

Healthy Coping Strategies for Stress and Anxiety

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Being there matters.

What is Stress

- ▶ It's likely most of you know what stress is by now, but it can be helpful to refresh ourselves.
- ▶ Stress is our natural response to change.
- ▶ Typically, the less under our control that change is, the more intense reaction we have to it.
- ▶ Stress in our lives can actually be a healthy thing.



Healthy Stress, aka Eustress

- ▶ Yes, this does seem like an oxymoron, but stay with me.
- ▶ Stress can act as an incredible motivator!
 - ▶ For example, the butterflies you get before a first date, getting a promotion at work, or watching a scary movie with friends.
 - ▶ Oftentimes eustress can motivate us to do exactly what we need to.
- ▶ Typically this stress will be short term, focused, and can feel quite exciting.
- ▶ Eustress feels within your coping abilities.



Unhealthy Stress, aka Distress

- ▶ This type of stress can feel overwhelming and highly unpleasant.
- ▶ Distress is not motivating you to achieve goals or overcome adversity. If anything, it prevents you from any sort of achievement.



The Effects of Distress

- ▶ Untreated stress can certainly cause a litany of physical and mental difficulties including:
 - ▶ High blood pressure
 - ▶ Increased breathing rate
 - ▶ Sleep difficulties
 - ▶ Trouble focusing
 - ▶ Skin conditions such as eczema
 - ▶ Digestive issues.



Internal vs External Causes of Stress

- ▶ You can divide types of stress into two categories: internal and external.
- ▶ Internal causes of stress include:
 - ▶ Rigid styles of thinking
 - ▶ Pessimism
 - ▶ Negative self-talk
- ▶ External causes of stress include:
 - ▶ Financial difficulties
 - ▶ Relationship troubles
 - ▶ Being too busy



Stress vs Anxiety: What's the Difference?

We oftentimes confuse the two, which is understandable since they both share similar symptoms.

Essentially, the natural “fight or flight” reaction to stress can, over time, build up and cause anxiety in someone.

Anxiety is typically the result of prolonged stress.

The effects can be a mixture between psychological and physiological.

Psychological Effects

- ▶ Avoidance.
- ▶ Inability to focus on anything but the trigger.
- ▶ Thought/worry spirals.
- ▶ Pervasive feelings of fear and nervousness.
- ▶ Phobias.



Physiological Effects

- ▶ Stomach Issues.
- ▶ Rapid heartrate.
- ▶ Sleep Issues.
- ▶ Shaky hands/fidgeting.
- ▶ Sweating profusely.



Healthy Coping Strategies

The Big Three:

SLEEP

DIET

EXERCISE

If you improve any or all of these, you will stand a much higher chance of reducing stress and anxiety from your life.

Additional Coping Strategies

- ▶ 10 minutes of meditation per day can help train your mind to find peace amongst the hustle and bustle of life.
- ▶ Practice vulnerability: open up about your hardships and struggles with someone you trust. Validation and acknowledgement can be incredibly helpful and affirming.
- ▶ Try journaling. This can work to externalize the internal, often making it easier to deal with.
- ▶ Be mindful of your limitations. This one is especially important, since many of us feel hardwired to keep pushing ourselves.
- ▶ Establish a self-care routine that works for you.
- ▶ Figure out if you're looking for solutions or comfort.

When to Seek Help

- ▶ Like most things in life, moderation is key.
- ▶ If you feel anxious sometimes, like before a job interview or a date, or getting behind the wheel after you've been in a car accident the month prior, that makes sense.
- ▶ If you start to have to plan your day or week around your anxiety, or it feels out of your control, it is probably time to talk to someone.
- ▶ Think about your support network. Who do you trust? Who has trusted you in the past?

