

Stress Management with Self Care Techniques

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1. What is stress?

STRESS can be defined as a form of tension or strain in the body or the mind for which there is no release or outlet. When under stress, one is like a car in the neutral gear with the accelerator on, trying to exert initially, but unable to do so .

Stress is also defined as mental, physical, emotional tension, strain or distress. Stress is a fact of life. However too much stress can result in the breakdown of a person's physical, mental and emotional health. It has physical and emotional effects on us and can create positive or negative energy.

But not all stress is bad. Stress can have positive effects too. In fact, stress is a very natural and important part of life. Human body is designed to react to two types of stress. Good stress helps keep us alert, motivates us to face challenges, and drives us to solve problems. These low levels of stress are manageable and can be thought of as necessary and normal stimulation. However, Distress, on the other hand, results when our bodies overreact to events.

2. Different types of stress

There are five main types of stress that people experience. They are

1. Eustress
2. Distress
3. Hyperstress
4. Hypostress
5. Neustress

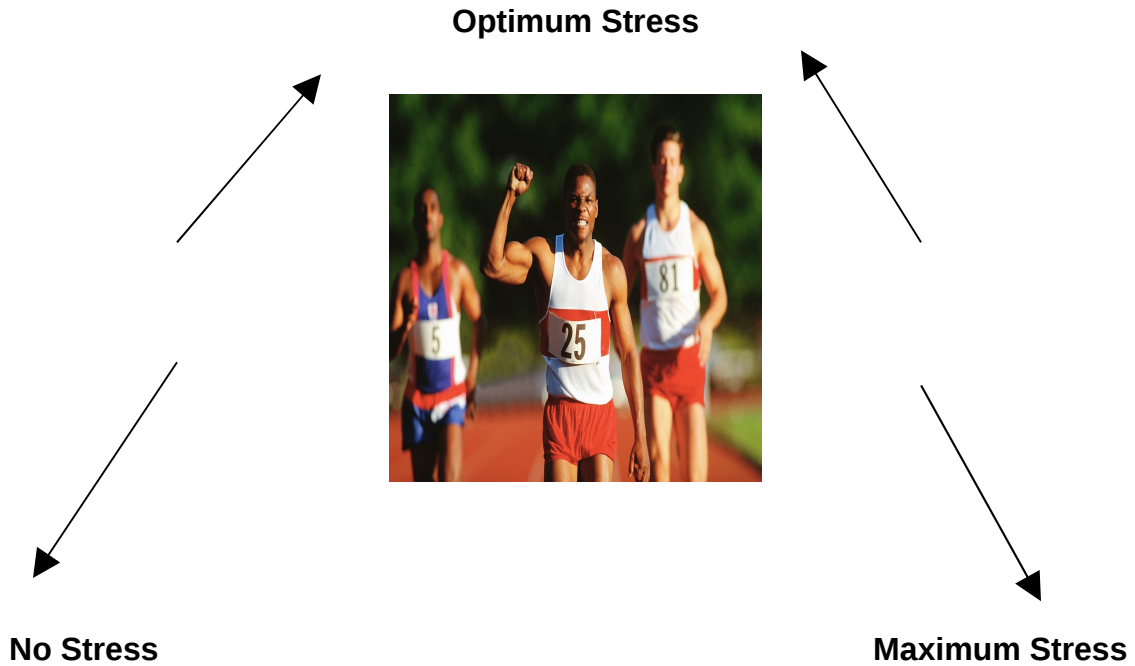
Eustress

Eustress is a kind of short-term stress that provides immediate strength. Eustress can be defined as a pleasant or curative stress. We can't always avoid stress. There are certain times when we do not want to avoid stress because controlled stress gives us that competitive edge in performance related activities like athletics, giving a speech, or acting, etc. Eustress arises at points of increased physical activity, enthusiasm, and creativity. Eustress is a positive stress that arises when motivation and inspiration are needed. A gymnast experiences eustress before a competition.

Eustress is a controlled stress that helps give you that extra push that you may need to get the job done, or do your best. Just like you hear some people say they work best under pressure, they are talking about eustress. Eustress can help you focus and concentrate better on the task at hand, giving you that competitive edge, that extra driving force. Eustress can add that measure of motivation to an otherwise dry existence.

