



Mental Health News

October 2021

In this month's letter:

- *Managing Your Stress to Combat*
 - *Sleepless nights*
 - *Racing Thoughts*
 - *Acute and Chronic Stress*

Managing Stress

Revealing the Source >>>

Understanding Stress and It's Precursors

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand. In short bursts, stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline. But when stress lasts for a long time, it may harm your health.

Managing Your Mind During Stressful Times

Stress can impact the body in a variety of ways. One common and detrimental impact that stress has on the mind is racing thoughts. Racing thoughts are consistent, persistent, often intrusive thoughts that come in rapid succession. These thoughts are difficult to shut down and can impede focus and concentration, prevent sleep, and impact your daily life.

When a person has racing thoughts, their mind involuntarily digs up random thoughts and memories and moves rapidly from one to another. The topics may have nothing to do with each other or may have links to each other. Random thoughts can affect a person's ability to sleep or to focus on a single topic. If racing thoughts move in a sequence, they can end in a worst-case scenario. A person may hear them as a voice they cannot ignore or as background noise in the brain.

There is a direct link between depression, anxiety and racing thoughts.

Treating an underlying health condition or learning some coping strategies may help resolve these thoughts. Racing thoughts that cannot be controlled can be a

precursor to more advanced concerns if they are ignored. Identifying what is causing the racing thoughts determines what needs to occur to calm them, and a

practitioner can help with both. Mindfulness exercises are grounding and breathing techniques that can help one to re-center, be present and regain control of their thoughts.

The Cost of Unmanaged Stress

Acute stress is the most common form of stress. It comes from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future. Acute stress is thrilling and exciting in small doses, but too much is exhausting.

A competitive run up a hill, for example, is exhilarating early in the day. That same run-uphill late in the day is taxing and wearing. Running beyond your limits can lead to falls and broken bones. Overdoing short-term stress can lead to psychological distress, tension headaches, upset stomach, and other symptoms.

Fortunately, acute stress symptoms are recognized by most people. It's a laundry list of what has gone awry in their lives: the group of friends that stopped speaking to them, the low grade they made on an exam, a deadline they're rushing to meet, their child's occasional problems at school, and so on.

Because it is short-term, acute stress doesn't have enough time to do the extensive damage associated with long-term stress. Acute stress can crop up in anyone's life, and it is highly treatable and manageable.

It is common for people with acute stress reactions to be over-aroused, short-tempered, irritable, anxious, and tense. Often, they describe themselves as having "a lot of nervous energy." They tend to be abrupt, always in a hurry, and sometimes their irritability comes across as hostility. Interpersonal relationships deteriorate rapidly when others respond with real hostility. As a result, the workplace becomes a very stressful place for them.

Chronic stress is the grinding stress that wears people away day after day, year after year. Chronic stress destroys bodies, minds, and lives. It wreaks havoc through long-term attrition. It's the stress of poverty, familial struggles, and being trapped in an unhappy relationship or a despised job or career. It's the stress that the never-ending "troubles" bring to life daily. Chronic stress comes when a person never sees a way out of a miserable situation. It's the stress of unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable periods. With no hope, the individual gives up searching for solutions. Some chronic tensions stem from traumatic, adverse early childhood experiences that become internalized and remain forever painful and present. Some experiences profoundly affect personality. A view of the world, or a belief system, is created that causes unending stress for the individual.

The worst aspect of chronic stress is that people get used to it. They forget it's there. People are immediately aware of acute stress because it is new; they ignore chronic stress because it is old, familiar, and sometimes, almost comfortable. However, a person is wise not to be fooled by the common-place feel of chronic stress. The detrimental effects of this type of stress can be extremely dangerous if it is allowed to go unchecked. Chronic stress kills through suicide, violence, heart attack, stroke, and, perhaps, even cancer. People wear down to a final, fatal breakdown. Because physical and mental resources are depleted through long-term attrition, the symptoms of chronic stress are difficult to treat. They may require extended medical as well as behavioral treatment and stress management.

final thoughts..

Although simply being overwhelmed by daily life can cause racing thoughts, behavioral health conditions are the largest contributing factor and is nothing to be ashamed about.

Anxiety and depression are the most common among both adolescents and adults, but other mental health issues are contributing factors, as well.

Addressing the Symptoms

The following techniques decrease stress and increase rest:

- doing deep-breathing exercises
- listening to soothing music
- writing out thoughts on paper or in a diary
- practicing meditation exercises
- engaging in personal pampering and self-care
- focusing only on the present and things you can control right now

Managing Stress Related Insomnia

Reclaiming the Sleep Your Mind and Body Needs

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Be Mindful. Shortly before bedtime, try a relaxation strategy that incorporates mindfulness, deep breathing, or meditation.
- Turn Screens Off Early.
- Take a Hot Bath or Shower to Relax.
- Count Sheep. It might sound a little silly, but it works.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, large meals, for several hours before bedtime.
- Exercise Regularly.
- Try Worrying Earlier in the Day.
- Have an herbal tea. Chamomile and other herbal teas can help you relax.

Acknowledging the Experts >>>

<https://www.sleep.org>

<https://www.verywellmind.com>

<https://crmhs.org>

<https://www.bbrfoundation.org>

Factors that Affect Sleep

The following are all common factors that contribute to lack of sleep:

Overthinking

Many people take their work home with them, either physically or metaphorically.

Caffeine

Caffeine can increase stress levels and significantly affect the amount and quality of sleep you get.

Cortisol

Unfortunately, chronic stress can lead to excessive cortisol levels, which can disrupt healthy sleep patterns.

Overscheduling

A hectic, busy life can rob you of time you can dedicate to sleep. You may feel tired a lot of the time but not realize the toll lack of sleep is taking.

Anxiety

Anxiety can make sleep difficult and wake you up at night. Anxiety keeps your mind busy as you imagine threatening scenarios and worry about what may happen next. That racing of your mind can rob you of sleep by keeping your cortisol levels high, making sleep harder to achieve.