

Stress

We've all been there, stress it affects us all, in different ways and in different amounts.

Stress can be described as 'the nonspecific response to any demands placed on the body.'

In short, this is the reaction that our body takes to stimuli that our body has had presented to it, both internally and externally.

Stress I think is seen as a bad guy that rears its ugly head to challenge our homeostasis. However although it is seen as this negative thing that causes destruction wherever it goes, the body would not possess such a reactionary responsive mechanism without actually needing it. So why do we need it? Well the 'short' answer is that we actually need stress to survive. Simply put there are two types of stress.....drum roll please....good stress and bad stress!

When many people think of stress, they think of something that drains us physically and mentally, however there are in fact other forms of stress that can affect us in both positive and negative ways.

Type of Stress	Good	Bad
Physical	Exercising to help strengthen muscles and bones	Poor posture
Nutritional	The process of your body extracting the nutrients it needs	Overeating and the consumption of food that is full of toxins, preservatives etc
Electromagnetic	Sunlight – which results in the production of vitamin D	Over exposure to Electromagnetic Low Frequency pollution can have an adverse effect on the hormonal system
Mental	Developing productive goals that stimulate the development of our minds	Negative thinking that has unfavourable reaction to our thought patterns and motivation
Chemical	Our body produces many chemicals that play an important part in its daily functions. When it is placed under good stress e.g. exercising, processes occur to produce the required hormones for protein synthesis	Artificial drugs in which the body has not had the adequate time to evolve to be able to process correctly

A form of stress that our bodies have developed over many thousands of years is what is known as **acute stress**. A familiar reaction that is a type of acute stress, is known as the 'fight, flight or freeze' scenario. It is a natural survival instinct that stems from when our ancestors would be confronted with a threatening situation – they either chose to fight or run. Nowadays we still experience this type of response, a common example of this would be a near accident whilst driving or an aggressive

verbal confrontation. Momentarily our heart and breathing rate increases and we seem to lose all control of our thought patterns, letting our older brain (the reptilian brain) take over.

This type of situation stimulates what is known as the sympathetic nervous system which stimulates certain reactions in the body which can include - increased release of stress hormones that increase the blood supply to the muscles and the heart and thus blood pressure. It also causes some restricting factors that reduce the amount of blood that travels to the digestive system.

As our brain has evolved we now have the capability to override certain thought processes. Meaning that when we are placed in a 'fight, flight or freeze' situation we have the rational thinking potential to decide consciously what we want the outcome to be, rather than it being an existential, subconscious process. Training for this is compulsory though!

Like any response in the body the processes are there to help us out at our time of need, the problems start to occur when we experience this type of stress over and over again, week after week, month after month. The constant pressure that is put on our homeostasis is immense, we may find that due to a lack of stimulation and blood supply to the digestive system that our nutrients are not absorbed as much as they should be. Raised levels of hormones such as cortisol (a stress hormone that is released) may mean that inflammatory responses may be affected, reducing healing times. When acute stress is experienced more frequently it is known as being:

Episodic acute stress –People who suffer from this type of stress tend to always be in a rush, but always late. It can happen to those people who take on too much, constantly juggling an endless list of chores.

Chronic stress – this type of stress is experienced over a long period of time, when the body is constantly exposed to situations that release stress hormones. Unlike acute stress, which is a new stimulus, chronic stress can become old and familiar and unfortunately some people get use to it.

Just because something is, doesn't mean that it will always be

As stress is a natural bodily function that arises due to internal and external stressor placed on it, we can take steps to reducing the 'bad' amount of stress than we experience, we just need to know how....

So what can we do to help control our response to stress?

Well as with anything we first need to become aware of and determine what our main stressor is. This may seem obvious but people experience many types of stress (see the list above). What is your main stressor?

After you've determined your main stressor you then need to start to think about a plan of action and set goals on how you can combat it. If you can see what your main stressor is, then you can work out smaller goals on how to tackle it. We may be experiencing many things that seem to weigh us down, but if we tackle things one thing at a time, then the positivity can have a cascading effect.

As with most things in life, the angles in which we look for change shouldn't be from one perspective but from many. Confident steps of **thinking** positively, **eating** and **moving** in the right way will have amazing impacts on your overall stress levels and wellbeing.

Stress happens, but be it conscious or unconscious we always have a choice on how far we may let it affect us.

When something bad happens you have three choices, you can either let it define you, let it destroy you or you can let it strengthen you.