

Depression and Stress Management

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ABSTRACT: Stress is the body's response to physical or emotional demands. It can be good or bad. Good stress helps you to achieve your goal while bad stress can hamper your health. If stress goes beyond control then it results into depression. In order to manage stress, lifestyle modifications can be enough but to treat depression, medical therapy may be required.

Key words: Stress, depression, lifestyle modifications

I. INTRODUCTION:

Stress is the body's response to physical or emotional demands. When you think of stress, it probably brings negative emotions to mind. But some stress is good for you, like the anticipation you feel when you start a new relationship or job. It can fuel excitement and make you want to do and achieve more. Stress can also help you be prepared to face challenges or respond to challenging situations.

Good stress does not stick around. It boosts your mood to meet the moment, then goes away. If you are under stress for long periods of time, it can become overwhelming and affect both physically and emotionally.

"If we stay under chronic stress, our physiological stress response is taxed beyond what it is designed to do, and it starts to impair us."

The effects of chronic, or long-term, stress can be harmful on their own, but they also can contribute to depression, a mood disorder that makes you feel sad and disinterested in things you usually enjoy. Depression can affect your appetite, your sleep habits, and ability to concentrate.

High-stress events, such as losing a job or the end of a long-term relationship, can lead to depression. Not everyone who experiences these situations becomes depressed. Biological factors may explain why one person facing a stressful circumstance experiences depression while another person does not.

Causes of stress

Losing a family member, divorce, and shifting to new place are all major life changes that

can cause stress. Some studies link an overactive stress system and high levels of cortisol in the body to depression and other health conditions, including heart disease. When the mind feels threatened, the body produces more stress hormones such as cortisol to help the body fight or run away from the threat. This works well if you are in real danger, but it does not always benefit you in your daily life.

Other examples of events that can cause stress include:

- getting into a fight with your spouse or significant other
- losing your job
- major natural disasters, such as earthquakes or floods, that can damage your home or destroy it altogether
- getting into a car accident, which can cause physical, emotional, and financial stress
- being robbed, mugged, or attacked

Certain lifestyle choices can also contribute to your stress levels. This is especially true if they affect your overall health or if you become dependent on unhealthy coping mechanisms. Lifestyle choices that can increase stress include:

- heavy or excessive consumption of alcohol
- not getting enough exercise
- smoking or using illegal drugs
- working for long periods of time without taking a break, or being a "workaholic"
- not eating a well-balanced diet
- spending too much time watching television or playing video games
- looking at a smartphone in bed, which can keep you from falling asleep

Sometimes the constant stresses of daily life trigger your fight-or-flight response. This can lead to complications, including depression. Depression can make experiencing and coping with events in our life more challenging. Big and small stresses still occur, but with depression, you may not feel as equipped to deal with them. This can make the symptoms of depression and the stress of certain situations worse.

Types of stress

Stress can be caused by a single event or by temporary situations. This is known as acute stress. Acute stress can be brought on by events that stress you out, such as taking a big test, or by an acute injury, such as a broken bone.

Stress can also last a long time without ever feeling like it is easing up. In these instances, events or illnesses may cause continuous stress or there may be no clear reason for your stress. This is known as chronic stress. Chronic stress is usually the result of personal, lifestyle, or health issues that are also chronic. Common causes of chronic stress include:

- having financial struggles
- working at a high-pressure job
- having personal or relationship issues at home
- not feeling like you have enough support from family or friends

Effects of stress on depression

While stress can generally have negative effects on your physical and mental health, it can be especially harmful if you have depression.

Stress can make you feel less able to maintain positive habits or coping strategies, which are important to managing depression. This can make symptoms of depression feel more intense. Interrupting a healthy routine can result in negative coping strategies, such as drinking or withdrawing from social relationships. These actions can result in further stress, which can then make depression symptoms worse.

Stress can also affect your mood, as anxiety and irritability are both common responses to stress. When a stressor causes you to feel anxious, the anxiety may result in more negative feelings or frustration, even if the stressor is only temporary.

