

FOUR TYPES OF STRESS

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For fast-acting relief, try slowing down.

Stress is that funny thing, that as kids we do not possess and somewhere along the way to adulthood it becomes a part of our everyday life. Some days stress is good and helps us strive for our best and at other times the stress feels like a

tidal wave pulling us under. Dr. Karl Albrecht identified the most common types of stress and how to spot them. When we gain insight to identify the stress coming at us, we are on the path to being stress managers and not stress carriers.

TIME STRESS

This occurs when we worry about time, or more troublesome, the lack of time. We worry about the length of the to-do list and the fear that we will fail to achieve our goals. This can lead to feelings of being trapped, unhappy or even hopeless. We can manage time stress by learning and applying good time management skills. This can be done by making "reasonable" to-do lists, devote enough time to the highest priority items instead of getting caught up in the seemingly urgent tasks, which really have little impact on our overall goals. Remember when you spend the entire day "running," but at the end of the day feel like nothing was completed? Well, that is time stress. It's key to recognize the important tasks as being those ones that help you reach your goals. Another key point about time stress

is enhancing your ability to say "no." It's okay to be polite and assertive to say "no" to the tasks you don't have the capacity to do.

ANTICIPATORY STRESS

This is what we do when we look to the future. Sometimes this stress can be focused on a specific event or it can be vague and undefined. Some people will feel a sense of dread about the future or thinking, "I'm just waiting for the other shoe to fall." The good news is that anticipatory stress can also be managed. This type of stress is future based, and by worrying about what has not happened (and may not happen) is a method of pre-suffering. Why wait for something to go wrong, start the stress now! Our minds will apply this tactic without much cognitive effort. Remember that just because you think it, doesn't make it so. Use positive visualization to see the situation playing out right, and how you will feel when this happens. Feels much better doesn't it? Research has demonstrated that our mind cannot tell the difference, on a neurological level, between a situation you are just thinking about repeatedly and one that's actually happened. Visualize a positive conclusion and your body will follow along.

SITUATIONAL STRESS

This is where you encounter a scary situation that you have no control over, or very little control. It may be an emergency situation that you did not see coming, but more times than not the situation involves conflict. Situational stress can show up out of seemingly thin air at times in a situation we could not anticipate. To manage this type of stress is to focus on self-awareness. This means recognizing the physical and emotional signs our body sends out when we are under pressure. Our

body will send out the physical signal before our mind is fully aware of the thought. Conflict is a significant source of situational stress. Application of healthy conflict resolution skills at work and at home can help in resolution of conflict. Remember that conflict is not a win/lose situation. Most conflict stems from a lack of understanding, miscommunication and misperceptions.

ENCOUNTER STRESS

This stress involves people. We experience encounter stress when we worry about our interactions with others. What if I don't like them? What if they don't like me? Within encounter stress can come "contact overload." This is when a person is drained from interacting with too many people. Managing encounter stress can be addressed by an emphasis on your people skills. This can start with a look at your emotional intelligence. This is your ability to recognize emotions, wants and needs of yourself and others. It's also important to know when you have reached your "people contact" limit for the day. All of us have different thresholds. If you are becoming irritated, cranky, cold or impersonal, there is a good chance you have reached your limit. Go for a walk, drink some water and practice some deep breathing. Having a sense of empathy is a valuable skill for encounter stress for understanding and compassion.

Congratulations, you made the first step to managing your stress... you read this article. The next step is learning what your triggers are. If you know what will push your buttons, it is easier to avoid or be ready to manage. There are stressors we need to accept, and then we adjust our reactions to them to keep our well-being in balance.