

Stress, anxiety and depression

Stress is a highly subjective phenomenon that it defies definition. However, there are many events in our lives can provoke stress. For example, leaving school, changing jobs, experiencing losses, having conflicts with our significant others, or even moving. We may also face many "daily hassles" which will also contribute to the levels of stress that we experience. Stress can be difficult to understand and cope. The emotional chaos it causes can make our daily lives miserable. It can also decrease our physical health, sometimes drastically. Ironically, we are not always aware that we are under stress. The habits, attitudes, and signs that can alert us to problems may be hard to recognize because they have become so familiar.

Some warning signs of stress:

- Shallow, rapid breathing
- Loss of physical stamina
- Loss of patience with people and things
- Have problem sleeping
- Race through the day
- Blow up easily
- Put things off regularly/ Unable to meet deadlines
- Have little rest
- Loss of sexual desire
- Worry constantly
- Experiencing memory loss
- Have no fun in life

Mental responses to stress include adaptive (good) stress, anxiety and depression. When stress enhances function, be it physical or mental, it may be considered good stress. However, if stress persists and is of excessive degree, it eventually leads to a need for resolution, which may lead either to anxious (escape) or depressive (withdrawal) behavior.

Ways to relieve stress:

Breathing exercise – Take a long, deep breath through your nose until you feel your lungs are fully expanded. Exhale slowly. Repeat this inhaling and exhaling exercise 5 to 10 times whenever you feel stressed throughout the day. This exercise will fill you up with oxygen, relieve muscle tension, and sharpen your mind.

Moving exercise – Get up and walk around. Stretch your body, swing your arms and shake your legs. This exercise will increase oxygen in your system, relieve muscle tension and get you away physically from the source of your stress.

Imaginary exercise – Find a relatively quiet place and visualize you are at the beach or in a mountain meadow or on a fishing boat. Call up the sights, the smells and the sounds.

Doing this exercise is like taking a five-minute mental vacation, giving you a daily physical and mental boost.

Chatting exercise – Find someone to talk with. Sometimes you just need a sympathetic ear or an opportunity to ventilate feelings. This also helps to strengthen your social network.

Laughing exercise – Laughter breaks tension and increases oxygen levels in your body. Go out with friends and have some fun will relax your muscles and mind.

Seek professional help – Some people are more private than others, they rather talk to a third party, someone they can trust and get advice. If you fall into this category or if you feel that your stress is originated in a problem beyond your control, you should seek professional help. Your company may have EAP. If not, ask around or surf the web to find someone to help you get to the core of your problem. It is worth spending a little money on getting professional help to prevent further mental and/or physical ill-health in your lifetime.