



Manage Stress Better

Stress

- Stress is the mental and physical response and adaptation by our bodies to real or perceived change and challenges.
- Stressors are any real or perceived physical, social, or psychological events or stimuli that cause our bodies to react to stress.
- Acute stress is a short-term physiological response to an immediate or perceived threat
- Chronic stress is a long-term state of physiological response to ongoing or numerous perceived threats

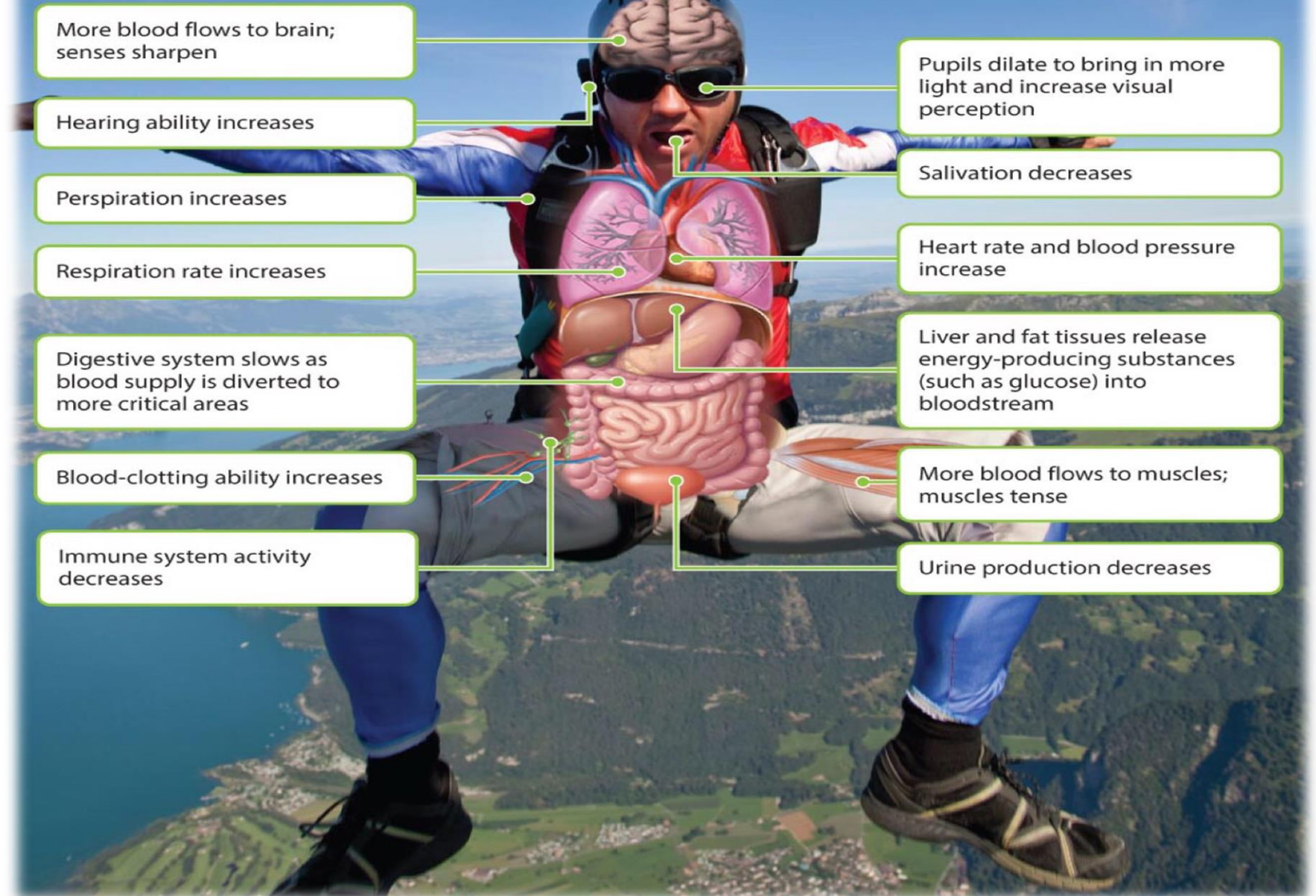


Stress

- Stress is unavoidable. Everybody faces stressors.
- But... how we think about stress and how we react to it makes a difference in how it impacts our health.
- There are many things you can do to help manage stress better, thus improving your overall health!



