Coping With Stress

"To bring about change, you must not be afraid to take the first step. We will fail when we fail to try." — Rosa Parks

What is Stress?

Stress is a term used to describe the mental and emotional strain that is caused by a person's response to pressure from the outside world. It is a natural response that can be triggered by a variety of factors, including school, relationships, family, unhealthy home environment, and health issues. When a person experiences stress, their body releases hormones and chemicals that prepare them to respond to the perceived threat. In small doses, stress can be beneficial, helping a person to perform better and meet challenges. However, chronic or excessive stress can have negative effects on a person's health, relationships, and quality of life.

Common Symptoms of Stress

Physical	Emotional	Mental
• Muscle tension • Headaches • Low energy • Chest pain • Upset stomach • Sleep disturbances • High blood pressure • Sweaty and/or cold hands and feet • Changes in appetite • Chromic pain • Dry mouth • Frequent infections • Clenched Jaw • Teeth grinding • Loss of sexual desire and/or ability	• Mood swings • Outbursts • Feeling depressed/anxious • Loss of interest in daily activities • Feeling hopeless/helpless • Feeling alone/Isolating • Overwhelmed • Feeling on edge • Difficulty regulating emotions	• Brain fog • Forgetfulness • Difficulty making decisions and solving problems • Difficulty concentrating • Racing and/or intrusive thoughts • Poor judgment

Acute vs Chronic Stress

Stress is a natural part of life, and it can be caused by a variety of factors such as work, relationships, finances, and health issues. While acute and chronic stress are both types of stress, they differ in their duration, intensity, and effects on the body.

Acute stress is a short-term, often sudden response to a perceived threat or challenge. It is a normal part of the body's "fight or flight" response, which is designed to help us react quickly in dangerous situations. Examples of acute stress include getting into an argument, being stuck in traffic, or giving a presentation at school. While acute stress can be uncomfortable, it usually goes away on its own within a few minutes or hours.

Chronic stress, on the other hand, is a long-term response to ongoing stressors that are not easily resolved. It can result from a variety of sources such as a difficult work environment, financial struggles, or a chronic illness. Unlike acute stress, chronic stress can have serious negative effects on both physical and mental health. It can lead to a weakened immune system, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, anxiety, and depression.

In summary, while both acute and chronic stress can be challenging to manage, chronic stress is more serious and can have long-term health impacts. It is important to find ways to manage stress in healthy ways, such as exercise, meditation, and seeking support from friends and family.

How to manage Stress

- **Identify your stressors:** Take note of the things that trigger your stress. This could be anything from school deadlines to family conflicts.
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** Engage in activities that help you relax, such as yoga, meditation, or deep breathing exercises.
- **Get enough sleep:** Aim for at least 8-12 hours of sleep each night to help your body and mind recharge.
- **Exercise regularly:** Regular physical activity can help reduce stress levels and improve your overall well-being.
- **Connect with others:** Spend time with loved ones or join a support group to help you cope with stress.
- **Prioritize self-care:** Make time for activities that bring you joy and make you feel good, such as hobbies or self-care practices.
- **Seek professional help if needed:** If you're struggling to manage your stress, don't hesitate to seek help from a mental health professional.

Remember, everyone experiences stress differently, so it's important to find what works best for you personally.