

# Understanding Stress and Learning Ways to Manage

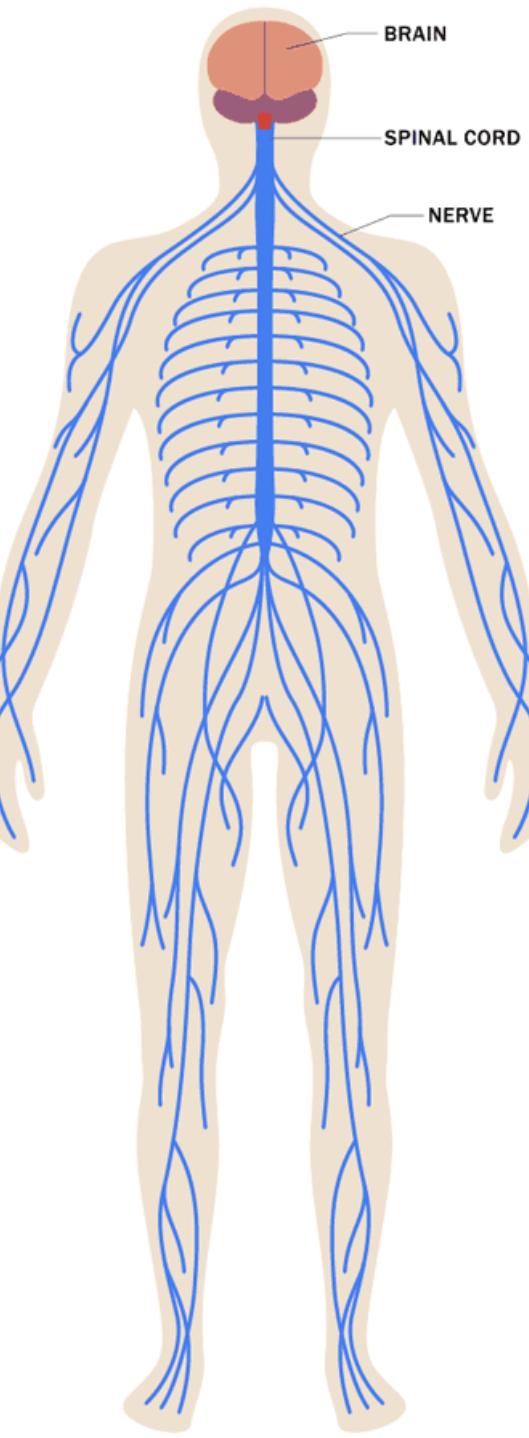
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# Stress

- ❖ An individual's unique reaction to any type of demand or adjustment that appears to exceed our resources to cope
- ❖ Stress is a natural part of life
  - *It is unavoidable because life is unpredictable*
  - ***We can't avoid stress, and this is NOT the goal - but we can increase our ability to COPE***
- ❖ Stress response has biological roots and does serve a purpose –“fight or flight”
  - *Chronic periods of stress – where our natural stress response is continually activated – equals significant wear and tear on our bodies*



# Stress Response

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- ❖ Our body's automatic reaction in response to a perceived threat
- ❖ Sets into motion a chain of events across multiple body systems, beginning with the autonomic nervous system

*Perceived  
stressor triggers  
the **Sympathetic  
Nervous System**  
**Fight or Flight***

Signals the release  
of hormones  
(**Endocrine  
System**)

Digestive processes change and  
glucose levels in the  
bloodstream increase to provide  
more sugar energy (**Digestive  
and Endocrine Systems**)

Hormones cause heart to beat  
faster and blood vessels in arms  
and legs to dilate  
(**Cardiovascular System**)

Muscles tense up  
(**Musculoskeletal  
System**)

Respiration rate  
increases  
(**Respiratory  
System**)

## What are some common sources of stress?



- ❖ Work
- ❖ Partner
- ❖ Children
- ❖ Family
- ❖ Social relationships
- ❖ Grief/loss
- ❖ Finances
- ❖ Obligations
- ❖ Unrealistic expectations/perfectionism
- ❖ Failure
- ❖ Health
- ❖ Violence/crime
- ❖ “Not enough time”
- ❖ Politics or larger societal issues - overexposure

Since 2007, the American Psychological Association has commissioned an annual nationwide survey as part of its Mind/Body Health campaign to examine the state of stress across the country and understand its impact. The Stress in America™ survey measures attitudes and perceptions of stress among the general public and identifies leading sources of stress, common behaviors used to manage stress and the impact of stress on our lives. The results of the survey draw attention to the serious physical and emotional implications of stress and the inextricable link between the mind and body.

