

Stress Management

Slide 1 -1 Thessalonians 3:7 (Amplified Bible)

Brethren, for this reason, in [spite of all] our stress and crushing difficulties we have been filled with comfort and cheer about you [because of] your faith ([a]the leaning of your whole personality on God in complete trust and confidence).

Handling Stress as a soldier and civilian on the battlefield and in the marketplace

Slide 2 - WHAT IS STRESS?

STRESS IS :

1. A reaction and response to any kind of change
2. Stress is a response to a perceived threat to your well being

Slide 3 -Myths about stress*

Myth 1 I must be stressed to succeed...

Myth 2 All Stress is bad...

Myth 3 If only I could move/change my job/ leave my spouse/get rid of my boss, then my stress would go away...

Myth 4 There is nothing I can do about stress...

Slide 4 -Common Responses to Stress

1. Fighting it
2. Flight - Escaping it
3. Freezing
4. Tend and Befriend

Everyone responds differently to stressors! A soldier in Iraq holding a child.

Slide 5 -Common Responses to Stress

Top Military Stressors

Sources of stress for men*

1. Being away from family

2. Increases in workload
3. Financial problems
4. Changes in family
5. Conflicts between military and family responsibilities

Pictured is a soldier in Iraq treasuring a letter from his wife.

Reference: 1998 Department of Defense Survey of Health Related Behaviors

Slide 6 - Positive ways of coping with stress

Plan to solve – American soldier in Iraq maintaining his yard in front of his tent.

Talk to friend/family

Exercise – ride a bike

Slide 7 -How do you cope with stress?

Soldiers meeting together in prayer.

Slide 8 -Stress Reducing Strategies

1. How you talk to yourself
2. Change own responses – A soldier on patrol takes time to pet a kitten to relieve the stress of war.

Slide 9 - Strategies for coping with stress.

Relaxation and Visitation – Soldier plays with a child at the delight to Iraqi adults.

Slide 10 -Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms

Cognitive Symptoms

Memory problems

Inability to concentrate

Poor judgment

Seeing only the negative

Anxious or racing thoughts

Constant worrying

Emotional Symptoms

Moodiness

Irritability or short temper

Agitation, inability to relax

Feeling overwhelmed

Sense of loneliness and isolation

Depression or general unhappiness

Slide 11 -Stress Warning Signs and Symptoms

Physical Symptoms

Aches and pains

Diarrhea or constipation

Nausea, dizziness

Chest pain, rapid heartbeat

Loss of sex drive

Frequent colds

Behavioral Symptoms

Eating more or less

Sleeping too much or too little

Isolating yourself from others

Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities

Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax

Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)

Slide 12 Signs and symptoms of stress overload

It's important to learn how to recognize when your stress levels are out of control. The most dangerous thing about stress is how easily it can creep up on you. You get used to it. It starts to feels familiar – even normal. You don't notice how much it's affecting you, even as it takes a heavy toll.

The signs and symptoms of stress overload can be almost anything.

1. Stress affects the mind, body, and behavior in many ways, and everyone experiences stress differently.

2. What's Stressful For You?

What's stressful for you may be quite different from what's stressful to your best friend, your spouse, or the person next door.

3. For example:

Do you enjoy speaking in public or are you terrified of speaking in public?

Are you more productive under deadline pressure, or do deadlines make you miserably tense?

Are you eager to help family and friends through difficult times or is this very stressful?

Are you comfortable complaining about bad service in a restaurant or do prefer to suffer in silence?

Do you feel changes at work represent a welcome opportunity or do you worry about coping with these changes?

Keep in mind that the signs and symptoms of stress can also be caused by other psychological and medical problems. If you're experiencing any of the warning signs of stress, it's important to see a doctor for a full evaluation. Your doctor can help you determine whether or not your symptoms are stress-related.

4. How much stress is too much?

Because of the widespread damage stress can cause, it's important to know your own limit. But just how much stress is "too much" differs from person to person. Some people roll with the punches, while others crumble at the slightest obstacle or frustration. Some people even seem to thrive on the excitement and challenge of a high-stress lifestyle.

5. Your ability to tolerate stress depends on many factors, including the quality of your relationships, your general outlook on life, your emotional intelligence, and genetics.

Slide 13- Signs and Symptoms of stress overload

6. Things that influence your stress tolerance level

Your support network – A strong network of supportive friends and family members is an enormous buffer against life's stressors. On the flip side, the more lonely and isolated you are, the greater your vulnerability to stress.

