

Q & A Mindline



Dr Roshan Jain
Senior Consultant Psychiatrist &
De-addiction Specialist
Apollo Hospitals, Bangalore

Q Is Stress a myth or reality? Please advise.

Stress is undoubtedly the topic of this millennia. Everyone from gurus to babas, from physicians to cardiologists and from psychologists to psychiatrists, everyone is talking about it. Are we really that stressed? Some myths about stress are that it's same for everybody, always bad, it's everywhere and therefore you can do nothing about it and finally if there are no symptoms (manifestation) then there is no stress.

In reality it's not the same for everyone and what may be stressful for you may not necessarily be so for another person. The peak at which stress takes a toll on well-being may differ for individuals. Amongst various factors, the way one relates to circumstances or situations is what makes the difference. Stress is within and not outside of us



i.e. it's internal, therefore it depends on the way we perceive, relate and negotiate with our outer world.

Stress is not always bad. Stress to humans is the same as what tension is to the violin or guitar. Too loose and it's shrill, too tight and it snaps. The idea is to get onto the middle path. Some amount of stress enhances motivation, concentration and focus and in fact is necessary for effective productivity and performance. Remember experiencing pressure and stress before and during examinations? Or for an interview, or when you are given a deadline to submit a project or assignment? You would recall that during times such as these, your productivity reaches an all time high and you are able to perform better and complete tasks faster than conceived.

So, what we are referring to here, is not the occasional self-contained stress experienced on a day-to-day basis, but the unwavering relentless stress that refuses to abate despite the early remedial measure. It is this unwavering stress that causes problems and too much of it is likely to lead to 'burnout' and 'breakdown.'

Stress is an inevitable experience of life but there is always something you can do about it. You can plan your life so that stress does not overwhelm you. Effective organization involves setting priorities and working on and solving simple problems before going on to more complex difficulties. When stress is mismanaged, it's difficult to prioritize, and that's when all your problems seem equal and stress seems everywhere.

The reality is that the time necessary to learn all the rules for effective living now exceeds our life expectancy! I think we have to continuously update ourselves, learn, grow and perhaps evolve for a more effective and meaningful life.

Q I have heard that jotting down your thoughts and feelings can help in managing stress? Is this true?

Perhaps writing a journal may be the first step to self-awareness, which I think is a prerequisite for setting an agenda for personal change and transformation. Therefore, I advise you to start with a stress journal. This can help you identify common and importantly less apparent stressors in your life. Each time you feel stressed, keep a track of it in your journal. With a daily log of three-four weeks, you will begin to see patterns and common themes.

Write down: What caused your stress (make a guess if you're unsure), how you felt both physically and emotionally and what were your reactions. Importantly, what you did to make yourself feel better. The more you do it, the more you will feel better and the faster will peace come.

Other basic strategies of coping with stress are: recognize and admit that you are getting stressed and anxious, be aware of the bodily manifestation of stress and don't let them scare you, instead let them talk to you, listen to the dialogue within yourself and note if you are filling yourself with negative thoughts, listen to the dialogues of those around you, as your stress may sometime be more apparent to others before you become aware of it. Also, is someone around you being negative and dragging you down with them? If so, try and get away from this source. This is your world. It is worth dedicating time to yourself and time to sync and harmonize with life.

Ask your queries at bpositiveQA@apollolife.com