



Stress

Everyone experiences stress at times, and it is a natural reaction to life experiences. Stress can result from everyday responsibilities at work at home, serious life events, war, or a loved one's death.

Short-term stress can be good. Hormones are released that readies the body by increasing heart rate, breathing rate and prepares the muscles to respond.

Long-term stress harms the body. The long term stress is chronic stress; examples are:

- irritability
- anxiety
- depression
- headaches
- insomnia

Chronic stress can also be a factor in overeating or not eating enough, alcohol or drug abuse, and social withdrawal.

The effects of stress

The mechanical process of stress begins when the brain signals the adrenal glands to release adrenaline and cortisol hormones. The heartbeat raises, and the blood supply increases to areas of the body that are anticipating work.

When the cause of stress diminishes, all systems should go back to normal. If not, then the situation is worsened.

The stress hormones affect the respiratory and cardiovascular systems. During the stress response, breathing becomes faster, and the heart pumps faster to distribute oxygen-rich blood to the body quickly. Stress hormones will cause the blood vessels to constrict and divert more oxygen to muscles, so there is more strength to take action. Chronic stress or stress that happens often requires the heart to work harder and longer. When the blood pressure rises, so do the risks.

Also, under stress, the liver produces extra blood sugar (glucose) to boost energy. The extra blood sugar released by the liver increases the risk of type-2 diabetes.

Besides, the digestive system is affected. Stress can induce heartburn or acid reflux. Stress by itself does not cause ulcers; the bacteria *H.pylori* does. However, stress can cause an ulcer to act up.

Muscles are also affected by stress. If the muscles cannot relax, they become tight. Tight muscles can cause body aches and headaches.

Stress also affects testosterone and menstrual cycles. Testosterone levels may drop, and menstrual cycles can amplify.

Stress affects the immune system, initially in a good way, but the long term is detrimental.

Stress is essentially a chain of neuroendocrine mechanisms. Hormones secreted in the brain stem start the process, followed by an increased secretion of hormones from the adrenal gland, especially adrenalin and noradrenalin, which keep the whole organism in a state of heightened alertness.



It is evident that stress is part and parcel of our life; all living creatures must react to threatening situations appropriately. A life without stressors and stress would be not only unnatural but also dull. Stress cannot be divorced from life, just as birth, death, food, and love are inseparable.

Five Things About Stress

Stress is a natural occurrence and is how the brain and body respond to any

demand. Everyone experiences stress now and again. Everyone handles stress differently. Moreover, all types of stress carry mental and physical risks.

Stressors include:

- Methodical stress of daily life relative to home and work.
- Unexpected pressure happens by a sudden negative change in life experiences.
- Trauma such as an accident, natural disaster, or war.

Stress can have a positive effect by improving awareness and performance. An interview, an exam, a dangerous situation are examples of short-term positive pressure.

Long-term stress can be dangerous to a person. If stress continues after the danger has subsided, then a situation called chronic stress occurs. With chronic stress, the body can interfere with sleep patterns, digestion, the immune system, and the reproductive system.

Routine stress is another type of stress, and it may be the most complex to diagnose because the body does not receive a clear signal to return to normal. Routine stress is a factor in more severe health issues like diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Everyday

stress has also been associated with cognitive problems such as depression and anxiety.



Stress can be managed in many ways depending on the source, for example:

- Low energy, feeling depressed, difficulty sleeping, easily angered, alcoholism, or substance abuse.
- often exercise, thirty minutes per day
- check-in with your doctor
- prioritize your task list and set achievable goals
- Relax and try stress-reducing programs like stretching, yoga, swimming.
- You can learn more about stress at the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) (www.nccih.nih.gov/health/stress).
- Increase human interaction with friends and relatives who will support you.
- Get involved with the church and missionaries.

Immediately seek help if you have suicidal thoughts or use drugs or alcohol to cope. Resources are available at www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp.

Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
800-273-8255

Paracelsus, a medical doctor of the early 16th century, said that the dose determines whether a compound is toxic or not (Dosis sola facit Venum). The same holds for stress: the amount determines whether stress will have adverse effects on health or increase the human ability to cope with life. The borders between everyday physiological and pathological stress are not known. Only one thing is sure: this border varies from one individual to another.

The more the term stress was used, the more it became a myth. Eventually, the word was used for nearly every kind of pressure on people. Psychologists and social scientists have done detailed research on the phenomenon of stress and formed a much clearer conception of it, particularly concerning occupational stress.

Stress is a negative emotional experience associated with unpleasant feelings. These

unpleasant feelings created anxiety, tension, depression, anger, fatigue, lack of vigor, and confusion. These feelings characterize mood, often studied by specially designed questionnaires called a profile of mood states, POMS.

Occupational stressors are the concept of the person-environment fit. The environment is the social as well as the physical environment. Some authors distinguish the fit between the person's needs and their satisfaction through the job environment; others refer to the fit between the demands of the job environment and the relevant worker's ability to meet those demands.



The measurement of stress

An individual psychological state is a way a person sees and then experiences the (work) environment. There are no direct physiological measures of stress. The measurement of pressure at work must focus on the individual's psychological state. Thus, a first step is to ask the person about their emotional experiences or mood concerning the situation at work.

