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What is Stress?

Sarah Mae Sincero24.6K reads

Stress is the physical, mental and emotional human response to a particular stimulus, otherwise called as 'stressor'. It is the adaption/coping-response that helps the body to prepare for challenging situations. Stress can be either negative or positive, depending on the stressor.

When you hear the word "stress", isn't it that you fret a little bit because you know that stress has been affecting your whole life? Well, you're not alone. Each one of us has his own feelings towards stress, and those feelings are more on the negative effects of stress.

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center. Below it are three quiz cards, each with a different image and title:

- Card 1: Image of red roller skates on a wooden deck. Title: Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2
- Card 2: Image of a fan of colorful pens. Title: Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2
- Card 3: Image of a Ferris wheel at sunset. Title: Quiz: Flags in Europe

At the bottom right of the banner is a link: [See all quizzes =>](#)

Defining Stress

Strictly defined, stress is the physical ^[1], mental and emotional ^[2] human response to a particular stimulus, otherwise called as 'stressor'.

For instance, if you are to start with making your thesis, the thesis itself is not the stimulus, rather it's the deadline, the depth of the subject, the extent of research to be done, and even your partners in your research group are just some of the many potential stimuli that can influence your response. The way you respond to these stimuli is exactly what stress is. Stress is the mismatch between the perceived obstacle and the perceived resources ^[3] for coping ^[4] with the "demands" of the obstacle.

The stress response may be thought of as the general component common in all emotions, general adaptation syndrome [5], where the strength of the response predetermine the strength of the emotion. Actually this also applies to positive feelings.

How does stress affect performance? [6]

The Two Faces of Stress

Stress can be negative or positive, depending on the level of our response to the stressors we encounter.

Apparently, most of us only think about the bad sides of stress. Negative stress are actually about stress that are beyond one's control. This bad impact of severe stress is often manifested in physical and mental signs and symptoms.

However, when we are only exposed to mild or moderate stress, we are actually able to experience the good side of stress, which include improved creativity, learning, efficiency at work and, eventually, a higher level of self-esteem that could lead us to be able to withstand a higher stress levels in the future.

Causes of Stress

What is stressful for one person may not be the same for another, that is why the causes of stress is diverse and individualized [7]. The most common stressors, though, include hectic work schedule, heavy work load, family and relationship problems, and financial problems. While these popular stressors are often pointed as the culprits for stress, do you know that even positive life moments, like getting married, may also act as stressors?

As long as something demands for your efforts or pushes you to work on it, it can be called a stressor. Choosing a university to go to, getting married, selecting a car, and other great life events can be stressful for you. With all these stressors around you, you need to learn about stress management techniques [8] in order to maintain the balance in your life.

Source URL: <https://explorable.com/what-is-stress>

Links

[1] <https://explorable.com/physiological-stress-response>

[2] <https://explorable.com/nature-of-emotions>

[3] <https://explorable.com/stress-and-cognitive-appraisal>

[4] <https://explorable.com/stress-and-coping-mechanisms>

[5] <https://explorable.com/general-adaptation-syndrome>

[6] <https://explorable.com/how-does-stress-affect-performance>

[7] <https://explorable.com/individual-differences-in-the-stress-response>

[8] <https://explorable.com/stress-management>