Your sense of control – If you have confidence in yourself and your ability to influence events and persevere through challenges, it's easier to take stress in stride. People who are vulnerable to stress tend to feel like things are out of their control.

- a. Your attitude and outlook – Stress-hardy people have an optimistic attitude. They tend to embrace challenges, have a strong sense of humor, accept that change is a part of life, and believe in a higher power or purpose.
- b. Your ability to deal with your emotions. You're extremely vulnerable to stress if you don't know how to calm and soothe yourself when you're feeling sad, angry, or afraid. The ability to bring your emotions into balance helps you bounce back from adversity.
- c. Your knowledge and preparation – The more you know about a stressful situation, including how long it will last and what to expect, the easier it is to cope. For example, if you go into surgery with a realistic picture of what to expect post-op, a painful recovery will be less traumatic than if you were expecting to bounce back immediately.

Am I in control of stress or is stress controlling me?

When I feel agitated, do I know how to quickly calm and soothe myself?

Can I easily let go of my anger?

Can I turn to others at work to help me calm down and feel better?

Am I able to recognize upsets that others seem to be experiencing?

Do I easily turn to friends or family members for a calming influence?

When my energy is low, do I know how to boost it?

7. Self-evaluation -When I come home at night, do I walk in the door feeling alert and relaxed?

Am I seldom distracted or moody?

Am I able to recognize upsets that others seem to be experiencing?

Do I easily turn to friends or family members for a calming influence?

8. Causes of stress

The situations and pressures that cause stress are known as stressors. We usually think of stressors as being negative, such as an exhausting work schedule or a rocky relationship.

However, anything that puts high demands on you or forces you to adjust can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, going to college, or receiving a promotion.

What causes stress depends, at least in part, on your perception of it. Something that's stressful to you may not faze someone else; they may even enjoy it.

For example, your morning commute may make you anxious and tense because you worry that traffic will make you late. Others, however, may find the trip relaxing because they allow more than enough time and enjoy listening to music while they drive.

9. Common external causes of stress

Not all stress is caused by external factors. Stress can also be self-generated:

10. Major life changes

Work

Relationship difficulties

Financial problems

Being too busy

Children and family

Slide 14 – Signs and Symptoms of Stress Overload

11. Common internal causes of stress

Not all stress is caused by external factors.

12. Stress can also be self-generated:

a. Inability to accept uncertainty

b. Pessimism

c. Negative self-talk

d. Unrealistic expectations

e. Perfectionism

f. Lack of assertiveness

13. Effects of chronic stress

The body doesn't distinguish between physical and psychological threats. When you're stressed over a busy schedule, an argument with a friend, a traffic jam, or a mountain of bills, your body reacts just as strongly as if you were facing a life-or-death situation. If you have a lot of responsibilities and worries,

your emergency stress response may be “on” most of the time. The more your body’s stress system is activated, the easier it is to trip and the harder it is to shut off.

14. Long-term exposure to stress can lead to serious health problems. Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body. It can raise blood pressure, suppress the immune system, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, contribute to infertility, and speed up the aging process. Long-term stress can even rewire the brain, leaving you more vulnerable to anxiety and depression.

Many health problems are caused or exacerbated by stress, including:

Pain of any kind

Heart disease

Digestive problems

Sleep problems

Depression

Obesity

Autoimmune diseases

Skin conditions, such as eczema

15. Dealing with stress and its symptoms

While unchecked stress is undeniably damaging, there are many things you can do to reduce its impact and cope with symptoms.

16. Learn how to manage stress

You may feel like the stress in your life is out of your control, but you can always control the way you respond. Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can’t, taking care of yourself, and making time for rest and relaxation.

17. Learn how to relax

You can’t completely eliminate stress from your life, but you can control how much it affects you. Relaxation techniques such as walking, reading scripture, and deep breathing activate the body’s relaxation response, a state of restfulness that is the opposite of the stress response. When practiced regularly, these activities lead to a reduction in your everyday stress levels and a boost in your feelings of joy and serenity. They also increase your ability to stay calm and collected under pressure.

Slide 15 -Managing my stress

1. How do I cope with stress?
2. Coping skills I'd like to add?
3. Poor coping skills I'd like to drop or change are:
4. People I know who seem to be in control of their lives are:
5. Things they do which I could try are:

Slide 16 -Managing my stress

6. Other things I could do to gain control over my life are:
7. Practice your stress management skills regularly!
8. One stress management strategy isn't foolproof!
9. Build your ability to bounce back! – Juggling your work with a smile.

