



Myths about Stress ^[1]

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There are four big myths surrounding stress, namely: (1) stress is purely negative, (2) everybody experiences and responds the same way to stress, (3) stress is not present if there are no symptoms and, (4) attention should only be given to stress that shows major or grave symptoms.

Each of us has his own perception of what stress is and how it affects one's life. Because of these differences in views about stress, some collective knowledge or myths ^[3] referring to stress have become widely known even though they do not relate to any scientific basis.

Myth 1: Stress is Purely Negative.

If you go around a public place and ask people, "*How does stress affect your life?*", you'll find out that the most common answer would be: "*Stress makes my health worse*", or something similar to that. Well, this is true, **if** we are talking about too much stress, that is. Many people think that if there's zero stress in our lives, then we can live happily and achieve optimum health. However, as per the definition of stress, it's actually a vital part of our daily life that gives the spark and enjoyment we're all been wanting to experience. It's the very reason why you feel happy when you performed well on an examination, or feel satisfied after a long and hard job well done.

Now, why do most people think of stress as all negative? Well, it's because they are referring to the stresses in their lives that are left unmanaged or mismanaged. Therefore, if you are able to manage stress in the most appropriate way you can, then you will look at it as beneficial rather than destructive.

Myth 2: Everybody Experiences and Responds the Same Way to Stress.

Just as how unique each of us is, stress is actually individualized. Each one of us experiences stress in a different manner, sensation and response. For instance, suppose a group of 30 students take an examination. The examination is the stressor, which remains the same for all the students, but the very stress that each of them experience is different from one another. One may feel that he is prepared to answer all the test questions because he has reviewed for weeks, while another may feel he's not as ready as the former. What is stressful for Student A may not be stressful for Student B, so the responses of the two students are entirely varying.

Myth 3: Stress is not Present If There are No Symptoms.

Stress is not a disease process; it is a human condition. Therefore, we should not expect that

all stressful moments provide obvious symptoms, although “symptoms” or feelings of excitement, worry, or mild anxiety might be left unrecognized due to the continuous exposure to that same stressor. Stress is always present in our daily lives, so we might have gotten used to it due to proper management (or even mismanagement) and might not notice that we feel happy, worried, nervous, etc in the presence of the stressor. Stress is always there, even in the absence of evident symptoms.

Myth 4: Attention Should Only Be Given to Stress That Shows Major or Grave Symptoms.

Most often than not, people seek medical or psychological help only when the effects of stress have gone from bad to worse. “Minor” symptoms, like stomach upset or headache, are often ignored by people who still believe in this misconception. But the truth is, we experience these “minor symptoms” in order to warn us about the coming worse symptoms or effects of stress if it is left unmanaged or mismanaged.

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