

# STRESS

This is the age of stress and anxiety. Our world today is especially fast moving, with rapid changes taking place in every facet of society. The strains and pressures of daily life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century are steadily building up. Those who can't cope try escaping through the use of alcohol or tranquilizers. Some end it all in suicide.

Not all stress is bad, but when stress is not managed and used properly, it has a harmful effect on the body. This unpleasant and destructive stress is actually distress. Disturbed by distress, the body will suffer in some way. The list of consequent mental and physical ailments aggravated by stress is already long and increasing. They include gastric or peptic ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease, mental or emotional breakdown, migraine headaches, diabetes, allergies, colitis, temporary diarrhea, heart attacks and suicide. Stress is even linked with causing certain forms of cancer according to recent evidence. The link between mental strain and physical health is well documented in medical journals. Unchecked emotions stress increased muscle tension and biochemical changes in the body to the point that its defenses against disease are reduced.

You may not always know when you are under stress. Even though you don't feel tense and under pressure, your body nonetheless suffers from the effects stress produces. Ask yourself the following questions: Do minor problems and disappointments throw you into a dither? Do you find it difficult to get along with people? Do the small pleasures of life fail to satisfy you? Are you unable to stop thinking your anxieties? Do you fear people or situations that never used to trouble you? Are you suspicious of people, mistrustful of your friends? Do you have the feeling of being trapped? Do you feel inadequate or suffer self-doubt? If you answered, "yes" to several of these questions, you may be on the road to illness unless you learn to cope better with those situations.

What causes stress? Three major categories of situations can cause stress. One is a LOSS of someone or something. Another is a situation involving a THREAT of some kind, to your home, finances, job, etc. The third is a CHANGE in your way of life. The change can involve marital status, health, type of work, responsibilities at work, etc.

Since we cannot avoid all stress, we need to learn to live with it. Improve our health is the first coping strategy we can use. Exercise relieves tension. Dr. Hans Selye, a leading expert on stress, found that under-exercised mice withstood stress far worse than those in peak physical condition. More outdoor living will counteract much of the tension of modern city life. Since stress burns up energy and causes fatigue, we must eat regular meals of nutritious foods and get adequate sleep. We must also take time out for relaxation. When pressures mount, our minds need a diversion. Good music is excellent, but it must be melodic and harmonious to serve as a tonic for jangled nerves. Loud and raucous music increases nervous tension. Try reading inspirational books, playing games

with family members, going to the park, developing a new hobby, or just walking.

One of the best methods of stress control is combining prayer and meditation. Change your way of thinking. Centuries ago God told us that our emotions and thoughts have direct effects on our health. Proverbs 14:30 says, "A Sound heart (mind) is the life of the flesh (body) : but envy ( a harmful emotion) is the rottenness of the bones." Negative emotions damage the physical body. On the other hand, positive emotions benefit the body. Proverbs 16:24 says, Pleasant words (or thoughts) are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." Also, in the Proverbs 17:22, "A merry heart (a cheerful attitude) doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." Learn to think good and uplifting thoughts, as the Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8. Avoid gossip, rumors and destructive criticism of others. Focus your mind on the good in others and develop an outgoing, helpful concern for them. Whenever possible, avoid personality conflicts and explosive situations that spark off stress. Attempt to understand how others feel and be willing to forgive their shortcomings.

Also important to controlling stress level is knowing your strengths and weaknesses. Trying to be like someone else causes stress if your expectations are beyond your capability to achieve. Don't take on more than you can comfortably handle. Be willing to say "no" when your time and energy are already in full demand. Another important principle is living within your means. The modern misguided "rat race" is not worth your effort, energy and economic resources. To avoid stress, be content with what you have. Trying to "keep up with the Joneses" is a heavy burden to bear.

A great deal of stress is involved with making decisions. Learn how to make wise decisions to solve problems. We must make decisions every day. It can be made easier by first getting all the relevant facts, including gathering information and seeking counsel from those having knowledge and wisdom to guide you. Determine what your fears are in the situation, and talk them over with someone. There are always choices of actions. Decide what they are and what the possible outcomes of each might be. Then come to a decision. Do not be afraid of making a mistake. What we think are mistakes are just growing experiences. Once you have made the decision, the tension caused by indecision will disappear.

Trust in God for strength and deliverance from distress. The Apostle Paul knew that the periods of stress he and other Christians had to endure were for the purpose of producing and strengthening spiritual character. II Corinthians 4:8, 9, 15 and 17 would make wonderful memory verses to combat stress. Paul was able to say in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." With God's help, we can learn how to cope with fears, worries and stress.

Finally, there is no better stress reduction technique than MemGram Processing®. This is accomplished by telephone with a Certified MemGram Processor®. MemGram Processing® will help you discover who you are, why you are here and how to go about getting what you deserve from your life. Visit our web site <http://www.biri.org> for more information.