

Stress

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Stress is the physical, mental, emotional, social, and/or spiritual pressures and anxieties put on us by conflicts, demands put upon us by others, low self esteem, role demands, our goals and aspirations that remain unfulfilled, our fears and anticipations, and life's events [ie: marriage, divorce, adoption, illness, experiencing a family member's or friend's death, changing or losing jobs, failing a test, money problems, sexual problems, or relational difficulties]. This is not an exhaustive list; however, it provides many of the typical stressors students face.

Stress is not always negative more undesirable. Some stress acts as an internal motivator. It is the amount of stress react to and manage it that counts most. Stress cannot and should not be completely eliminated or ignored. We need to learn ways to manage stress and to channel it to our advantage. Stress management and channeling are skills that can be learned with focus and effort.

Some crucial factors in managing and channeling stress are: (1) knowing your symptoms of stress – some typical **physical manifestations** include: sudden loss of or gain in appetite, restless sleep patterns, mid day fatigue, and panic attacks – some common **emotional symptoms** of stress include: sudden mood swings, atypical loss of temper, emotional outbursts, unusual hurt feelings, and weepiness – often observed/felt **mental stress** symptoms include: repetitive bad decision-making, loss of short-term memory, sporadic inarticulateness, shortened attention span, and increased impatience with others and with tasks – some **spiritual symptoms** of stress include: lowered expectation of self and of others, increased deceptive behavior, apathy, isolation from others, lowered empathy, and deteriorating or neglectful relationships; (2) being able and willing to admit to yourself and to others that you are experiencing stress; denial of stress is yet another stressor; (3) changing thought and behavior to adapt to and to alter stressful life experiences; and (4) not feeling guilty about being stressed out; stress is the body's way of alerting you to the need for better management and channeling.

Channeling stress means putting the stress energy to your temporary advantage. We are all somewhat stressful before an examination. Rather than freaking out, giving up, engaging in aversive behaviors, or dwelling on potential adverse outcomes, positive stressor management skills would include: focusing on the task at hand, assuring yourself adequate time to study and to rest prior to the exam, relaxing before the event, and thinking positively about the exam process and outcome.

Stress is natural; but like food, water, sex, labor, sleep, etc.; it needs to be dealt with in moderation and not be ignored. Stress in moderation is a battery rejuvenator; in too heavy doses, stress causes heart attacks, strokes, and misery.