

# Overcoming Stress

What it is, how it effects your body and mind, & how to reduce it.

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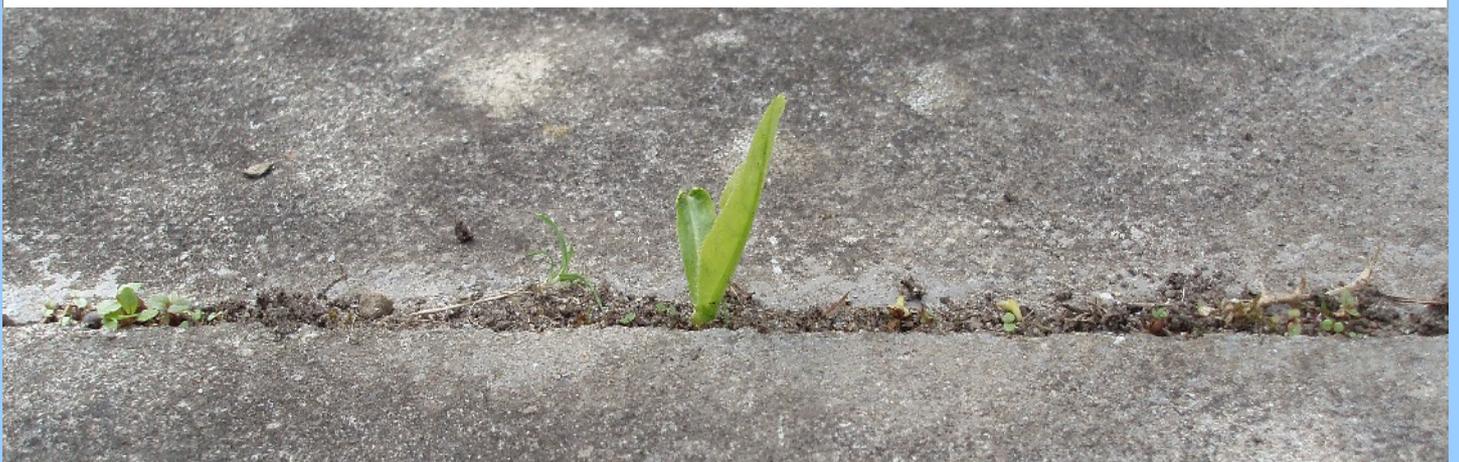


**The American Medical Association states: “Stress is recognized as the number one proxy killer disease today”. Meaning stress contributes to more illness than any other factor in the world. It's a primary contributor in over 60% of all disease. Staggering isn't it?**

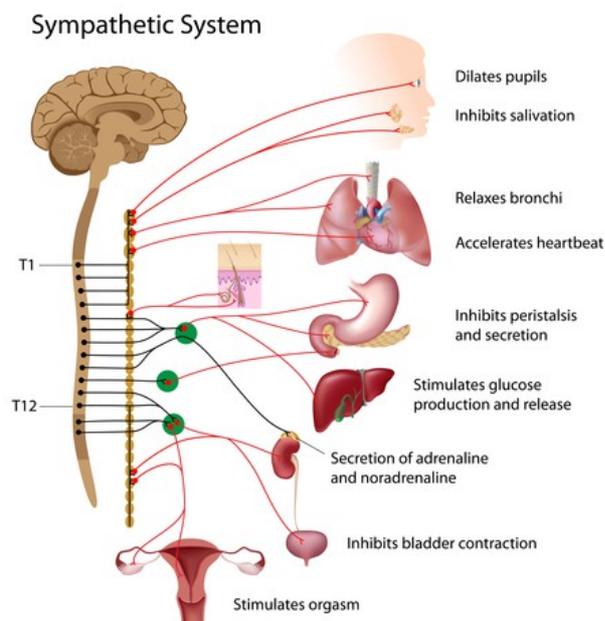
Stress is a reaction in the body and mind to help us in times of danger. We've all had a shock at some time where we shook afterwards and perhaps time seemed to slow down during it. That's your 'fight or flight' response kicking in to make you faster and stronger in a crisis. In the short term that's great, even helping you survive and succeed.

Unfortunately, when we suffer long-term stress our self preservation system stays active - as if some danger was always present. This puts pressure on our body and mind to maintain this higher level of activity at the expense of healthy function in other areas of our bodies as well as putting pressure on the heart and vascular system. Hence we feel bad rather than energised as time goes. As stress builds it can supress your immune system and harm overall bodily health unless dealt with.

**However, the first step in controlling stress is understanding it's actually there to help you!**



According to the Mayo Clinic *“Stress symptoms may be affecting your health, even though you might not realize it. You may think illness is to blame for that nagging headache, your frequent insomnia or your decreased productivity at work. But stress may actually be the culprit.”* That stress can go unnoticed is a big risk for us all. It can make existing illness worse and even lead to mental illness. Common signs include a pressure or headache, a tightness in our stomach or chest, tight muscles, back or neck pain, an increased heart-rate, feeling fuzzy-headed, less concentration or attention span and so on. Poor sleep or difficulty falling asleep and digestive trouble are also common with stress. Often we respond to stress with anger, being on a short fuse, or just snapping at colleagues or our kids. These warning signs for stress are your body's reaction to some perceived threat. It could be pressure, deadlines, worry about money, fear, bullying, or almost anything unpleasant. Your brain notices negative emotions and then activates your 'self preservation' systems as it does in danger. What is designed to help becomes dangerous in the long term as your body struggles to deal with the extra strain.



The key is to notice your reactions to stress. Becoming aware of what causes you to feel stressed begins to give you control over it. In severe cases where long term stress is present various forms of psychotherapy can deliver fast and lasting results. However, there's a lot you can do to reduce your stress. Mindfulness meditation, Yoga, Tai-Chi, hypnotic relaxation and similar activities that create relaxation and a focus on the now all yield proven reductions in stress. Perhaps the simplest method is exercise. 4 hours walking a week has been showing to reduce anxiety by 48% and stress significantly. That's about 35 minutes a day, not a big athletic ask, is it? Anxiety makes stress worse, so if you've always been a worrier or been nervous about many aspects of life then treating your anxiety should cut your stress right down. If it's pressure of deadlines and it feels like you can't start because there is so much to do, set a time to stop, and stick to it. Just work until the 'stop' time and be strict about stopping. Allow yourself to chip through the work for less stress. Procrastination is both a symptom and multiplier of stress. Success breeds success, so take small easy steps to make it easier for you to succeed with less stress, notice your stress and smile, just recognising what it is and where it comes from will help. Exercise a little each day if you can, and most importantly take a moment every hour and notice how you're feeling. The more you live in the now, the less stress you will have. Lastly, breathing deeply sends a signal to your brain that helps cut stress too, and so simply.

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