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American Psychological Association  
Stress in America Survey

# MOST COMMON SOURCES OF STRESS

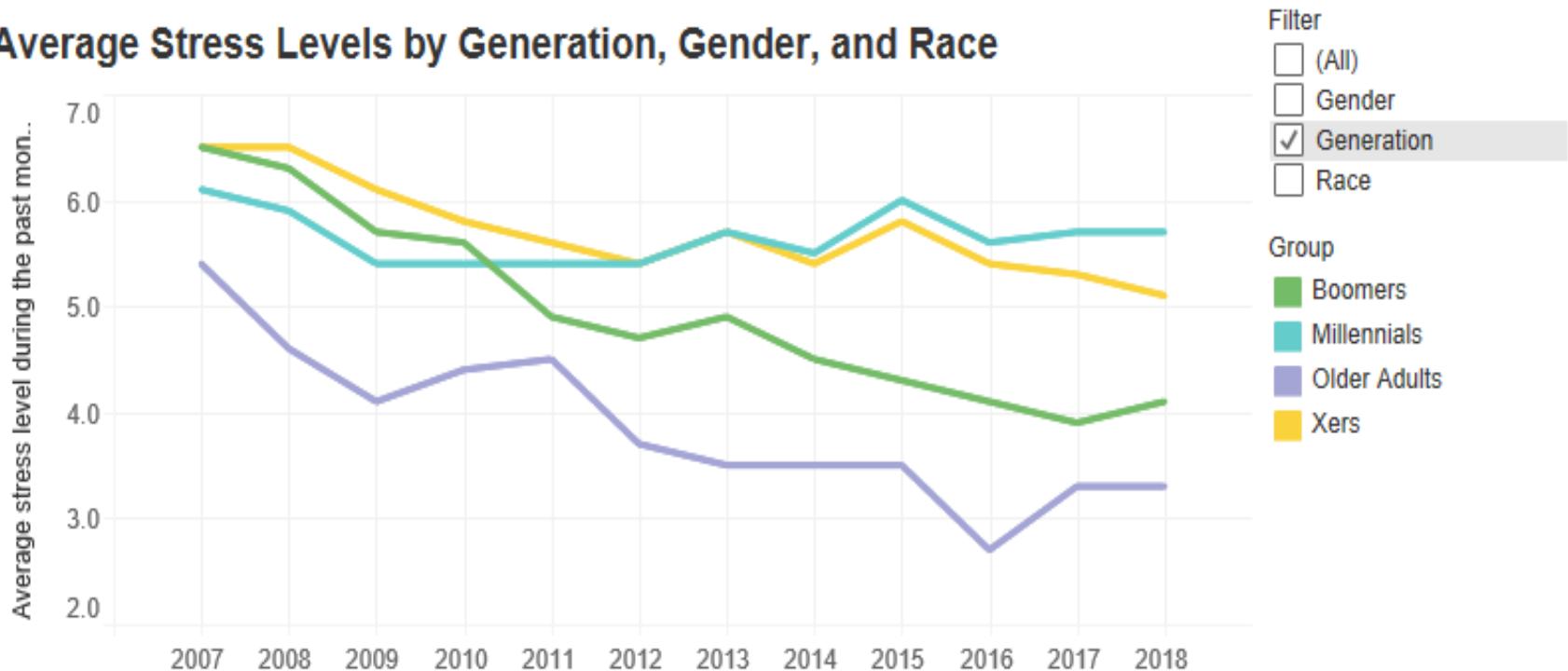


Note: Sources of stress reflect two separate questions; the sources of stress listed above were not shown within one list.

