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# What is stress?

- ▶ “Physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension”
- ▶ “A condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize”
  - ▶ Basically, that means: Stress is our response to situations where we feel unable to meet the needs of the situation.
    - ▶ Body’s fight or flight response to an unfavorable situation
- ▶ Small amount of stress can offer enough pressure to motivate us to do our best.



# Causes of stress

## ▶ External causes of stress:

- ▶ Major life changes
- ▶ Work or school
- ▶ Relationship difficulties
- ▶ Financial problems
- ▶ Being too busy
- ▶ Children and family

## ▶ Internal causes of stress:

- ▶ Pessimism
- ▶ Inability to accept uncertainty
- ▶ Rigid thinking, lack of flexibility
- ▶ Negative self-talk
- ▶ Unrealistic expectations/perfectionism
- ▶ All-or-nothing thinking



# Chronic stress

- ▶ When our body is constantly in “fight or flight” mode, it becomes easier for your body to trigger and harder for it to shut off.
- ▶ Chronic stress can suppress your immune system, upset digestive system and reproductive systems, increase risk of heart attack, stroke, and speed up aging process in general.
  - ▶ Re-wiring of the brain can also occur and lead to anxiety, depression and other mental health problems.
- ▶ Other health problems include: pain of any kind, sleep problems, autoimmune diseases, eczema, weight problems, thinking and memory problems,



# How anxiety plays a part with stress

- ▶ Anxiety can be a reaction to stress
  - ▶ Too much anxiety can lead to avoiding situations due to irrational fears, constant worrying
  - ▶ Other symptoms include; stomachache, muscle tension, headache, rapid breathing, fast heartbeat, sweating, shaking, dizziness, frequent urination, change in appetite, trouble sleeping, diarrhea, and fatigue
  - ▶ Uncontrolled anxiety can also lead to, feelings of impending doom, panic or nervousness, difficulty concentrating, irrational fear, and restlessness
- ▶ Stimulants including caffeine, illicit drugs, and alcohol can make symptoms worse. Some prescription medications can also make anxiety worse including; thyroid medications, asthma inhalers, and diet pills



# Ways to reduce stress

- ▶ A strong support network
  - ▶ Isolation can leave you at greater risk to succumb to stress
- ▶ Having a sense of control
  - ▶ Confidence and ability to influence events and persevere through challenges
- ▶ Outlook and attitude on life
  - ▶ Being generally hopeful and optimistic make a huge difference in ability to handle stress
- ▶ Ability to deal with emotions
  - ▶ Can increase your tolerance to stress and help you bounce back from adversity
- ▶ Knowledge and preparation
  - ▶ The more you know about stress beforehand, how long it will last and what to expect can also be beneficial



# Ways to improve ability to deal with stress/ reduce anxiety

- ▶ Upping activity level, regular physical activity
- ▶ Connecting with others, actually talking face-to-face
- ▶ Engaging your senses; listening to music, smelling something you enjoy, petting animals
- ▶ Learning to relax; yoga, meditation, deep breathing
- ▶ Eating a healthy diet
- ▶ Getting enough sleep
- ▶ Have a positive attitude
- ▶ Replace negative thoughts with positive ones.
- ▶ Limiting caffeine and alcohol consumption
- ▶ Scheduling time for hobbies
- ▶ Keeping a diary of your feelings
- ▶ Practicing deep breaths
- ▶ Recognizing the factors that trigger stress and anxiety
- ▶ Try your best
- ▶ Instead of aiming for perfection, be proud of how close you get.
- ▶ Figure out what triggers your anxiety
- ▶ Write in a journal when you're feeling stressed or anxious and look for a pattern.



- ▶ Stress and anxiety can present very similar and they can also feed off of each other, making the symptoms of one or both worse
- ▶ Using any skill or technique to reduce stress or anxiety can prevent any long term mental or physical effects
- ▶ Many of the causes of stress can also be linked to the causes of anxiety.
- ▶ Any way that you feel helps manage your stress, you can also use that skill to manage anxiety
- ▶ Unmanaged anxiety can lead to needing medication, but developing skills and having support of family and friends can help reduce anxiety enough to where you may never need medication or only need it briefly.
- ▶ Some anxiety and stress is beneficial as it can give us the pressure and motivation to do well on tests or at our jobs, but it is when it becomes overwhelming and feels constant is when we need to make sure to do what we can to manage our stress and anxiety.



# Resources

- ▶ <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/stress-coping.html>
  - ▶ This is a great site for all ages!
- ▶ <http://parentingchaos.com/anxiety-apps-kids/>
  - ▶ 15 Mindfulness and Relaxation Apps for Kids with Anxiety



# References

- ▶ <https://www.stress.org/what-is-stress/>
- ▶ <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-symptoms-signs-and-causes.htm>
- ▶ <https://www.healthline.com/health/stress-and-anxiety#managementtechniques>

