

STRESS

Stress is a failure to respond adequately to mental, emotional, or physical demands, whether actual or imagined

Eustress: where stress enhances functioning (physical or mental, such as through strength training or challenging work)

Distress: persistent stress that is not resolved through coping or adaptation and may lead to anxiety or withdrawal (depression) behavior

Chronic Stress:

Significantly affects all of the body's physiological systems

Effects an individual's perceptions of and reactions to stress

The term "psychoneuroimmunology" is used to describe the interactions between the mental state, nervous and immune systems. Immune system changes can create more vulnerability to infection as well as protection from illness and disease.

Shown to impair developmental growth in children by lowering the pituitary gland's production of growth hormone

Seen to affect parts of the brain where memories are processed and stored

Stress promotes the accumulation of visceral fat, which in turn causes hormonal and metabolic changes that contribute to heart disease and other health problems

Some External Causes of Stress:

People (family, friends, co-workers, neighbors)	Finances
Work demands	Too much or too little free time
Travel or commuting	Health in self or others
Too much to do in too little time	Everything else in daily life
Sensory input	Social and environmental issues
Life experiences- positive and difficult	Too many changes in a short time span

Some Internal Causes of Stress:

Perfectionism	Pessimism
Self-criticism	Unrealistic beliefs
Lack of assertiveness/passivity	Unmet or unrealistic expectations
Fear	Low self-esteem
Unexpressed emotions	Uncertainty
Believing everything you think	Pretending

The way we relate to our experience is frequently a cause of stress or distress:

Hating or rejecting (wanting less or none of) what is happening in the present moment

Wishing or wanting more of what is happening in the present moment

Wishing or wanting things to never change

Denial of what is happening

When we resist our present reality, we increase, perpetuate and/or maintain tension, stress and pain.

Pain (emotional or physical) + resistance = more pain.

Whatever we resist persists. Whatever we resist goes to the basement and lifts weights.

Ways We Resist Our Reality:

Denial	Living in the future or the past
Trying to explain away by blaming external causes	Creating stories about the cause
Using intoxicants	Watching too much T.V. Or technology
Over or under eating	Isolating ourselves
Over socializing	Dissociating from our bodies as they are
Over exercising	Getting angry or other intense feelings
Denying anger or other feelings	Staying overly committed or busy
Staying in automatic pilot	Ignoring alternative perceptions

Possible Coping Mechanisms:

MBSR class	Meditation, prayer, chanting
Medication (prescribed)	Exercise
Yoga, tai chi, aikido, qigong	Listening to relaxing or inspirational music or talks
Getting out in nature	pets
Psychotherapy	Relaxation exercises
Creative expression (art, music, writing, etc.)	Breathing exercises
Assertiveness and being proactive	Letting go of that which no longer works