

What is Stress?

Stress is both an emotional and physical strain that is typically caused by factors from the outside world. Many people complain of being "stressed out" by work, obligations, and school. While stress is a normal response to events that make us feel unbalanced, worried or threatened in any way, too much stress can be a bad thing. From deadlines and demands to obligations and internal pressures, many people find their daily life to be quite stressful. A bit of stress can be motivating and positive, but too much stress can be quite harmful to one's lifestyle.



There are many different symptoms of stress. Stress reactions could include tension, inability to concentrate, irritability, a fast heartbeat, headache, and other physical symptoms. People who are experiencing stress in their lives may also experience trouble sleeping and feeling tired. Physical symptoms of stress might include an upset stomach, trouble breathing, a pounding heart, and sweating. Many people who are stressed out complain of pain, tightness and tension in their muscles. Stress can lead to more serious conditions as well, such as heart attacks.

Stress is part of your body's defense mechanism – when it senses danger (either real or imagined), your body goes into an automatic process called "fight or flight," which is also known as a stress response. When your body perceives a threat, your nervous system responds by releasing hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol. Your body is ready to fight – which explains the symptoms listed above, such as muscle tightness, increased heart rate, and quickened breath.

Stress is caused by both internal and external factors. Typical external causes of stress include financial problems, family issues, relationship difficulties, major life changes, and work. Internal factors that can lead to stress include perfectionism, unrealistic expectations, pessimism and negativity.

Stress can be reduced using many different techniques. Exercising and practicing relaxation techniques such as yoga or meditation can be helpful. Strengthening relationships by volunteering, spending time with friends, or joining a new class can also be helpful. Some people find it very difficult to cope with stress, and may turn to alcohol or drugs. This leads to further problems and should be avoided as a means of coping with stress.

It is very common for people to feel stress. It can be helpful in some ways – stress is part of what makes us study for a test when we would rather be doing something else. However, if stress is overwhelming or affecting one's life and relationships, it is best to speak to a professional about ways that stress can be reduced.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. A stress response is also known as an automatic process called:
 - a. Fight or Flight
 - b. Automatica
 - c. Stress-Activation
 - d. Stresseritis

2. Perfectionism is an example of:
 - a. An external factor to stress
 - b. An internal factor to stress
 - c. A stress-related disease
 - d. A method of relaxation.

3. Stress can lead to serious conditions, such as:
 - a. Diabetes
 - b. Kidney Disease
 - c. Liver problems
 - d. Heart problems such as heart attacks.

4. John is worried about a talk he has to give at work tomorrow. He stays up late practicing his presentation. This is an example of:
 - a. "Fight or Flight"
 - b. How stress can be a positive motivator
 - c. Stress reduction
 - d. Abnormal behavior

5. Turning to _____ and _____ is never a good way of coping with stress.
 - a. Drugs and Alcohol
 - b. Exercise and Travel
 - c. Professional Help and Meditation
 - d. Yoga and Deep Breathing

Name: _____ Date: _____

Short Answer Questions

1. Name two hormones your body releases when it sense danger.
2. Have you ever felt stressed about something? Explain.
3. Jane is stressed about giving a speech in front of an audience. List some of the physical symptoms she will likely experience.
4. List three ways a busy businessperson might relax to reduce stress.
5. List two internal factors that could contribute to stress.
6. List two external factors that could contribute to stress.
7. "I'm so stressed out," complains Brian. "There are tons of deadlines at work, and I'm supposed to go to a wedding this weekend. My mother won't stop telling me it's time to have kids, and I'm scared my wife might leave me for her scuba instructor." Is Brian suffering from *external* or *internal* stress symptoms?

ANSWER KEY:

Multiple Choice:

1. a
2. d
3. b
4. d
5. a

Short Answer:

1. Adrenaline and Cortisol.
2. Individual Response.
3. She could feel nauseas, sweaty profusely, experience heart palpitations and have difficulty breathing.
4. Individual Response. Example: A busy business person might practice yoga, volunteer at a soup kitchen, and go for a long run to reduce stress.
5. Any two of the following internal factors would be correct: perfectionism, unrealistic expectations, pessimism and negativity.
6. Any two of the following external factors would be correct: Financial problems, family issues, relationship difficulties, major life changes, and work.
7. Brian is experiencing external stress symptoms.