Physiological Responses to Stress



Physical Effects of Stress

- Can increase cortisol levels in the bloodstream which can drive us to food, leading to weight gain
- Can lead to thinning hair and baldness
- Can negatively impact heart rate and blood pressure and can increase risk for heart attack and stroke
- Weakened immune system
- Decreased energy
- Headaches
- Upset stomach/nausea
- Chest pains



Psychological and Intellectual Effects of Stress

- Becoming easily agitated and frustrated
- Low self-esteem
- Can lead to mental disorders, especially depression and anxiety.
- Poor problem solving
- Poor concentration
- Inability to focus
- Poor judgment
- Difficulty relaxing
- Feeling overwhelmed and lack of control

Behavioral Symptoms of Stress

- Appetite changes – too much, too little, eating disorders
- Increased intake of alcohol and other drugs
- Withdrawing from others
- Restlessness
- Fidgeting
- Nail biting
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Hypochondria/healthy anxiety

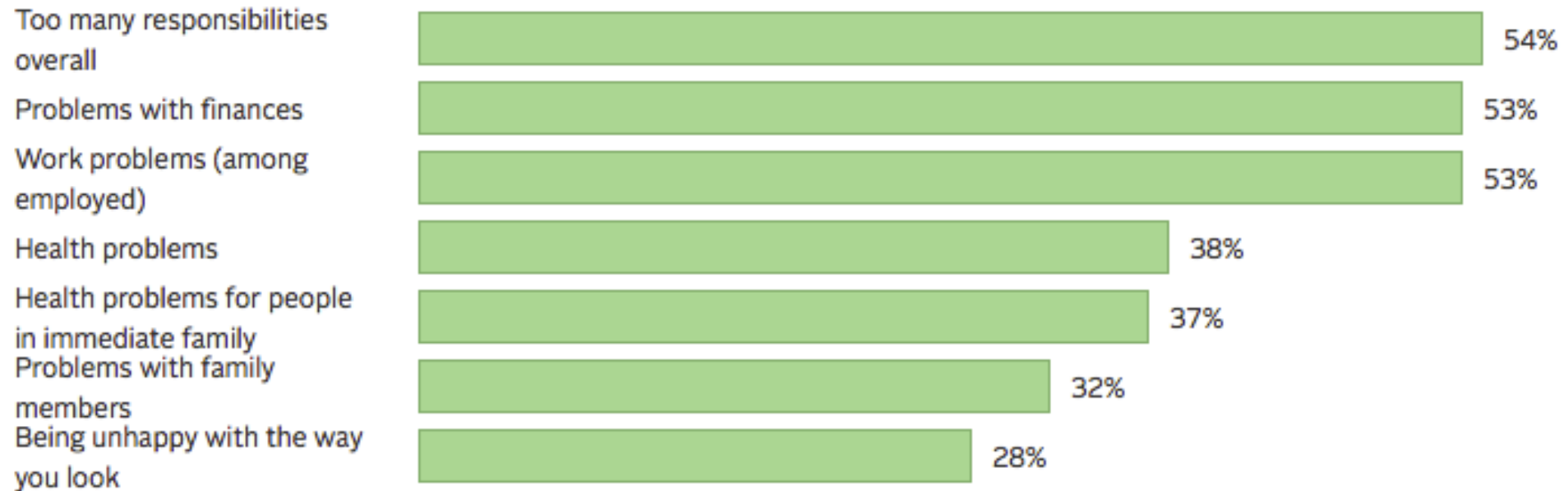
Common Causes of Stress (Stressors)

- Adjustment to changes
- Relationship conflicts
- Academic pressure
- Financial strain
- Work
- Overload
- Stressful environments
- Bias and discrimination
- Health problems
- Exposure to traumatic incident



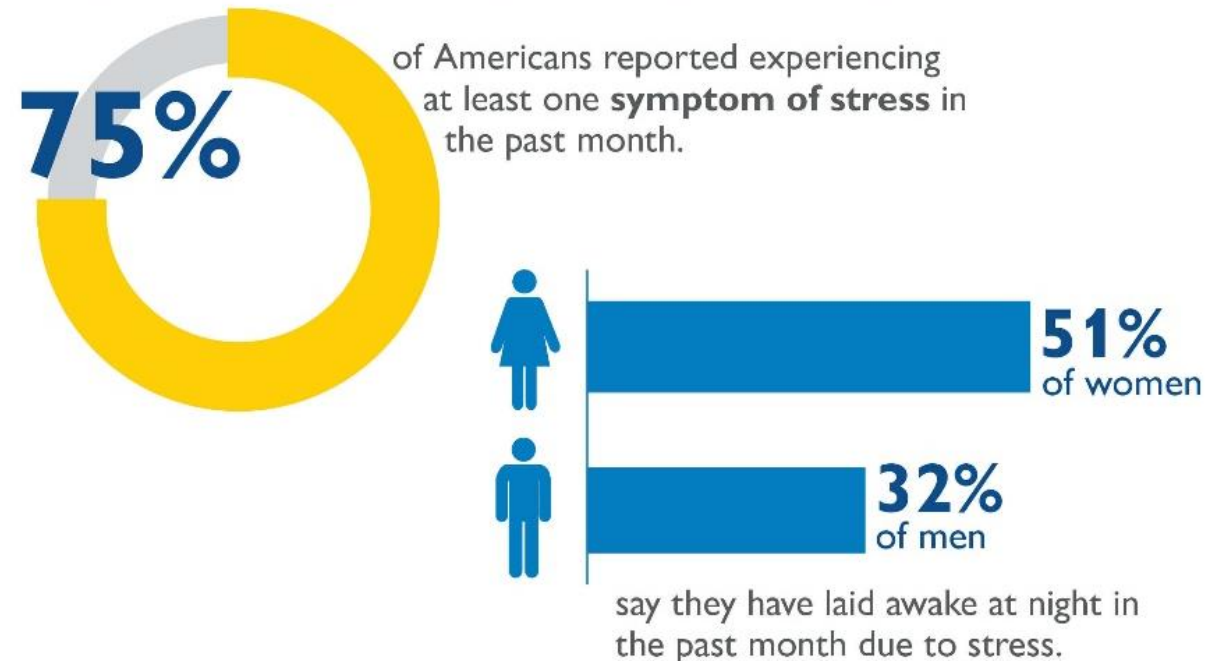
Common Causes of Stress (Stressors)