The Stress Curve diagram illustrates the concept that, for any performance-related activity, there is an optimal amount of stress. If you are involved in an oral interview for a job, you will benefit from a certain amount of stress. It is stress that provides you with focus and gives you your "competitive edge" that will help

you think quickly and clearly and express your thought in ways that will benefit your interview process.



Examples of Eustress

1. Graduating from college
2. Getting married
3. Receiving a promotion
4. Changing jobs for better prospects
5. Winning competition
6. Buying a new home

Such examples of eustress contribute to individual excellence. The benefits of optimal stress, if handled properly, include opportunity for increased growth and maturity, independence and control.

Distress

Distress is a negative stress brought about by constant readjustments or alterations in a routine. Distress creates feelings of discomfort and unfamiliarity. There are two types of distress. Acute stress is an intense stress that arrives and disappears quickly. Chronic stress is a prolonged stress that exists for weeks, months, or even years. Someone who is constantly relocating or changing jobs may experience distress.

Examples of distress are



1. Chronic Pain
2. Anxiety
3. Depression
4. Lack of meaningful friendship
5. Cramming for exams
6. Having too much to do at work
7. Troubled relationships
8. Expressed hopelessness, anxiety or grief, etc.

Basically, distress is your body's way of responding to what it views as a tragic or upsetting event in your life. It can affect both your physical and your mental health, especially for chronic sufferers. Distress can interfere with your concentration; can lead to excessive absences from school and work, and can often make sufferers become very hard to get along with, even for friends and family members.

Hyperstress

Hyperstress is an excessive amount of stress. It occurs when an individual is pushed beyond what he or she can handle. Hyperstress results from being overloaded or overworked. When someone is hyperstressed, even little things can trigger a strong emotional response. A Wall Street trader is likely to experience hyperstress.



The most common sufferers of hyperstress are those who are overloaded trying to juggle children, careers, marriages, so much so, that one more little incidence could very easily push them over the edge. Mothers are often victims of hyperstress, as they may work and care for the home, husband, and children, or they may stay at home, plus juggle marriage and the demands of motherhood.

Hypostress

Hypostress is the opposite of hyperstress. Hypostress occurs when an individual is bored or unchallenged. People who experience hypostress are often restless and uninspired. A factory worker who performs repetitive tasks might experience hypostress. Hypostress happens when you suffer from extreme boredom, or when you have nothing in your life that stimulates you anymore. If you go to work everyday at the same time, same place, and perform the same repetitive work, then you are likely to suffer from hypostress.

When you lack stimulation or have an unchallenging job or if you are over satisfied with your job, you might be suffering from hypostress.

Neustress

Neustress is neutral stress, neither good nor bad. Neustress describes sensory stimuli that have no consequential effect, neither good nor bad. This kind of stress arises when a tornado hits an unoccupied island. It is a kind of stress which has no significant consequence. Also, from the scientific point of view, it has no real meaning.

3. What are Stressors?

The issues or factors that create stress are called stressors. Stressors are the situations, circumstances and other stimuli that are perceived to be a threat. Stress is often associated with situations that you find difficult to handle. How you view things also affects your stress level. If you have very high expectations, chances are that you will experience more than your fair share of stress. This includes for instance

Personality Stressors

- Self-perception
- Need for control
- Anxious reactivity
- Time urgency
- Personality traits
- Negativity
- Over-analyzing nature
- Anger, hostility

Psychosocial Stressors

- Financial insecurity
- Life changes
- Technological advances

Overload
Frustration
Deprivation
Trauma, loss

External Stressors

Occupation
Noise
Nutrition
Drugs, substance
Environment
Life events over which you have no control

Stressors can also be classified as short-term (**acute**) or long-term (**chronic**).

Acute Stress - Acute stress is the reaction to an immediate threat, more popularly known as the fight or flight response. The stress can be due to any situation that is experienced, even subconsciously or falsely, as a danger.

Common acute stressors include

- Noise
- Crowding
- Isolation
- Hunger
- Danger
- Infection
- Imagining a threat or remembering a dangerous event

Normally, once the acute threat has passed, the response system gets inactivated and the level of stress hormones returns to normal. This condition is known as the “relaxation response”.

Chronic Stress – Chronic stress is something which is not short lived. A person with chronic stress experiences it every day on an on-going basis. The stress gets aggravated when an individual tries to suppress it.

