



Stress: is it sabotaging your life? What stress is, and how to manage it.

Life is normally full of ups and down, and it is more than likely that we have all felt stressed during some point in our life. During periods of stress we may feel overwhelmed or start to feel burned out. We may experience headaches or migraines, have stomach problems or feel tired before the week has barely begun. Feeling stressed can be unsettling, difficult and sometimes even debilitating.

The good news is, that how stressed we get or how often this happens, are two things that we can have an enormous influence over. Without smart habits for dealing with stressful situations, life can be a whole lot more difficult than it needs to be. Effective stress maintenance involves managing what we eat, how we think, the manner we treat our body, what actions we take on a regular basis and how we deal with social interactions. These key factors of stress management are the foundational blocks that help build harmony with ourselves, others and our immediate environment. If we cultivate these factors and apply them to our daily routine, we will find bliss where others find havoc and mayhem.



What is stress?

Stress is our body's way of responding to any kind of demand or threat. When we feel threatened our nervous system responds by releasing a flood of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, which arouse the body for emergency action. This triggers the heart to pound faster, the breath to quicken, the muscles to tighten, blood pressure to rise, and our senses to become sharper. These physical changes increase our strength and stamina, speeding up our reaction time, and enhancing our focus. This is known as the "fight, flight, freeze, flop or friend response" (Lodrick, 2007) and is our body's way of protecting it. The nervous system rouses for emergency action—preparing us to either fight, flee, freeze, flop or befriend the danger at hand.

When stress is within our comfort zone, it can help us to stay focused, energetic, and alert. In emergency situations, stress can save our life - giving us extra strength to defend ourselves or to slam on the brakes to avoid an accident. Stress can also help us to meet challenges and keep us on our toes to achieve the best we can. But beyond our comfort zone, stress stops being helpful and can start causing major damage to our mind and body.



- Reproductive issues
- Pain of any kind
- Heart disease
- Digestive problems
- Sleep problems
- Cognitive and memory problems

Signs and symptoms of chronic stress or stress overload

The following table lists some of the common warning signs and symptoms of chronic stress. The more signs and symptoms you notice in yourself, the closer you may be to stress overload.

Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms	
<p>Cognitive Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Memory problems ■ Inability to concentrate ■ Poor judgment ■ Seeing only the negative ■ Anxious or racing thoughts ■ Constant worrying 	<p>Emotional Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Moodiness ■ Irritability or short temper ■ Agitation, inability to relax ■ Feeling overwhelmed ■ Sense of loneliness and isolation ■ Depression or general unhappiness
<p>Physical Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Aches and pains ■ Diarrhea or constipation ■ Nausea, dizziness ■ Chest pain, rapid heartbeat ■ Loss of sex drive ■ Frequent colds 	<p>Behavioral Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eating more or less ■ Sleeping too much or too little ■ Isolating yourself from others ■ Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities ■ Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax ■ Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

