

What is Stress Anyway?

By Suzy Strepke

Stress is a response the body produces to protect and support us. How does your body use stress? Stress is generally considered being synonymous with distress. Distress is defined as "physical, mental or emotional strain or tension"

When this type of stress is constant, it becomes harmful. Cortisol is a steroid hormone released by our bodies in reaction to stress to help get us through challenging situations. Scientists have recently realized that the brain also uses cortisol to suppress the immune system and tone down inflammation within the body. So, persistent distress depresses your immune system and shuts down your body's ability to heal itself. Common conditions associated with chronic stress are heart disease, cancer, depression, eating disorders... the list is endless.

There is such a thing as good stress - good stress has a positive effect. It keeps us motivated, increasing our productivity. And as mentioned earlier, it produces the hormone which helps us through challenging situations.

So, the question is... How can you tell when the line is crossed between stress that is good for you and distress?

Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to that question. The reason is that, what is good stress for one may be distress for another.

A good example is by observing people on a steep rollercoaster ride. Some are hunched down in the back seats, eyes shut, jaws clenched and white knuckled with an iron grip on the retaining bar. They can't wait for the ride to end so they can get back on solid ground. But up front are the wide-eyed thrill seekers, yelling and enjoying every moment. And in between you may find a few who seem a little bored. So, was the roller coaster ride stressful?

How do you determine what's causing you distress?

STOP.

This is the 1st step in identifying what causes you stress. You actually need to spend the time getting to know yourself better and recognize any symptoms you may or may not have.

Do a system check.

Figure out what you are tolerating. Tolerations are things that bug you, drain your energy and could be eliminated. We typically tolerate more than 50 things on an ongoing basis. Sit down and write everything you are tolerating and find ways to cross them off.

Stress Release Trigger

We've taken the first couple of steps in maintaining healthy stress. In addition to these action steps it's vital to create balance within your life. Balance is the key to health. It's what I strive to help my clients create.

Even when we implement all these steps, we are human. We occasionally are going to have stressful days. We all know those days... nothing seems to be going right, we have a to-do list a mile long, everything takes twice as long as it should, we feel as though nothing is actually getting accomplished AND all of those physical symptoms we experience when we're stressed start to creep up – headache, tight muscles, queasy stomach, heart palpitations.

What can you do when this happens? This is where the "Stress Release Trigger" comes in. You can train yourself to release stress in seconds. Here's how it works:

Find a ritual that is relaxing for you. For some of you it may be taking an aromatherapy bath, a foot massage with lotion in your favorite scent, deep breathing with your favorite aroma, exercise with your favorite music... whatever it is make sure it involves different senses and is easy for you to do every time you are stressed. So, for those of you who are constantly on the go and need something quick and easy, a few deep breaths with your favorite aromatherapy may be just the thing for you OR if you love to take baths (as I do) and you spend more time at home, this may be an excellent 15-20 minute ritual you develop for yourself. During your ritual you want to focus on emptying your mind and focus on the senses that are stimulated by your ritual.

The key is training yourself to release stress with a trigger. It takes 21 days to make or break a habit. So, it is vital that you use your ritual EVERY time you are stressed for 21 days to train yourself in releasing stress immediately. Once you develop the trigger effectively, the moment you engage – the symptoms associated with stress ... chaotic mind, headache, tight muscles etc. go away and leave you refreshed and re-focused and ready to proceed. For those few moments out your day, you actually get more accomplished than if you continue your day stressed out.

***Suzy Strempe**, professional core energy coach™, is the owner of Growth In Action - Empowerment Coaching and Training. She is passionate about empowering women to build successful businesses while maintaining healthy and fulfilling personal lives. She helps her clients get "in action" for what they want most for themselves and leads them to bust through internal blocks that are holding them back. A successful entrepreneur for more than five years with Sensaria Natural Bodycare, Suzy enjoys educating women about the value of self-care, nurturing rituals, good skin care and ingredient awareness. For more information please visit <http://www.growthinaction.com>*