



UNDERSTANDING STRESS

STRESS CAN BE CAUSED BY:

- A change in your life
 - desired or undesired
- Too much or too little of a good thing
- Hassles, inconveniences and disillusionments
- Ambiguity and uncertainty
- Too many or too few things to do

STRESS CAN CAUSE YOU TO:

- Feel angry, guilty or anxious
- Feel challenged and energized
- Lose sleep
- Increase or decrease your performance
- Question yourself

STRESS CAN BE MANAGED BY:

- Taking time out to do something fun
- Exercising and relaxing
- Avoiding self-criticism
- Thinking positively
- Using your support system



UNDERSTANDING STRESS

Stress is the natural reaction to the demands in our lives. It can be exhilarating or burdensome, depending on how we each perceive the demands, and our ability to handle them. What is stressful to you may not be as stressful to someone else, and what is stressful today may not be as stressful at some other time. Having a variety of responsibilities, having to meet challenges, putting up with hassles, dealing with change and loss, are a part of everyone's life. To a large extent, these demands are what give our life meaning and fullness. The trick in managing the stress of demands is being able to build your capacity to cope with them.

PAYING ATTENTION TO SIGNALS OF TOO MUCH STRESS

Being aware of when you are under too much stress is especially important during times of extraordinary circumstances that are undesirable, unfamiliar, uncertain or threatening. You should also watch for signals of too much stress when you are experiencing increasing demands. Each person has their own stress signals; the important thing is to pay attention to them early and shift gears to take care of yourself. If you don't, you risk having the stress signals grow "louder" and more disruptive until you are forced to shift gears.

PHYSICAL SIGNALS

Include headaches, changes in sleep patterns or appetite, indigestion, neck or shoulder tension, sweaty palms, racing heart, one too many colds.

BEHAVIORAL SIGNALS

Demanding, controlling, impatient, critical of self and others, procrastination, increased perfectionism, overeating, abuse of alcohol.

EMOTIONAL SIGNALS

Angry, nervous, tense, easily upset, on edge, lonely.

COGNITIVE SIGNALS

Distractibility, forgetful, loss of creativity and humor, memory loss, mistake prone.