

Stress management : To be the burden of imbalance or find power in growing up

Written by Hui-Chen Chen

“Low energy , low interest, agitation and anxiety , the feeling of time flying by.....these are signs of pressure.”

Pressure arises when an individual believes that available resources are not sufficient enough to deal with the challenges that they face.

If an individual believes that he is powerless to handle demands from his environment, pressure builds up. In order to deal with pressure and to build up enough power to ward off threats, an individual must have confidence in one's own abilities.

Pressure exists even though it may not be recognized.

Everyone experiences pressure in their life. A moderate level of stress can motivate us to perform better. However, excessive pressure, over a long period of time, can have a negative impact on our physical and emotional well-being. The symptoms of pressure can vary depending on the duration and intensity of a stressful event. Physical and emotional symptoms, as well as thoughts and behaviors need to be considered in order to recognize healthy or unhealthy pressures. Unhealthy physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral symptoms may include:

Physical:

Constipation, insomnia, stomach discomfort, headache, menstrual irregularity, high blood pressure, heart disease, etc.

Emotional:

Impulsiveness, anxiety, irritability, depression, lethargy, etc.

Cognitive:

Rigid thinking, inattentiveness, lack of rational judgment, poor problem-solving ability, etc.

Behavioral:

Lower energy, aggressiveness, detachment, medical addiction, compulsiveness, etc.

To be the burden of imbalance or to find power in growing up: A question of stress management.

When stress happens management becomes necessary to be healthy. Both high stress indicators and ways to manage them are listed below.

A stressful event is measured by its level of frequency, urgency, difficulty and duration.

- High Stress Indicator: multiple stresses happening at once, traumatic events, and long-term stress.
- Managing Stress: reducing unnecessary stress stimuli through meditation, immediately resolving stressful events, and handling serious and chronic stress while taking into consideration the unique characteristics of the person and the specific coping strategies that are effective for the individual.

Personality characteristics: attribution style, the level of self-efficacy, past experience.

- High Stress Indicator: negative attribution style, self-blame, low self-efficacy.
- Managing Stress: avoid attaching failure to one's ability, instead focus on the situation, increase self-confidence, and reframe threats as challenges, avoid connecting past failures to the present situation, take advantage of the resources available, and develop an optimistic attitude.

Coping Techniques: There are effective ways and ineffective ways to manage stress.

- High Stress Indicator: inability to face problems, engaging in negative thought patterns and being overwhelmed by negative emotions.
- Managing Stress:
 1. Take action to solve the problem ; do not put off actions to resolve the problem.
 2. Detach from the problem for a certain amount of time, DO ANYTHING that relaxes and refreshes your body and mind.
 3. Change the way of thinking: seeing one's own ability and the problem in

a more positive way.

4. Seek others for support or help.
5. Learn some skills to relax body and mind:
 - (1) Meditation: practice for 2-20 minutes before having a meal, focus your attention on breathing.
 - (2) Muscle relaxation: tighten your heads, shoulders, forehead, eyes and mouth for 5 seconds and, all at once, relax and let go.
 - (3) Body extension: slowly exercise head, shoulders, limbs, waist, belly, etc.
 - (4) Belly breathing: expand the diaphragm, slowly breathe in and breathe out while remembering that more time should be spent on exhaling than inhaling.
6. Time management: make lists and prioritize things in your schedule.
7. Eat a healthy diet, and get plenty of sleep on a regular basis.
8. Smile as much as possible. Holding a between your teeth lengthwise hrows the face muscles into a smile and works!
9. Develop your sense of humor and appreciate the beauty of the environment and the people around you.

Social resources: Seek out available materials and emotional support.

- High Stress Indicator: loneliness, avoids seeking help from others, worry about “losing face” i.e. what others think, difficulty establishing meaningful relationships with others.
- Stress management:
 1. Discuss life pressures and stressful situations with people that you trust.
 2. Develop hobbies, and engage in social activities.
 3. Surround yourself with positive people.
 4. Seek help when dealing with the problem.
 5. Consult others to get advice in order to improve your problem-resolution skills.

Managing stress need to be an individual art form. If we handle stress inadequately, stress turns into distress. However, if we deal with it appropriately and creatively, stress may become a positive force that can motivates us. Through positive solutions to managing stress we gain wisdom and maturity by growing ourselves up in artful creative ways specific to our own difficulties and finding power in them.

References :

Siou-Ling, T., & Jhin-Sin, Y.(1999). Pressure Management. Taipei: Yang Jhih.