

Stress and Health:

- ✦ 80 to 90 percent of today's illnesses are stress-related.
- ✦ Over 75 percent of all visits to primary care physicians are to treat stress-related complaints.
- ✦ 60 to 70 percent of all patients visiting a physician have no physical disease but are somatizing stress.
- ✦ Virtually all illnesses are influenced for good or bad by our thoughts and our feelings.
- ✦ Research has shown that prolonged emotional stress and anxiety produce actual tissue changes and organ dysfunction (O'Hara, 1996).

The Power of Self-Care:

The benefits of physical exercise are undisputed—including minimizing the risk of heart attack, increasing good cholesterol (HDL), promoting weight control, and increasing longevity.

One of its greatest benefits is that it has the ability to reduce both stress and anxiety. **You can feel better when you exercise!** Physical health and psychological well-being are directly linked. Repeatedly, studies confirm that exercise improves your mood and decreases anxiety and tension. Just 10-minutes of exercise can lessen tensions and stress. Some simple ways to exercise include:

- ✦ Taking a short walk (either inside or outside)
- ✦ Stretching exercises
- ✦ Jumping-Jacks

If these initial steps do not provide relief from the pain, other options are available. Seek counseling if your symptoms do not abate. First, see your primary care physician to rule out possible physical causes of your symptoms, and if needed, ask his or her recommendation for a local therapist.

Although stress and anxiety are common, there are many steps you can take to manage and control it. You can find peace.

If you are in doubt about where to turn for assistance, please feel free to contact the Regent University Psychological Services Center at (757) 226-4488.



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Brochure author: Traci L. Forrest
Series Editor: LaTrelle D. Jackson, Ph.D. & Mary Beth Covert, M.A.
Published by: Regent University Psychological Services Center, 1000 Regent University Dr, CRB - 188, Virginia Beach, VA 23464
(757) 226-4488

Are You Stressed?

Help for Managing Stress and Anxiety



Regent University

Psychological Services Center

1000 Regent University Drive

Classroom Building Suite 188

Virginia Beach, VA

(757) 226-4488

Stress can be a powerful motivator when reacting to sudden danger or trying to meet a deadline. But more often than not, stress robs us of good health in mind, body and spirit. Sleepless nights become a rule and well-balanced meals a thing of the past. Family time seems to disappear. Pressures at work or at school overwhelm. Tasks on the to-do lists multiply. And worse, an impending sense of doom and depression gnaws at the soul. As the pace of life accelerates at an unstoppable speed, how and where can you find balance?

The way we perceive a situation is more important than the situation itself. Our thoughts and our stress and anxiety levels! The connection between a very stress-filled life and the probability of illness is influenced by how we respond, or perceive life's changes. Stress is not just a result; it is a cause. It is not just a product; it produces. When you connect with people and situations in anger, frustration, or depression, it causes a chain reaction very different from one in which you respond from inner strength, confidence, and a sense of calm. You have a choice between a life of well-being and one of stress.

“There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace with God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-8). (The Jerusalem Bible)

Worry is a conscious choice to try to control life events rather than believe that God is in control. Worry is a thief that robs us of joy, energy, peace of mind, and strength for today. The antidote for worry is absolute faith in God by turning everything over to Him in prayer. God promised to guard our hearts and our minds if we gave everything to Him. Our bodies were not meant for these worries.

We must learn how to turn stress and crisis into an opportunity for spiritual healing. We must strive to restore a sense of wholeness to our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. Connecting with God through prayer, meditation, and worship can help us to use our stresses as a vehicle for positive growth and an opportunity for positive change rather than defeat. You can weather a crisis better if you are able to find meaning and purpose in your life despite the crisis. This meaning and purpose can always be found in the Lord.

Emotional Symptoms:

Do you think to yourself:

- ✦ I am full of fears that I can't get out of my mind.
- ✦ I feel like something terrible is going to happen.
- ✦ I worry excessively.
- ✦ I feel uneasy and alone a lot of the time.
- ✦ I often feel isolated, lonely, down in the dumps, and depressed.
- ✦ I feel I have no control over what happens to me.
- ✦ I feel embarrassed, rejected, and criticized.
- ✦ I often feel like screaming with anger.

Physiological Symptoms:

Do you feel:

- ✦ Weak all over?
- ✦ Rapid, pounding heartbeat or palpitations?
- ✦ Tightness around your chest?
- ✦ Hyperventilation (a feeling that you cannot get enough air)?
- ✦ Periodic dizziness and sweating?
- ✦ Muscle tension, aches, or tremors?
- ✦ Chronic fatigue?

Cognitive Symptoms:

Do you think to yourself:

- ✦ I can't carry on. I've got to get out of here.
- ✦ What if I make a fool of myself?
- ✦ People are looking at me all the time.
- ✦ I'm having a heart attack.
- ✦ I'm going to faint.
- ✦ I'm going crazy.
- ✦ I can't go on alone; no one will help me.
- ✦ I can't go out; I will lose control.
- ✦ I feel confused and can't remember things.

If you have many of these symptoms, you may be suffering from stress and anxiety. It is important to keep in mind that you can have the greatest effect on changing your stress level.

Healing from Stress!

You can calm the waves of stress by:

1. Reframing how you see a situation—changing your thoughts from awfulizing or catastrophizing to a more neutral perspective. For example, changing your inner dialogue from “I can't stand it” to “This is not my preference, but...”
2. Building your resilience to stress by maintaining good health habits, such as nutrition and regular exercise.
3. Learning coping skills, such as the relaxation techniques of conscious breathing, muscular relaxation, meditation, and quiet time.
4. Having a strong support system of friends and relatives.
5. Keeping creative time and fun as a part of your life.
6. Releasing accumulated stress through stretching exercises and aerobic activities.
7. Improving your self-esteem.
8. Improving your communication skills.
9. Whatever works for you! Stargazing, a picnic, a walk in nature, playing with a pet, a pillow fight, sipping tea by a fire, watching a sunset.