Tips on managing stress

Stress management techniques are useful in coping with depression. Stress relief can also help prevent depressive symptoms from developing. Some helpful stress management techniques include:

- Getting enough sleep. Making sure your mind and body get enough rest can go a long way toward easing stress. The National Sleep Foundation recommends 7 to 9 hours sleep for adults every night.
- Eating a healthy diet

- Getting regular exercise. Just 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week is enough to make a difference. Activities like yoga and meditation, which slow things down and help you relax, are good for reducing stress.
- Taking occasional vacations or regular breaks from work
- Consuming less caffeine or alcohol. Try to cut down on coffee, soda, and other caffeinated drinks.
- Quit smoking. The idea that smoking cigarettes can help you handle stress is a popular myth. While nicotine does help relax you right away, that feeling is short-lived and can create more stress through cravings or withdrawal.
- Express Yourself in Writing. Writing in a journal is great therapy and can help you manage depression. You can relieve stress by being open about your thoughts, feelings, and concerns in your writing and stress management is an important part of living well with depression. Be totally honest in your Eprivate journal. Writing down your feelings and challenges with depression can release pent-up emotions.
- Boost Your Self-Image. People with depression often experience low self-esteem, so finding ways to feel better about yourself is an important aspect of treatment. Practice positive thinking by focusing your thoughts on your best qualities. You can also make lifestyle changes that can improve your self-esteem, such as eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, and spending time with friends who make you feel good about who you are.
- Stick to a Schedule. Maintaining a healthy and regular routine is helpful for people with depression.
- Stay Involved. If you are experiencing depression, you may feel like you want to withdraw socially and keep to yourself, either because of low self-esteem or a lack of interest. Social life is important. Push yourself to stay involved with friends. Social connections can help keep you from spiralling downward into deeper depression and from becoming isolated and alone with your thoughts. Go to the movies, share a brisk walk, or just catch up with a close friend — it might lift your spirits.

- Depend on Others. Friends and family can help you feel better about yourself when depression brings you down. Allow yourself to lean on loved ones when you need them. They can encourage you to follow your treatment plan, exercise, eat a healthy diet, and generally take care of yourself — all steps necessary to get better. You can also join a support group for people with depression for the chance to talk to others who understand what you are going through.
- Make the Food and Mood Connection. Diet and nutrition are very important and some studies have shown that a higher daily intake of omega-3s, which you can get in fish like salmon or through fish oil supplements, can improve mood. Eating a healthy diet can make you feel healthy, fit, and attractive, which improves self-esteem, while feeling unhealthy can worsen depression and play into negative self-perception
- Handle On Your Household Chores - Depression can make it difficult to complete household chores, such as doing the dishes or paying bills. Take control of your daily chores. Start small and work on one project at a time. Getting up and moving can help you start to feel better in itself.
- Create A Wellness Toolbox - A wellness toolbox is a set of tools that you can use to help soothe yourself when you are feeling down. The tools you find most helpful might not work for someone else so it is important to carefully consider what things can help you feel your best. Cuddling your pet, listening to your favourite music, taking a warm bath, or reading a good book are just a few tools you might find helpful. Create a list of the activities you might try when you are feeling bad. Choose an activity to try when you are having a particularly rough time.

If lifestyle choices are causing you stress, you may consider changing the way you approach your

personal or professional life. Some ways you can help decrease this kind of stress include:

- putting yourself under less pressure to perform at work or school, such as by lowering your standards to a level you still find acceptable
- not taking on too many responsibilities at work or activities at home
- sharing responsibilities or delegating tasks to others around you
- surrounding yourself with supportive and positive friends and family members
- removing yourself from stressful environments or situations

Activities such as yoga, meditation, or attending religious services can also help you deal with stress. A combination of these techniques may prove even more effective. It is important to find what works for you. And no matter what you choose, it is vital to have close friends and family members who are willing to support you.

Talking to a counselor, therapist, or other mental health professional can also be a useful way to deal with stress and depression. Talk therapy alone or combined with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or medication is a proven solution for both depression and chronic stress. Medications for depression include:

- selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), such as citalopram (Celexa)
- monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), such as isocarboxazid (Marplan)

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