

Coping with Stress

What is Stress?

Life is constantly changing. Changes we go through can sometimes be so severe they can even become life-threatening, or sometimes we experience so small changes that we don't even notice of. Stress occurs when our body develops a quick reaction to any kind of change, demand or threat.

Physical and Mental Signs of Stress

A number of these physical, mental and emotional symptoms may mean you are under stress. Common **physical signs and symptoms** of stress include: headaches, upset stomach, tense muscles, weight gain or loss without diet, hair loss, skin problems, frequent colds and infections. Common **mental signs and symptoms** of stress include: forgetfulness, lack of motivation or focus, difficulty with decision making, feeling confused. Common **emotional signs and symptoms** of stress include: sudden mood swings, feeling overwhelmed, feeling bad about yourself, lonely, worthless and depressed.

Best Ways to Handle Stress

Become aware of your feelings and emotions and express them appropriately

- In order to be aware of your feelings and emotions, you should first identify them. Identify and express your feelings (sadness, disappointment, anxiety, anger...) when you face a stressful life event.
- When you feel anger or rage, which is a secondary emotion, you should know that one of the primary emotions, like fear, sadness, resentment or disappointment can be found underneath the anger. Just try to become aware of your primary emotions.
- Being aware of our emotions and feelings, and expressing them appropriately to the person who makes us feel sad/angry/disappointed etc. can help us beat stress and feel more relaxed.

Try to understand your way of thinking so as to replace it with realistic thoughts and solutions

- Are we really facing a disaster or is it in fact ourselves who turn it into a disaster? We should take a second to think about how we interpret situations.
- We can try to find out advantages and disadvantages for situations we confront, even make a pros and cons list, which would help us develop a more realistic perspective of our feelings.
- We can try to consider develop various solutions to issues we are facing so we can feel better instead of being overwhelmed by negative emotions: What should I do now?
- Sometimes what we can do is limited when we face a bad situation. Recognizing our limitations can help us cope better with stress.

Engage in activities that make you feel better and don't forget to breathe deeply!

- Find an activity you enjoy doing and make it a regular part of your daily life.
- Diaphragmatic breathing increases the amount of oxygen-rich blood that flows to your brain and helps you cope better with stress. During this type of breathing, the diaphragm contracts, air enters the lungs and the belly expands.
- If you still think you have trouble dealing with negative emotions and stress, despite all your best efforts and attempts, you can always contact IKBUCounselling and Psychological Services to make an appointment.

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