

Management Techniques

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What is Stress Management? A definition Set of techniques and programs intended to help people deal more effectively with stress in their lives by analyzing the specific stressors and taking positive actions to minimize their effects.” (Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine, 2008).

What is stress? Stress is the “psychological, physiological and behavioral response by an individual when they perceive a lack of equilibrium between the demands placed upon them and their ability to meet those demands, which, over a period of time, leads to ill-health” (Palmer, 1989).

Symptoms of stress:

Although we all experience stress differently, some common symptoms include: Difficulty sleeping, Weight gain or weight loss, Stomach pain, Irritability, Teeth grinding, Panic attacks, Headaches, Difficulty concentrating, Sweaty hands or feet, Heartburn, Excessive sleeping, Social isolation, Fatigue, Nausea, Obsessive or compulsive behaviors

1. Why is stress helpful? :

Historically stress was our friend. It acted as a protective mechanism that warned us of danger; a natural reaction telling us when to run. This response is now referred to as the “fight or flight” response, or the “stress response”. It’s believed that stress has remained part of the evolutionary drive because of its usefulness in helping us to survive. Since when it’s used at the right time, stress temporarily increases our awareness and improves physical performance. (Van Duyne, 2003).

2. Why is stress harmful? :

Repetitive exposure of the stress response on our body is proven to lead to long-lasting psychological and physical health issues, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, anxiety and depression. Stress has been referred to as the “silent killer” as it can silently cause heart disease, high blood pressure, chest pain, and an irregular heartbeat.

3. Tips for Stress Management

- **Understand your stress:** How do you stress? This can be different for everybody. By understanding what stress looks like for you, you can be better prepared and reach for your stress management toolbox when needed.
- **Identify your stress sources:** What causes you to be stressed? Be it work, family, change or any of the other potential thousand triggers.
- **Learn to recognize stress signals:** We all process stress differently so it’s important to be aware of your individual stress symptoms. What are your internal alarm bells? Low tolerance, headaches, stomach pains or a combination from the above ‘Symptoms of stress’
- **Recognize your stress strategies:** What is your go-to tactic for calming down? These can be behaviors learned over years and sometimes aren’t the healthy option. For example, self-medicating with alcohol or overeating.
- **Implement healthy stress management strategies:** It’s good to be **mindful** of any current unhealthy coping behaviors so you can switch them out for a healthy option. For example, if overeating is your current go to, you could **practice meditation** instead, or make a decision to phone a friend to chat through your situation. The American Psychological Association suggest that switching out one behavior at a time is most effective in creating positive change.