



Coping, or Not Coping With Stress

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By Dr. Edward M. Burstein

Stress can be described as a poor diet (biochemical stress), a mental upset (emotional stress), a physical strain or an injury to the body (physical stress), the weather (thermal stress), or a combination of any of these factors. So, if you're like most people, the many stresses of daily living have left you worn out and not in the tip-top shape you'd like to be in.

When your body is in a stressed state many physiological changes take place. Blood pressure goes up, digestion slows and muscles tense - all of your body's systems are on alert to deal with the negative stimulus. Continued distress (or negative stress) is harmful because your body becomes exhausted from working overtime. Let's take a detailed look at how the body deals with this phenomena.

When the body first responds to upset, a physiological alarm goes off and the adrenal glands go to work to mobilize the body's energy. If the stress is short-term in nature, this energy helps to remove its effects and return the body to its natural, homeostatic (balanced) state.

But if the stress is emotional or biochemical in nature, and continues, the resistance phase begins - the body attempts to adapt to the stress. Again, the adrenal glands are at work, but now the body's energy reserves are called upon. This phase can go on indefinitely, and eventually the body weakens.

The last phase is characterized as exhaustion or "burnout". The body no longer has the energy to contain the stress and begins to break down. Expressed as fatigue or chronic tiredness, this phase is probably the most universal in our society. As a result, the body cannot operate efficiently to repair daily wear and tear. Digestion may slow down, the immune system may become sluggish resulting in poor lymphatic drainage, and the acupuncture system (or electrical pathways in the body) may short circuit. In simpler terms, you may experience back pain, indigestion, insomnia, headaches, allergies and many other symptoms.

Why are some people able to live successfully with stress and resist disease while others exist in a constant state of burnout and ill health? The secret to coping with stress is having sufficient energy in the body. However, this is only possible if your energy-producing glands (adrenal and thyroid) are functioning properly and the chemical, emotional and physical aspects of your whole being are in balance.

The doctor of chiropractic, who specializes in Applied Kinesiology, is essentially a doctor of stress. By evaluating the entire person, the doctor of chiropractic can determine the cause of the stress and can work with the body's own systems to restore energy and health. Of course, you must do your part too - a proper diet, aerobic exercise and adequate rest are fundamental to coping with stress.

Editor's note: Dr. Burstein is founder and Clinical Director of the Berkeley Heights Chiropractic Center, a multi-doctor holistic health care center dedicated to natural healing and optimum health. He has been awarded the status of



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Teaching Diplomate by the International College of Applied Kinesiology, and shares this distinction with only four other chiropractors in the state and 117 worldwide. Dr. Burstein has lectured at Overlook Hospital and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital on immune, autoimmune and chronic degenerative diseases. For information, call (908) 665-0770.