Common chronic stressors include

- Ongoing highly pressured work
- Long-term relationship problems
- Loneliness
- Persistent financial worries

4. How to recognize stress?

It is important to acknowledge the signs of stress for yourself, so that you can work out on how to protect yourself and deal with what is causing the stress. What are the warning signs that show that stress has crept into your life? Normally, people pay lot of attention to things in the outer world that are related to stress such as financial problems, troubles in relationships, and overwhelming responsibilities. But we do NOT to pay enough attention to our inner worlds, the signals that stress is starting to take its toll on us. Interestingly, we are often quite good at ignoring those internal signals and pushing ourselves even harder. If we keep pushing ourselves, eventually something inside of us will send warning signs that stress is becoming a problem.

The following are some of the symptoms that you need to watch out for:

Physical Symptoms

Tense muscles
Headaches
Fatigue
Restlessness
Colds
Indigestion
Sweaty Palms
Cold hands, feet
Dizziness

Emotional Symptoms

Angry outbursts/ bad temper
State of anxiety
Easily discouraged
Nervous laugh
Feeling of insecurity
Edginess
Overwhelming pressure
Crying easily
Feeling helpless

Shallow breathing

Feeling powerless

Mental Symptoms

- Difficulties in concentrating
- Difficulty in making simple decisions
- Forgetfulness
- Boredom
- No new ideas
- Expecting too much from others
- Loss of humour
- Constant worry
- Being pessimistic
- Lack of creativity
- Being self-critical

Behavioural Symptoms

- Increased alcohol, drug or tobacco use
- Nail-biting
- Reckless driving
- Absenteeism
- Workaholism
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Bossiness
- Procrastination
- Excess smoking
- Excess drinking

5. Checklist for determining your vulnerability to stress

For each of the following 20 items, rate how much of the time each applies to you. You might want to print this completed page for your reference.

	Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
1. I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.					
2. I get 7-8 hours of sleep, at least 4 nights a week.					
3. I give and receive affection regularly.					
4. I have at least 1 relative within 50 miles on whom I can rely.					
5. I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.					
6. I smoke less than half a pack					

of cigarettes a day (non-smokers = almost always).					
	Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
7. I drink fewer than 5 alcoholic drinks a week. (non-drinkers = almost always).					
8. I am the appropriate weight for my height.					
9. I have an income adequate to meet my basic needs.					
10. I get strength from my religious/spiritual beliefs.					
11. I regularly attend club or social activities.					
12. I have a network of friends and acquaintances.					
13. I have at least 1 friend in whom I confide about personal matters.					
14. I am in good health (including eyesight, hearing, teeth, etc.).					
	Almost Always	Usually	Sometimes	Almost Never	Never
15. I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.					
16. I have regular conversations with my housemates about					

domestic problems.					
17. I do something fun at least once a week.					
18. I am able to organize my time effectively.					
19. I drink fewer than 3 caffeine drinks a day.					
20. I take quiet time for myself during the day.					

What does your score mean?

- 0 - 10 indicates you have excellent resistance to the vulnerability of stress
- 11 - 29 little vulnerability to stress
- 30 - 49 some vulnerability to stress
- 50 - 74 serious vulnerability
- 75 - 80 extreme vulnerability

Source: University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter, August, 1985.

Scale Developers: Lyle Miller, Ph.D. and Alma Dell Smith, Ph.D. of Boston University Medical Center.

6. What are stressful situations?

Academic Stress

Normally, for a student of any discipline, the examination months and the month during which the results are declared can be safely guessed to be the most stressful period. The stress that the students face might be because of the following factors:

1. Fear of failing or letting down their parents.

2. The pressure placed on the students to succeed would be so high that the students unable to bear the pressure fall ill and in worst cases, they even attempt to commit suicide.
3. Not having confidence about the subjects studied.
4. Having extremely high expectations.
5. Comparing one with others.
6. Unrealistic goals set by the parents

Many students begin to feel an overwhelming amount of stress during exams. A little stress can help you stay alert and ready to do your best, but too much stress can cause exhaustion and make you feel miserable. The key to getting through an exam successfully is to find a balance of stress which you can control. Below are some suggestions for helping you manage your stress during exams.