Field studies on occupational stress are based on extensive questionnaire surveys on working conditions, workers' health and well-being, potential stressors, job satisfaction, and mood states. Many authors use scales that have become standardized and widely used instruments for which normative data are available.

A popular method of evaluating psychological response criteria today is the use of mood checklists. These procedures serve to gauge the worker's feelings. An example of monotonous and repetitive tasks significantly increased self-reported stress with significant decreases in self-reported arousal.

Another approach is psychosocial questionnaires that evaluate perceptions and feelings about the job situation, including job satisfaction, perception of

workload, work pace, career opportunities, supervisory style, and organizational environment.

Computer stress

Anecdotal reports and general experience indicate that the introduction of computers into offices also creates some psychological problems. In some cases, this technology imposes a performance increase and, therefore, a more significant workload.

Here are a few generalizations:

1. Generally speaking, computer operators do not show symptoms of excessive stress.
2. Data-entry or data acquisition experience, on average, more potent psychosocial stressors report low job satisfaction and indicate a higher frequency of mood changes for the worse and gastrointestinal or other psychosomatic troubles.
3. Other studies, including repetitive computer jobs, did not reveal more psychosocial stressors or stress symptoms than control groups. It concludes that it is not the work with the computer but the shoddy work setup and equipment placement.
4. Apart from repetitive and monotonous jobs, computer operators are, on the whole, satisfied with their work.

They lead many employers to fear the possibilities of negative impacts associated with this demographic trend. On the one hand, they are concerned that having age-gifted workers on the job may mean escalating age-related healthcare costs, workers' compensation, and pension liabilities.

On the other hand, they worry about impacts on quality and productivity or an impending shortage of skilled labor as skilled, experienced veteran workers retire. However, these concerns have not been paralyzing. Employers are positively looking at the aging workforce issue and have implemented policies and practices that support a more competitive, sustainable, and safer workforce, regardless of its overall age. We will share strategies from our experience and our client's experiences.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 25% of the workforce will be over 55 in 2020. That is one in four workers — up from one in every five workers just two years ago. Why? In addition to Boomers, eliminating mandatory retirement and enacting age discrimination laws accounts for some of this trend. Better life expectancy and health are partly responsible. Moreover, for most, early retirement is essentially a thing of the past. Many workers now choose to or must remain in the workforce longer than initially planned.

So what about health and safety concerns related to the graying of our offices, retail

outlets, and factories? There is no consistent relationship between aging and work performance. Although older workers are more likely to have chronic health conditions and physical limitations, these factors are not directly related to decreased work performance in most cases. Moreover, there are many advantages to maintaining and hiring older workers. They generally have more experience, better relationships with co-workers, and report less stress at work. Older workers also have fewer non-fatal injuries than their younger counterparts. Nevertheless, when an injury occurs, it tends to be more severe, and it takes longer for the worker to recover.

Work is beneficial for many of us as we age. Work may provide access to better healthcare benefits. Emerging research shows a positive relationship between working longer, better cognitive function, and a longer life span. Work keeps us engaged and socially connected with others. It keeps us more technologically savvy and current with the world around us.

The good news is that a well-designed workplace with favorable policies and programs to optimize the health of aging workers benefits everyone. When workstations and job tasks match the capacity of each worker, everyone benefits. Maximizing workplace flexibility, when organized with personal health and well-being principles in mind, and when workplace policies

consistently are viewed through their health effects on workers, employers and workers both win. By preventing stresses or injuries that, over time, can have cumulative adverse effects on a worker's ability to work safely and productively, an employer can help assure that the U.S. continues to have a capable, experienced workforce.

Many effective workplace solutions are simple, do not have to cost very much, and can have significant benefits if implemented properly with worker input and support throughout all levels of management. Consider the strategies below for preparing the workplace for an older, healthier, and safer workforce.

Prioritize workplace flexibility. Workers prefer jobs that offer more flexibility over those that offer more vacation days. To the extent possible, give workers a say in their schedule, work conditions, work organization, work location, and work tasks.

Match tasks to abilities. Use self-paced work, self-directed rest breaks, and less repetitive tasks.

Avoid prolonged, sedentary work – it is not suitable for workers of any age. Consider sit/stand workstations and walking workstations for workers who traditionally sit all day.

Manage noise hazards (including excess background noise), slip/trip hazards, and

physical hazards, conditions that can challenge an aging workforce more.

Provide ergo-friendly work environments — workstations, tools, floor surfaces, adjustable seating, better illumination, and screens and surfaces with less glare.

Utilize teams and teamwork strategies for aging-associated problem-solving. Workers closest to the problem are often best equipped to find the fix.

Provide health promotion and lifestyle interventions, including physical activity, healthy meal options, tobacco cessation assistance, risk factor reduction and screenings, coaching, and onsite medical care.

Accommodate medical self-care in the workplace and time away for health visits.

Invest in training and building worker skills and competencies at all age levels. Help older employees adapt to new technologies.

Proactively manage reasonable accommodations and the return-to-work process after illness or injury absences. Require aging workforce management skills training for supervisors. Include a focus on the most effective ways to manage a multi-generational workplace.