Most common contributors to stress among Americans with great deal of stress



Stress Impacts Many People

- According to The American Institute of Stress:
 - About 33 percent of people report feeling extreme stress
 - 77 percent of people experience stress that affects their physical health
 - 73 percent of people have stress that impacts their mental health
 - 48 percent of people have trouble sleeping because of stress



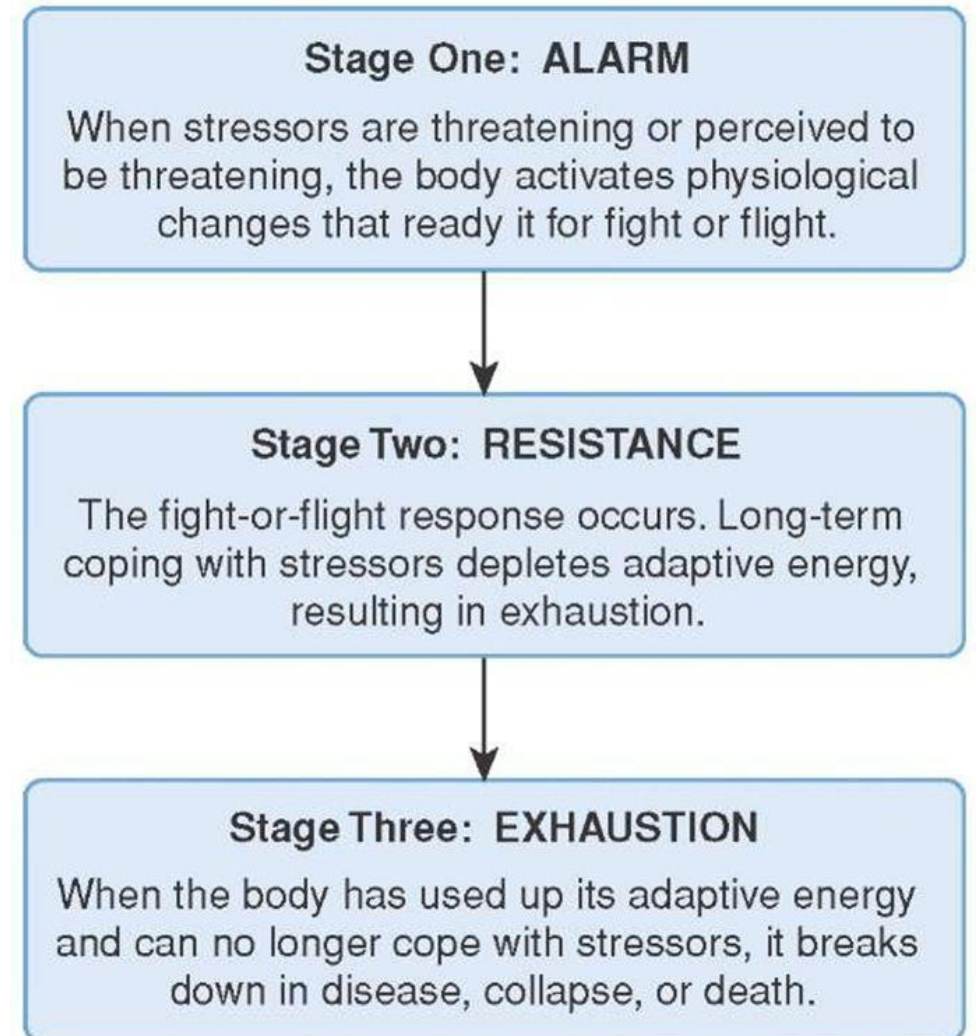
Good Stress vs. Bad Stress

- Not all stress is bad
- Some stress is good (eustress) and can help us in completing important projects and accomplishing goals by providing the motivation and stimulation to cope with challenging situations.
- However, negative stress (distress) can cause anxiety, decreased performance, and can lead to poor mental and physical health
- Excessive or prolonged stress can have a harmful effect on mental and physical health