Before the exams

1. Make a timetable to organize test dates and study hours.
2. Divide the difficult subjects into smaller portions so that they become easier to study and understand.
3. Eliminate distractions.
4. Avoid idling away the time and reward yourself when you finish a task
5. Eat a balanced diet and try to avoid "stress eating"
6. Get some exercise everyday
7. Try to get at least 6 hours of sleep a night
8. Take time everyday to relax and make sure to take study breaks
9. Watch what you tell yourself- If you change your "Am I going to fail thoughts" to "I'm going to do the best I can," you'll greatly reduce exam anxiety

During the exams

1. Reach the exam hall at least one hour before.
2. Stop studying an hour before the exam.

3. You probably won't learn anything new in an hour, but you might see something you don't know which can cause additional stress and anxiety.
4. Don't talk about the test with other students once you get there. Everyone is anxious before the test and anxiety can be contagious.
5. When you first get the test, take a deep breath and relax.
6. Read the entire test before starting and write down a few notes. This can help jog your memory later as you go through the test.
7. Answers all the questions first which you find easier. Leave the difficult ones for a later time. At least you will score in those questions which are comparatively easier.
8. Do not forget to carry the identity card, admission ticket, etc.
9. Remember managing stress effectively, while you are still young can help prevent diseases in the future.

Job Stress

According to a report, in India, nearly three fourth of the employees believe that workers have more on-the-job stress than a generation ago. If job stress affects the employee personally and professionally, it could affect the employer financially to a great extent. The employer's loss could be due to the following factors:

1. Accidents
2. Absenteeism
3. Employee turnover
4. Diminished productivity
5. Direct medical, legal, and insurance costs
6. Worker's compensation awards, etc.

The factors that cause stress at work can be due to the following factors:

1. The demands of the job

2. Meeting deadlines which could be statutory or self-created
3. The lack of support from colleagues and superiors
4. Their relationships with colleagues
5. Working long hours
6. Boring, mundane and repetitive work
7. Accidents at workplace
8. Uncomfortable workplace
9. Lack of training
10. Whether they understand their roles and responsibilities
11. Management's attitude towards the welfare of the workforce
12. Juggling between professional and personal or social commitments
13. Overburdened with work
14. Not happy with the salary/perks
15. Not happy with the job/boss
16. Bullying
17. Lack of feedback on performance
18. Value and contribution
19. Technological change
20. Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities

Stressful relationships

Man is a social animal. Everybody needs supportive relationships to get through challenging times. But sometimes the people we love the most can cause us the highest levels of stress. If your partner, family or children are getting you down, here is something for you.

Know your limits

People under stress often find it difficult to differentiate between their 'sphere of command' and their 'sphere of apprehension'. In a car, for example, our 'sphere of command' is our ability to manoeuvre our car skillfully on a busy road; our '

sphere of apprehension ', on the other hand, might include the worries we might feel if stuck in a traffic jam. We have no command, however, over the latter; the only thing that we can alter is our response to it.

Relationships are the same. We might be 'apprehensive' about our partner, but at the end of the day 'our sphere of command' remains our own behaviour. Thinking that we can control a loved one is merely a source of stress.

Leading an aimless life

If you don't know what you want from life, you're more likely to follow those directions that you feel are wrong. To ascertain what really matters to you, write down on a piece of paper all the important ingredients in your life (work, relationships, children, hobbies, dreams, etc.), and then rank them in order from the most to the least important.

Once you have properly assessed your values, you will find it much easier to prioritize when conflict arises.

Stop comparing

One of the most stressful habits of modern life is our tendency constantly to compare ourselves to others. But you must remember that even though other families or couples or individuals may look happier, richer or more fulfilled, you will never know what really happens behind closed doors. Trying to compete, or letting others make you feel inferior, stops you concentrating on your own unique talents and goals.

Know when to say 'NO'

The most difficult in a relationship is to say 'no' to somebody you love. However, if you don't learn to refuse, at least some of the time, you run the risk of becoming overloaded and enraged. It's better to spend some time to consider

which requests you are happy to fulfill and which you are not. If you clearly draw the line and show your family members as to what you can fulfill and what not, it helps you avoid getting stressed.

