

Stress: **What is Stress?**

Academic Success Center

What is stress?

Stress is our body's way of creating energy when faced with a perceived danger. In some situations, stress can help our bodies react to emergencies with more strength and efficiency. Unfortunately, our bodies can't always tell when we are in an emergency or not. Therefore, we may feel stress for things that are not a danger to our survival, such as taking tests.

Too much stress can lead to unclear thinking, mood fluctuations, and poor eating habits. It is helpful to identify your personal stressors and react when you feel your body increasing in stress.

Sources of stress

Survival stress:

- Your survival or health is threatened
- You are put under pressure
- Experience unpleasant or challenging event (ex: have to give a presentation)

Internally generated stress:

- Anxious worrying about events beyond your control
- Tense or hurried approach to life
- Relationship problems

Environmental stress:

- Living environment
- Come from noise, crowding, untidiness or other distractions

Fatigue and overwork stress:

- Stress builds up over a long period
- Try to achieve too much in too little time
- Not using effective time management

How to recognize stress

There are two kinds of stress:

- Short term: Manifestations (signs/symptoms)
- Long term: Physical, internal and behavior effects

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Short Term Stress Manifestations (signs or symptoms)

- Fast heart beat
- Increased sweating
- Cool skin and cold hands and feet
- Nausea
- Rapid breathing
- Tense muscles
- Dry mouth

Long Term Stress Manifestations

Physical Signs

Change in appetite
Frequent colds/illnesses
Aches and pains
Fatigue

Internal Effects

- Worry/anxiety
- Confusion
- Inability to concentrate
- Overwhelmed
- Feeling out of control
- Mood change
- Depression, irritability, impatient, being restless, frustration
- Lethargic
- Difficulty sleeping
- Alcohol or drug use

Behavioral Effects

- Talking too fast or loud
- Frequent yawning
- Fiddling, twitching or pacing
- Bad moods (Irrationality, emotionality, aggression, defensiveness)
- Negativity
- Bad judgments
- Forgetful
- Increased mistakes
- Increased absenteeism
- Neglect of personal appearance