

Understanding Stress

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Your daily life can be stressful and this stress can affect your quality of life. It is important to understand what causes you stress and how that stress is uniquely expressed by you (Emotional, Physical and Behavioral), so that you can find solutions to reduce, if not eliminate, the negative affects of life's stressors.

EMOTIONAL STRESS: Some people feel stress more keenly than others. They hold on to the stress and pressure even after the immediate situation has passed, wondering whether they did the right thing or continuing to be angry or fearful. Symptoms can be – feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, loss of sex drive, depression, insomnia or sleeping too much, and low energy level. Solutions can be – identifying what you are feeling, listening to your inner self-talk and learning how to be more positive and encouraging toward yourself, and working with a therapist to process any unfinished childhood issues, or to treat low self-esteem or depression.

PHYSICAL STRESS: People who tend to deny their feelings and deny the needs of their body are more likely to show their stress in physical ways. Their bodies express the stress they are under, even when their words deny it. They tend to be super-human and keep going and going until they collapse into sickness or exhaustion. Symptoms can be – back, chest or abdominal pain, physical disorders or illnesses, grinding teeth, stiff muscles, heartburn, and diarrhea. Solutions can be – engaging in regular exercise (something you enjoy), regularly practicing a relaxation technique like yoga or progressive relaxation, and working with a nutritionist to understand how certain foods and drinks can negatively affect the body.

BEHAVIORAL STRESS: People who minimize or deny the stress they are under often develop self-defeating behaviors. While these may temporarily relieve pressure, they often simply become new sources of stress, since they create new health and interpersonal problems. Symptoms can be – avoiding tasks, difficulty completing assignments, problems sleeping, substance abuse with drugs or alcohol, overeating, and criticizing, blaming, or ridiculing others. Solutions can be – learning better time management skills, developing your own creative talent, and working with a relationship therapist to improve your interpersonal communication skills.