Communicate

Good communication is the key to stress-free relationships. Letting your partner know when you are under pressure, rather than expecting them to guess, can help the whole family plan ahead to lighten the load. Allotting ten minutes each evening for you and your partner to share your experiences of the day and explain its stresses will strengthen your bond and increase the chances of you both feeling understood.

Blame Game

Blame is one of the most baneful habits in relationships. Blaming someone for your mistake creates a lot of stress in you. It's natural to argue - and it can be useful to clear the air and update how we feel - but it is essential to learn to forgive. Otherwise, the pain from one day transfers to the next.

If you find it hard to stop blaming your partner, why not try and reframe the dispute and ask yourself, 'What part of the argument is my fault?' Ultimately, we have to take responsibility for our own feelings.

Learn to accept the changes

When your child grows up and learns to handle things independently, learn to accept the changes. Give them the freedom. Do not try to take refuge at home and cling to all that is familiar. We want our partner to remain the same; we don't want our children to grow up and leave home. But unless a relationship changes and grows it will begin to languish, and the great irony is that the more we struggle to keep things the same, the greater the pain we experience. Try to see change at home as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Financial Stress

Financial stress is a common complaint that affects every household to some degree. You can recognize financial stress by the pressure it imposes on your family.

- You worry over bills, especially ones that are overdue.
- Interest on revolving credit accounts keep piling up when you only make small payments on bills.
- You worry over not being able to buy everything you want, especially if your children have to do without the things they want, the things other children have, or the things you want them to have because you never had them as a child.
- You worry because you can't save any money.
- You feel social pressures because you can't keep up with the neighbor's lifestyle.
- You may have family tensions leading to arguments - - husband vs. wife, parents vs. child.
- You may get flak from your in-laws.

Financial stress can be defined as a condition that occurs whenever income is less than expenditure. If you are a victim of financial stress your only solution to the problem is to balance income and expenditure. This balancing act can take two forms (1) either increased income or (2) decreased expenditure.

If you are the only earning member in your family, it can increase your burden all the more. After all, taking care of the needs of your family members is not a joke. You increase your family income by requesting your spouse or educated children to support you financially. Alternatively, you can reduce your expenditure by cutting down on extravagant things or luxury items. But this requires careful planning and wise budgeting.

However, in order to make yourself financially stable in the long run, you might have to adopt both the options. Apart from balancing the monthly budget, there

are things that need serious consideration. Like your children's education expenses, marriage expenses, your parents medical bills or saving something for yourself in the future. All this requires meticulous planning. And it is advisable to seek an expert's help, if you find it difficult to handle the investment part of your family budget.

7. What happens when you are stressed out?

Just recollect how your day begins? (Probably with the mad rush to get the kids to school and yourself to work) and once you reach your office, you find that there are a host of things to be done and you are running out of time. From this point, the stress only increases. The first stressor you encounter gets the muscles tense, the blood pressure up and the stress cycle going. From this point the stress just builds up. The next stressor tightens the muscles more as heart rate and blood pressure continue to rise. After a series of stressors you begin to feel the effects. The headache, neck ache, or backache may come. Your energy drops and the level of irritability goes up. It becomes hard to concentrate on tasks.

By the time you reach back your home in the evening an outright stress reaction may exist. You are peevish and cranky with a mishmash of aches and pains. It takes you only a short time to say something very nasty estranging everyone with whom you live. The evening becomes stressful too. Now it is bedtime and you can not sleep. You replay the events of the day as your head pounds and your stomach churns. After a night of on-and-off sleep you awake in a foul mood and think, "Oh no, I have so much to do again."

By the time you wait through a traffic jam you arrive at work more stressed than when you left - and this is just the beginning.

If this cycle continues day after day, week after week, and month after month then you are headed for problems. As you continue to adapt to the stress reaction, your body will try to get your attention to tell you that something is

wrong. The body's message of distress comes through physical symptoms like those just mentioned. You more frequently have complaints of headaches, neck aches, and backaches; other muscle and joint pain; chest tightness, shortness of breath, dizzy spells and problems with the belly such as pain, cramping, spasms, or diarrhea.

If these stress symptoms are ignored and no action is taken to come out of it, you are at risk for serious health problems. Recent research suggests that anywhere from two-thirds to 90 percent of illness is stress-related. Stress can damage you in many subtle and penetrating ways. For example, a study at Ohio State University showed that short periods of psychological stress can cause the body to take longer to clear heart-damaging fats from the bloodstream.