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| Eustress , or "positive" stress, helps you get tasks done if they're manageable. | Distress , or "negative" stress, is chronic and overwhelming- not helping you long-term. |
| Example: Getting ready for a presentation by practicing it out loud before presenting in class is good stress. | Example: When you have an exam and start studying the material the night before, that's distress. |
| Symptoms: Feeling challenged, motivated and like you're getting out of your comfort zone. | Symptoms: Body aches, getting sick more often than usual, headaches, changes in your attitude, and not sleeping well. |
| Solutions: Be aware of what feels good when it's been accomplished, and what just feels exhausting afterward. | Solutions: Know when what you're doing is too much and take some responsibilities off of your shoulders. |

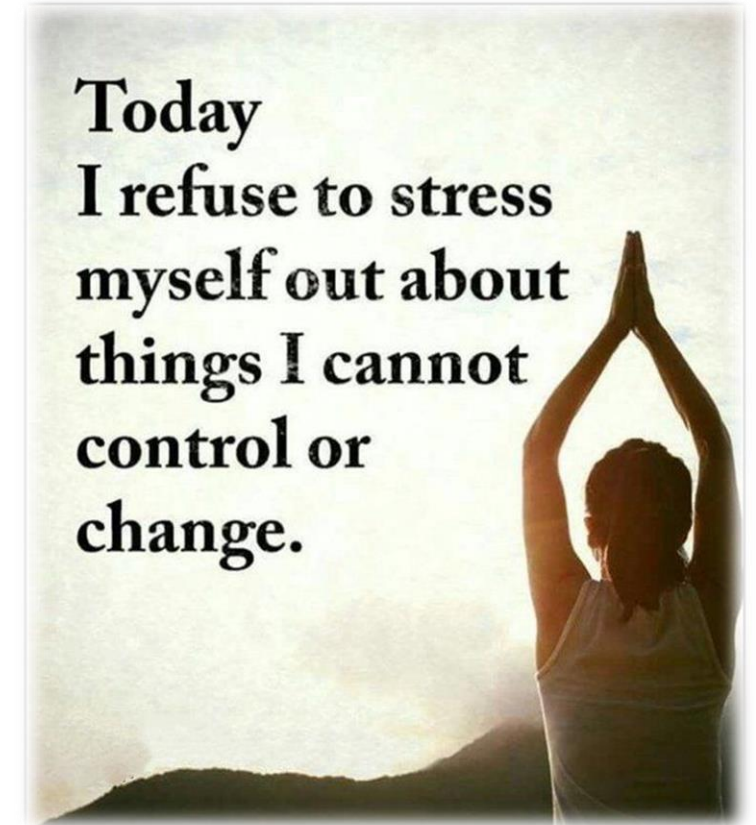
General Adaptation Syndrome

- Stressors trigger a physiological response.
- The body then tries to return itself to its normal state of balance, or homeostasis, through an adaptive response.



See Stress Differently

- Look at events or stress triggers from a different angle and remember it's not helpful to focus on things that can't be changed and are out of our control
- Try to improve your mood by looking at what is going on what is going well in life
- Find the silver linings
- Focus on your accomplishments or what you have overcome



Stress Management Tips

- Connect with others
 - Share feelings or vent concerns to someone you trust
- Eat well
 - Eat nutritious and regular meals – don't skip meals!
- Keep a gratitude journal
 - Take time to reflect
 - Write down any thoughts or feelings to help you better understand your stressors and how you react to them
- If needed, talk to a therapist
- Take time for fun creative activities or hobbies
- Make time to laugh



Stress Management Tips (cont.)

- Avoid caffeine and alcohol
- Find a balance
 - Re-organize your time to help balance your responsibilities so that you can be comfortably busy without being overwhelmed or overworked.
- Take care of spiritual needs
- Get plenty of sleep
 - Your ability to manage stress and stressful situations is negatively affected when you're tired or sleep deprived.
- Try different healthy ways to relax
 - Get a massage, take a bath, focus on self-care, listen to music, etc.
- Stay physically active and exercise
- Practice deep breathing techniques/relaxation techniques

Relaxation Techniques for Stress Management

- Meditation: A relaxation technique that involves deep breathing and concentration
- Visualization: Creation of mental images to promote relaxation
- Progressive muscle relaxation: Tense a group of muscles as you breathe in, then relax them as you breathe out



Resources

- The American Institute of Stress
 - www.stress.org
- National Institute of Mental Health
 - nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress
- American Psychological Association
 - apa.org/topics/stress
- Mentalhealth.gov