

Mental Health Matters

April 2023



April is Stress Awareness Month

Learning to cope with our stress and finding healthy ways to deal with these situations can go a long way in living a healthy and positive life.

What does stress mean to you?

We all experience stress – yet we may experience it in very different ways. Because of this, there is no single definition for stress, but the most common explanation is a physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension.

Stress is a reaction to a situation where a person feels anxious or threatened. Learning healthy ways to cope and getting the proper care and support can help reduce stressful feelings and symptoms.

Common reactions to a stressful event can include:

- Disbelief, shock and numbness
- Feeling sad, frustrated and helpless
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Headaches, back pains and stomach problems
- Smoking or the use of alcohol or drugs

Affecting more than just your mind

Long-term stress can prove to be more than just a mental issue. From headaches to stomach disorders to depression – even very serious issues like stroke and heart disease can come as a result of stress.

When you are placed in a stressful situation, specific stress hormones rush into your bloodstream leading to an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and glucose levels. This is helpful in emergency situations, but having this “rush” for extended periods of time can be dangerous and make you susceptible to the issues mentioned previously.

Learn to overcome issues you cannot change

Sometimes the stress in our lives is not something we have the power to change. Try to:

- Recognize when you don’t have control, and let it go.
- Avoid getting anxious about situations that you cannot change.
- Take control of your reactions and focus your mind on something that makes you feel calm and in control.
- Develop a vision for healthy living, wellness, and personal growth, and set realistic goals to help you realize your vision.

Full article found at <https://www.stress.org/april-is-stress-awareness-month>



Need Mental Health Support?

OPTUM EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) OFFERS **FREE CONFIDENTIAL HELP**

Call toll-free

888-444-8624 any time

OR

Go to

www.liveandworkwell.com

and browse as a guest using

code **CSEBO**





Mental Health Counselors:

Lisa de la O, AMFT:

805.933.8936

LdelaO@santapaulausd.org

Rachael Forbes, LMFT:

805.933.8937

RForbes@santapaulausd.org

Deborah Ujfalusy, LCSW:

805.933.8939

DUjfalusy@santapaulausd.org

Leticia Enriquez, LCSW:

805.933.8964

LEnriquez@santapaulausd.org

In case of an Emergency:

- **911 For Immediate Support**
- **Ventura County Crisis Team (866) 998-2243 –(24 hours)**

**MENTAL
HEALTH
MATTERS**
#ENDTHESTIGMA

Eustress vs Distress: Positive & Negative Types of Stress

Most people view stress as negative and harmful, but in some situations, stress can be adaptive and helpful. Stress is a normal physiological and psychological response people develop in response to their circumstances. Eustress is a word used to describe stress that is positive, motivating, and enhances functioning while distress refers to bad and overwhelming stress that impairs functioning.

What Is Stress?

Stress is a normal response to “stressors,” or internal and external circumstances that are difficult, upsetting, or scary. Internal stressors include distressing thoughts or memories, physical sensations like pain or discomfort, and also emotions like sadness or anger. External stressors include any concerning event, situation or circumstance that has the potential to negatively impact a person or something they care about.

When a person encounters a stressor, a chain reaction is set into motion in the brain and nervous system. This chain reaction begins in the brain when a problem or potential threat is identified, which cues the sympathetic nervous system. When the sympathetic nervous system is activated, stress hormones and chemicals like adrenaline and cortisol are pumped into the bloodstream. This results in the stress response (also called fight or flight) and involves a quickening of the heart rate and breath, feelings of restless energy and increased mental alertness.

When stress happens in response to actual problems or threats, it can be helpful in providing energy, motivation and focus needed to confront or solve the problem. This kind of stress is called eustress. When the stress response happens too often or in response to unimportant or uncontrollable circumstances, it is more likely to be experienced as distress, which can have negative effects on a person’s physical and mental health.

What Is Eustress?

Eustress is a relatively new concept that describes a type of stress that is positive, helpful, and motivating. Unlike distress, eustress motivates people to work hard, improve their performance, and reach their goals, even in the face of challenges.⁶ In the body and brain, both eustress and distress involve the activation of the fight or flight response.

The difference is that in eustress, the energy provided is proportionate to what is needed in the situation while in distress, the energy is excessive or unusable. Whether a person experiences distress or eustress in a situation mainly depends on their perception of themselves and the stressor. When a person feels confident in their ability to overcome the stressor, they are more likely to experience positive stress.^{3,4,6} This positive assessment of the stressor helps them channel the energy provided by the fight or flight response in ways that help them work towards a solution.

What Is Distress?

Distress describes the negative kind of stress that most people associate with feeling “stressed out”. Distress tends to cause people to feel overwhelmed, anxious, and to experience physical and psychological symptoms like headaches, tension, insomnia, inattentiveness or irritability. Frequent, intense or chronic stress is toxic to the body and brain and is linked to a number of physical and mental illnesses, as well as impairing a person’s ability to function.

Full article found at <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/eustress-vs-distress/>