Studies show that long-term activation of stress symptoms, triggered by the release of hormones and brain chemicals, can have a hazardous, even lethal effect on your body and brain. Because stress inhibits the immune system, it makes you more vulnerable to infections. Stress can make it difficult to conceive a baby. A working professional, when affected by job stress can behave violently with his colleagues or superior or he may quit the job. Thus the effects of stress are manifold with long term effects on the sufferer's life and those who are related to him.

Stress is a contributor to very serious physical and psychological conditions, including:

- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Obesity
- Anorexia nervosa
- Substance abuse

- Ulcers
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Memory loss
- Trouble in getting sleep
 - Headache
 - Stomach upset
 - Weakening of immune system
 - Accentuates the process of ageing

It has been found that most illness is due to unrelieved stress. Thus it is better to manage stress than to let stress manage you.

8. Can stress be eliminated from your life?

One of the deadliest myths about stress is that it cannot be prevented or eliminated. There are many stresses that can be changed, eliminated, or minimized. Different people deal differently with situations they face either at the work or within the home environment or in the social environment. Our personality type , our childhood , our attitude and degree of physical being are some of the factors that will determine how effectively we combat stress .

Here is an example to show how one can let stress creep into his life unnecessarily:

It's the beginning of a perfect morning, you wake up on time, have a great breakfast, you set out to work. You discover the traffic's gone awry, there is no way that you can make it to that 8.30 a.m. meeting with your client, maybe divine intervention would help...but as usual it eludes you. To top it all, your cell phone's battery is running low...what we see is the development of a stressful situation.... You can feel the bile rising to your throat, your diastolic pressure –

well above the normal...what do you do? Could this situation have been averted?
Can you change the situation?

The above example is a situation that all of us have experienced atleast once in our lifetime. How have we answered the above questions? It is apparent that the above situation could not have been averted, you woke up on time, you left home on time, and you couldn't have done anything more than that. Well, you should have remembered to charge your cell phone...so you could have partially averted the situation. But brooding over a bad memory is not going to provide you with a solution to the emerging situation. A little planning could have helped you in making sure that your cell phone's battery does not run low. Clearly, we can make an attempt to take care of those things which are in our hand than to worry about something which is beyond our control.

Here are some things you can do to reduce your level of stress:

- Become aware of your own reactions to stress.
- Reinforce positive self-statements.
- Focus on your good qualities, strengths and accomplishments.
- Avoid unnecessary competition.
- Develop assertive behaviors.
- Recognize and accept your limits. Remember that everyone is unique and different.
- Cultivate hobbies that you find interesting. Relax and have fun.
- Exercise regularly.
- Eat a balanced diet daily.
- Talk with friends or someone you can trust about your worries/problems.
- Learn to use your time wisely:
 - Evaluate how you are budgeting your time.
 - Plan ahead and avoid idling away the time.
 - Make a weekly schedule and try to follow it.

- Set realistic goals.
- Set priorities.
- When studying for an exam, study for short periods and gradually increase the time you spend studying. Take frequent short breaks.
- Practice relaxation techniques. For example, whenever you feel tense, slowly breathe in and out for several minutes.

However, there is one kind of stress that can never be **completely eliminated**, for example, the stress that an employee experiences at the work place. However, the management and employees who deal with stressful situations can do a lot to reduce the effects of stress.

1. Supervisors can reduce stress by keeping people involved in and informed about decisions that affect them.
2. Recognize the warning signs of stress, and deal with these immediately. People often don't recognize the signs of stress in themselves until others point it out. Don't be offended when others try talking to you. They're trying to help.
3. If you feel overwhelmed by stress, then talk to someone. Talk to supervisors and try to resolve the problem. They may be able to help by changing procedures or work duties, rearranging schedules, or arranging time off.
4. If you don't feel comfortable talking to your supervisors, then talk confidentially to the Human Resource Department of your company. They may be able to suggest solutions.
5. Anger and irritability is a common first response to stress. Be constructive, and not destructive, in how you handle stress. Deal with the issues to find a solution. Don't complain to people who cannot resolve the problem.
6. Reduce the physical effects of stress. Take breaks during long sessions at the computer. Make sure your office is ergonomically designed. Try slow deep breathing to slow your heart rate. Eat nutritionally, get lots of rest, and exercise regularly.

