

Stress Management

How To Break Free From A Stressful Life

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Introduction - Stressed Out?

Just about everyone who you talk to nowadays will complain about being “stressed out.” Thirty years ago, no one ever even used this term. Today, however, it is a staple in most conversations. We often refer to ourselves as being “stressed out” when we discuss our careers as well as our personal lives.

Recent studies indicate that even children are “stressed out.” Little kids, who shouldn’t have a care in the world, are becoming “stressed” due to activities at home or at school. In most cases, they are simply inheriting the stress from their parents.

Psychologists who deal with “stressed out” individuals blame the current situation on everything from the foods we eat to our society. Most agree that people today attempt to do “too much” and end up getting burned out.

We all experience stress during the course of our lives. There is a difference, however, in being constantly stressed out and experiencing stress due to a certain situation. Anything that dramatically disrupts our lives is a cause for stress. Most people recover from the stressful situation after it has been resolved or over a period of time.

Other people tend to get stressed out all the time. In fact, their entire life appears to be one big stress factory. This is unhealthy and is gradually taking its toll on our society. Each year, billions of dollars are spent on symptoms of stress. There are dozens of prescriptive medicines on the market today that address stress and anxiety. Millions of people are on some sort of medication for “stress.”

What has happened in the past thirty years that has caused us to become such a nation of stressed out individuals? Is society expecting too much from us or are we expecting too

much from ourselves? Why are so many people suffering from the following:

Anxiety disorder

Social anxiety disorder

Obsessive compulsive disorder

Anorexia Nervosa

Depression

Panic attacks

Years ago, no one ever even heard of these conditions, now they are featured in every magazine you encounter. There is a huge market to treat both depression and anxiety, which usually go hand in hand and are the offspring of stress.

Pharmaceutical companies are cranking out different anti-depressants all of the time. These are said to be ‘better’ than the other anti-depressants that they discovered a year prior. Thirty years ago, no one ever even heard the term “anti-depressant.” If you used that expression back then, people would think you were talking about something to do with your car.

Today it seems as if every single person you encounter is “on something” for stress, depression or anxiety. All of them can neatly be lumped into the same category and are caused by stress.

Stress is usually at the root of all of the above psychological disorders. It also affects us physically as well. Stress has been linked to every disease known to man, including heart disease and cancer. Clearly, it is not a good idea for people to be under stress. But, as human beings, we are going to experience stressful situations. There is no avoiding this fact. Therefore, in order to really be able to help cure ourselves from being “stressed

out” we need to know how to do the following:

Identify stressors that affect our daily lives;

Eliminate the stressors of which we can free ourselves;

Learn to deal with stressful situations in a healthy way

If you are one of the millions of people who are feeling stressed out, you must take a look at the reasons why you are stressed out and try to do what you can to eliminate as much stress as you can from your life. If you continue to be “stressed out” you will most likely find yourself taking some sort of prescription drug for one of the above disorders. Taking prescription drugs for stress does not mean that you are “crazy.” This book will discuss alternative ways to deal with stress, but as a last resort, you are better off with the medications than allowing your body to be battered by stress.

Life is way too short to go through it being stressed out. And chances are that you will shorten your lifespan significantly if you continue to be “stressed out “ through the daily course of your life. This is especially true as many of the things over which you may be stressed are minor, but have been blown up in your mind to be worse than they actually are.

Wouldn’t it be nice to actually be able to go through life without being “stressed out” over everything and without drugs or medications? This book will teach you everything you wanted to know about stress and how you can avoid this scourge that seems to be plaguing millions of people.

Chapter 1 - What Is Stress?

Stress is an intrusion on your peaceful existence. All of us strive to have orderly and peaceful lives. We tend to develop well when we get into certain routines. Human beings are all animals. If you have ever owned a dog, you may have observed that the dog thrived very well on routine. You had to walk the animal a certain time each day, it had to be fed at a certain time each day and it slept at a certain time each day. The dog depended on a routine.

When the routine was broken, the dog would do things such as have accidents in the house, or behave in another destructive type manner. This is because the dog was actually stressed out. Why was the dog stressed out? Because his or her routine had been broken.

Human beings behave the same way. Parents often find that their children will behave much better when they have a set routine than if everything is pandemonium in the household. Routines give a child a feeling of security, which is the one thing that a child wants most of all.

Many people will complain that their kids are unruly and do not want to go to bed on time. Their bedtime “routine” involves telling their kids to go to bed. It then escalates into screaming at their kids to go to bed to threatening their kids with punishment if they do not go to bed.

The entire “go to bed” issue can be avoided if the parents simply set a bedtime routine. Milk and cookies. A bedtime story and being tucked in. Every night. The children know what to expect and actually end up looking forward to bedtime. This gives children an

added sense of security, something that they really need in their lives.

