



## Stress and Burnout

### DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRESS

Stress is our physical, emotional, or mental reaction to a change. Stress can have both a positive and a negative impact on our body, mind, and spirit. The type of stress that is beneficial is called eustress. When you experience eustress, your body releases endorphins.

Other types of stress occur when there is a level of fear or alarm present. An example is sending a sensitive email to the wrong person, making a mistake, or having a conflict with someone. Some people can experience stress more frequently or for longer durations. This cause can people to feel like they are always running behind and that they cannot get ahead of the curve. This stress can be very draining and often has impacts on someone's emotions, making them short-tempered, irritable, and tense.

### BURNOUT

Burnout is when people experience a mental and/or physical collapse. Because of the severity of symptoms, people typically need months to recover from burnout. Symptoms can include depression, anxiety, chronic fatigue, forgetfulness, feeling useless, insomnia, and loss of appetite.

Since May, 2019 the World Health Organization has declared burnout as an official occupational phenomenon (WHO, 2019). The official definition is "Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed" (WHO, 2019). The official symptoms are similar to described above, namely a feeling of exhaustion, an increase of mental distance from your job, negative or cynical feelings related to your job, and a decrease in professional efficacy (WHO, 2019). It is important to note these symptoms as it will help you recognize it in yourself and others before they become too severe.

## How to Alleviate Stress and Burnout

By Lotte Mulder, Ed.M.

### MITIGATING STRESS

There are two general areas of coping resources, namely personal resources and relationship resources. Under personal resources there are two separate areas: nutrition and exercise. Recent studies have shown that an increase in healthy gut bacteria can reduce stress (Diop, Guillo, & Durand, 2008). In other words, ensuring that you eat probiotics, whether through food or vitamins, can help reduce feelings of stress. Relationship resources has multiple resources to deal with stress. Below are some areas for consideration.

- If you have a problem or a challenge, try to solve it right away. Lingering will only increase your stress.
- Separate the people from the problem, especially when it's about a specific behavior or task.
- Listen to understand others and take a learning approach to what they are telling you. There is always something we can learn.
- Find people to spend quality time with, either at work or personally.
- Share your appreciation of others to them to make them feel acknowledged. The kinder we are to others, the less stress we feel.
- Be open to diversity of thought, actions, behaviors, ideas and experiences. Open mindedness can reduce stress.

Another approach to reducing stress is to embody the concept of #JOMO, the Joy Of Missing Out (Sarner, 2019). Life clutter, and thus stress, builds up when we say "yes" to too many things, including work tasks, opportunities, and additional assignments (Sarner, 2019). Perhaps making sure that every opportunity we agree to aligns with either our personal and professional goals and ensuring that they "spark" joy is crucial before agreeing to add more to our plate. Also, it is important to note that certain opportunities will come again. For example, perhaps now is not the best time to agree to collaborate on a paper, but next summer is.

Along similar lines, those working in the medical field must take the time to check in with our experiences in each day (Bayley, 2019). In these moments of self-reflection, we should reflect on if each task energizes or drains you (Bayley, 2019). Doing so will help us to know which activities engage and motive us and which do not. This will help guide our day-to-day planning, but it also creates a positive mindset, because not every task in every day is draining (Bayley, 2019).

Furthermore, procrastination is a form of self-harm (Lieberman, 2019). We procrastinate things against our better judgement, which is why it makes us feel bad (Lieberman, 2019). Procrastination can also have negative consequences beyond our personal feelings, which is why procrastinating is a very irrational behavior (Lieberman, 2019). It is, therefore, an issue of emotion management and not of time management (Lieberman, 2019). Emotions are linked to stress, which is why it is so important to reduce and/or eliminate your procrastination behaviors because it will also reduce your stress.

In short, reducing stress is all about action: The first step to increase your ability to cope with stress is to recognize the stressor and change your response to it. This means that instead of allowing your stress to make you irritated, reflect on it and analyze the root cause. Then you can deal with the cause and either eliminate it or find a solution to cope with it. Developing and strengthening coping resources is another method to reduce stress. In other words, identify the areas in your life where you see opportunities for growth in managing your stress. Remember, not all stress is bad and can actually help us lead more productive lives, so perhaps increasing those habits can help reduce stress as well.

### REFERENCES

1. Bayley, R. (2019). What Marie Kondo Can Teach Us About Physician Burnout. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncnp.org/journal-of-medicine/2329-what-marie-kondo-can-teach-us-about-physician-burnout.html>
2. Diop, L., Guillo, S., & Durand, H. (2008). Probiotic food supplement reduces stress-induced gastrointestinal symptoms in volunteers: a double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized trial. *Elsevier*, 28(1), pp1-5. Rhttps://doi.org/10.1016/j.nutres.2007.10.001
3. Kornacki, M. J., Silversin, J., Chokshi, D.A. (2019). From Distrust to Building Trust in Clinician-Organization Relationships. *JAMA*, 321(18).
4. Lee, P.V., Berwick, D., Sinsky, C.A. (2019). Building Trust Between the Government and Clinicians Person to Person and Organization to Organization. *JAMA*, 321(18).
5. Lieberman, C. (2019). Why You Procrastinate (It Has Nothing to Do With Self-Control). Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/25/smarter-living/why-you-procrastinate-it-has-nothing-to-do-with-self-control.html>
6. Sarner, M. (2019). Burned out and overwhelmed: should you embrace the joy of no? Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/feb/18/burned-out-and-overwhelmed-should-you-embrace-the-joy-of-no>.
7. World Health Organization (May, 2019). Burn-out an «occupational phenomenon»: International Classification of Diseases. Retrieved from [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/evidence/burn-out/en/](https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/burn-out/en/)