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# Stress

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Stress is the body's automatic response to any physical or mental demand placed on it. When pressures are threatening, the body rushes to protect itself by preparing to defend itself. Under stress, change is experienced as a threat, which triggers the release of adrenaline from the brain. The body goes through three stages:

1. Alarm – when the body recognizes a stress and prepares for it. The adrenal gland secretes hormones, blood pressure rises, perspiration occurs, etc.
2. Resistance – the body repairs any damage done during the alarm stage. The signs fade and the body returns to normal.
3. Exhaustion – occurs if the stress doesn't go away or many stresses occur.

Not all stress is bad. It is necessary and can be beneficial in assisting us in physical life-threatening situations by letting us run faster and to fight harder. It gives us additional strength to help us in emergencies.

- Eustress is “good stress”. It is stress that comes from the demand of pleasant activities. Examples are: doing a training run, studying or working on a task, vacation, weddings, promotions, etc.
- Distress is “bad” stress. It is stress we experience when the demands are too great and for too long. Examples are: cramming for finals, having too much demand at work, troubled relationships, divorce, death of a loved one, changing residence or jobs, physical/Emotional illness, physical/verbal/emotional sexual abuse, etc. Continual distress produces exhaustion.

Events in your life may cause varying degrees of stress. Some can be more overwhelming than others and each person will deal with stress differently. Sometimes the events in our life that we may consider good can provide the most degree of stress. For example, getting married, changing jobs or residence can become overwhelming if we do not pace ourselves through the events. Lower degree of stress that may be caused by events in our daily routine such as, daily work schedule, child care/parenting, and constant noise can become overwhelming if we do not receive relief from the stress.

As any combinations of the aforementioned stressors or circumstances are experienced we can subtly accumulate stress. Over time this accumulated stress can become overwhelming and create other emotional symptoms such as, anxiety, depression (socially withdrawal, lack of motivation, problems with sleeping, eating, etc.) or physical conditions such as headaches, stomach problems, fatigue, etc.

As people become more stressed they often revert to a variety of methods to cope. These methods may include increase in alcohol and caffeine consumption, smoking, over the counter drugs, food, etc. Unfortunately this only makes the problem worse by decreasing the ability to fight the stress. More positive methods such as exercise, meditation, yoga, healthy diet, positive attitude, expressing feelings, talking problems out with a friend or counselor, time management, modifying the environment, and taking breaks and vacations are beneficial to the body and mind in the long run.

## **TREATMENT**

Counseling is a very helpful treatment for stress. Often the counseling will help you find the origin of the stress and identify new ways of coping with it. How you relate to stress is often from learned behaviors or responses from the past. Counseling will help find new ways to identify and handle the events before they turn into unhealthy stress. The emotional, Spiritual, social, and vocational needs should be addressed, as they become appropriate. Do not let your busy schedule or your pride get in the way of receiving help from family, friends, the church, or counseling professionals.