We all want to feel safe and secure, but as we get older, we realize that we cannot always count on things being the same. We experience different incidents in our lives that turn our world upside down and cause us to feel stress. Most of these incidents we cannot control, others we can control to a certain degree. Some of us are fortunate enough not to experience these stressors until adulthood. Others experience stress as young children.

Stress can be pinned to an outside factor or something that we create in our own heads. If we are creating self induced stress, chances are that something from the outside triggered this condition and the resulting response.

Some of the more notorious causes of stress are the following:

Death of a loved one

This can be a spouse, parent, child or friend. Death is part of life, but the death of a loved one is something that causes significant stress. Our hearts are broken as we grieve for our loved one and our lives are seriously disrupted. This is something which we can do little about, unfortunately, and also something we all have to deal with, sooner or later. Many people recover from this stressor and continue with their lives. Others never fully recover. Death of a loved one can cause a number of serious illnesses that we take on ourselves, including depression.

The death of a child is probably the worst pain anyone can endure and many people never fully recover from this type of stress, however, they do manage to go on with their lives for the sake of others around them. Despite the fact that the death of a child is

enough to put anyone over the edge, most people have more of a life force and feel compelled to go on. However, this is one stress factor that can be completely devastating to someone emotionally and is one from which one never fully recovers.

Divorce

Even if we are glad to get rid of our ex-spouse, divorce is a major stressor in our lives. In addition to causing us to feel stress, it can also stress out our children. Many couples are so wrapped up with their own emotions during a divorce that they fail to notice the impact of the situation on their children. Chances are that the kids are feeling quite a bit of turmoil, even if they are too young to understand what is really going on. In fact, younger children can experience even more stress than older children in the case of their parent's divorce because they cannot put their emotions into words, nor can they understand that daddy or mommy going away has nothing to do with them. To a young child, everything in the world has something to do with them.

A child who experiences the trauma of his or her parents' divorce will feel stress. In some cases, the stress may manifest itself to a number of psychological disorders, including anxiety. The routine has been broken and the child no longer feels safe, so he or she will come up with a way to alleviate the stress and retain some sort of control over their lives by developing a disorder such as anorexia. Children should see a counselor when the parents' divorce, whether or not they appear "fine." Some children will be able to deflect the stress better than others, but it is always a good idea to make sure that the child truly is "fine."

Moving

Even if you are moving from a shack to a palace, this is still stressful. It may be a happy

occasion, but it is still a disruption of your routine. And any disruption of your routine causes stress. Moving disrupts the entire family. And it is a real pain in the neck. Plus you have to deal with the packing.

Everyone hates moving. Packing up all of your belongings and then unpacking them is just a hassle. Very few of us are fortunate enough to be able to have someone do all of this labor for us so it tends to be stressful. However, even if we do not have to lift a finger, moving is still a disruption of our normal routine.

It will take a while before you can get established into your new home. Until you do, you should try to maintain as much of your normal routine as possible, especially if you have children.

Major Illness

Any type of major illness is a significant stressor for the entire family. One person being ill does not just affect that person, but everyone around him or her. A major illness is one of the worst stressors we can endure as it can go on for years, taking its emotional toll on everyone around, especially children.

Many people who experience a major illness enter into a depression. This is usually due to the dramatic change in their life. Others will most likely also enter into a state of depression or exhibit unusual behavior. A young person who has a very ill parent may start turning to drugs, alcohol or other behavior to alleviate the stress he or she feels due to the parent's illness. They will be unable to deal with the stress and chances are that the rest of the family will be emotionally unavailable for help. Self medicating with drugs, alcohol or even promiscuous sex is a way for some young people to cope with

the illness of a parent.

Job Loss

In addition to being humiliating, the loss of a job will most likely throw you into financial turmoil. Losing a job often results in depression as well as anxiety. Not only did your self esteem take a hit, but you are also worried about money. You will probably experience stress until you get a new job or reconcile yourself to the fact that you will have to get by on less money.

Until you get your bearings, you will face a disruption in your lifestyle as well as your financial status. The uncertainty that surrounds getting another job also affects us when it comes to stress. Losing a job and having to find another job is very stressful.

Even if we quit a job for a better job, this is still considered a stress factor. Starting a new job, while a good thing, is stressful for most individuals. Why? Because it breaks our routine. And anything that breaks our routine causes stress.

These are just a few of the major stress factors that we, as a society, face. There are other things that can lead to stress, but these are among the worst.

In some cases, happy events such as the birth of a child, marriage, or even a new job can lead to stress. Even though these are joyous occasions, they are stressful. Why? Because they disrupt our lifestyle.

Are you sensing any sort of pattern here with regard to stress? Each of the aforementioned stressors all has one thing in common - they disrupt our lives. We don't like to have our lives disrupted and when it happens, even if it's a good disruption, it

causes stress.

We cannot go through life like robots and expect for nothing to ever change. We are going to experience stressful situations throughout our lives. How we handle the stressful situations will determine how well we can manage stress. There are both good ways and bad ways to manage stress.

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