9. Some stress management techniques

The following techniques can help reduce stress in your life and help you live the more balanced life that you were meant to live:

Exercise regularly

Exercise has so many stress management and health benefits, and for many of us, nighttime is when it best fits our schedules. Light exercise like yoga or walking at night can also help sleep as it releases tension without overstimulating the body. Exercise in water can reduce stress even more. When you are in water, you are more buoyant; gravity takes a much gentler toll on your body, so the tension created in your muscles just by holding you up gets released. To inspire yourself, just think about the great personalities and what they do to avoid getting stressed out. Do you know what Anil Ambani does to relieve his stress? He goes for a jog in the morning!!!

When you do not have time for exercise then do the following:

When you genuinely do not have time for exercise, alternatively you can at least do some light stretching and bending exercise at your office desk. Taking a deep breath in and letting it out like a sigh makes you feel better. Sitting up and making raising your arms straight up and down can also help you release at least some part of that tension that has accumulated in your body.

Breathing:

The amazing stress-reducer that you have with you right now is your breathing. That's right. The method in which you take air into your body is an ESSENTIAL part of you releasing stress and becoming more relaxed.

Yoga, meditation, tai chi:

Some powerful practices like **yoga, meditation or tai chi are the best herb for being stress free**. **Yoga** is a wonderful practice for reducing stress. It gives **complete relaxation to body as well as mind**. It helps you to concentrate and focus on some particular things. It's the best relief for stress. Same is the case

with meditation. The perfect antidote to stress is relaxation and meditation...and the perfect form of meditation is hypnosis. When you are stressed it's as though your brain is preparing your body to fight or run away...and it is! Stress causes strain on the body...and the strain can lead to illness...unless we do something about it...like practice relaxation and meditation with hypnosis.

Other effective stress release techniques:

Laugh:

Laughter therapy is gaining grounds firmly in India. Medical research has shown that laughter decreases blood pressure and heart rate, increases oxygen in the blood, creates an enzyme that protects your stomach from stress, and strengthens the immune system.

Eat a good breakfast:

Studies show that eating breakfast is one of the healthiest habits we can adopt. Yet, most people do not pay attention to their breakfast and some don't even bother having it. Having a good breakfast is very healthy! Remember unless you put fuel to your car, it does not run. Same is the case with human body...

Cultivate a hobby:

Start something you always wanted, it can be working in the garden (amazing) or learning how to make pots (even more amazing), working out is good, running or swimming, in fact almost any kind of regular physical activity is good.

Listen to music:

Music can soothe your mind and body to the point that it's now being used as a therapeutic tool by many practitioners. You can use music to your benefit by playing relaxing tunes before bed, and throughout the evening to help you unwind and release tension as bedtime approaches.

Journaling

Journaling has many stress and health benefits, making it a great way to end the day. Writing in a journal before bed can clear your mind, help you process emotions, solve problems, mentally prepare for the next day, make plans, and get your thoughts out of your head and on the page, where they can be picked up the next morning.

10. When should you seek professional help for your stress?

When none of the techniques mentioned above, help you reduce your stress levels, it is advisable to seek professional help. When you refuse to seek professional help at the right time, things might just slip out of your control. Getting help from a trained professional (a therapist, counselor, psychologist, mediator, and so on) can be a practical step toward building a better life. The person trained to help people change how they feel, understand their problems, and solve those problems in a timely fashion.

Support from a trained professional can help you to

- Improve your coping skills
- Improve your communication skills
- Improve the quality and strength of your relationships
- Improve your parenting skills or relationship with your kids
- Work your way through stress, grief, or depression
- Stop acting in unordinary or peculiar ways (ways that are causing you or your family concern or have decreased your ability to carry out everyday activities)
 - Helps you find new approaches to solve your problems
 - Teaches you how to develop and maintain skills to deal with stress

Having realistic expectations is important. A professional is not going to solve your problems for you or give you solutions. Rather, he or she will help you come up with your own strategies and solutions. However, when you seek professional help, it is very important to develop faith in the practitioner. Remember it is only

when you trust him that you can trust yourself and develop the will to eliminate the stress out of your life.