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# STRESS LEVEL TRENDS

## Average Stress Levels by Generation, Gender, and Race



American Psychological Association (2018). Stress in America: Generation Z. Stress in America™ Survey.

Symptoms of  
chronic stress can  
take on many forms

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## Cognitive

- Memory problems/forgetfulness
- Poor concentration/judgement
- Negative thinking
- Racing thoughts
- Constant worry
- “Foggy” brain
- Difficulty making decisions

## Emotional

- Moodiness/mood shifts
- Irritability/anger
- Feeling on edge
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Loneliness
- Depressed mood
- Anxiety
- Fatigue

## Physical

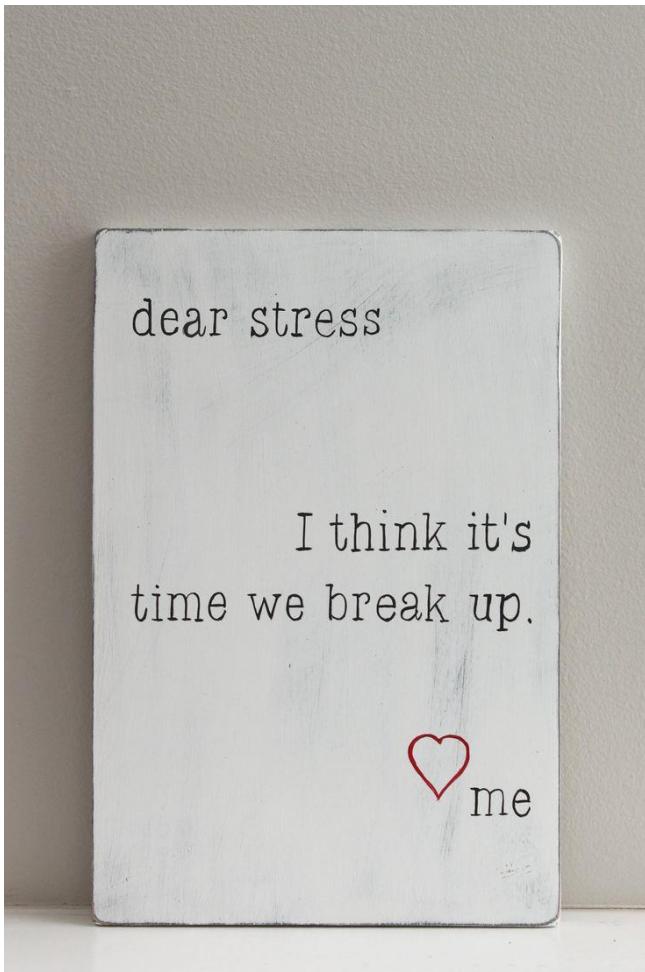
- Aches/pains
- Muscle tension
- Sweating
- Chest pain/pressure
- Headaches
- Racing heart
- Shakiness
- GI problems/nausea
- Dizziness

## Behavioral

- Change in eating/sleeping
- Isolating self
- Procrastination
- Substance use
- Crying spells
- Nervous habits
- Angry outbursts
- Decrease in healthy activities
- Excessive gambling/impulse buying

# Long Term Impacts of Ongoing and Unmanaged Chronic Stress

- ❖ Negative impact on health
  - ❖ heart disease, high blood pressure, heart attacks, stroke, obesity, acne, flare ups of psoriasis or eczema, hair loss, GERD, ulcerative colitis, and irritable colon
- ❖ Burnout
- ❖ Lowered self-esteem
- ❖ Depression
- ❖ Anxiety/panic attacks
- ❖ Eating disorders
- ❖ Accidents/injuries from accidents
- ❖ Abuse of substances
- ❖ Suicide



So how do we  
deal with stress?

# Take good physical care of yourself

- Healthy eating habits
- Regular physical activity
- Proper sleep
- Avoid excess alcohol consumption
- Regular wellness appointments





# Learn and practice relaxation techniques and strategies

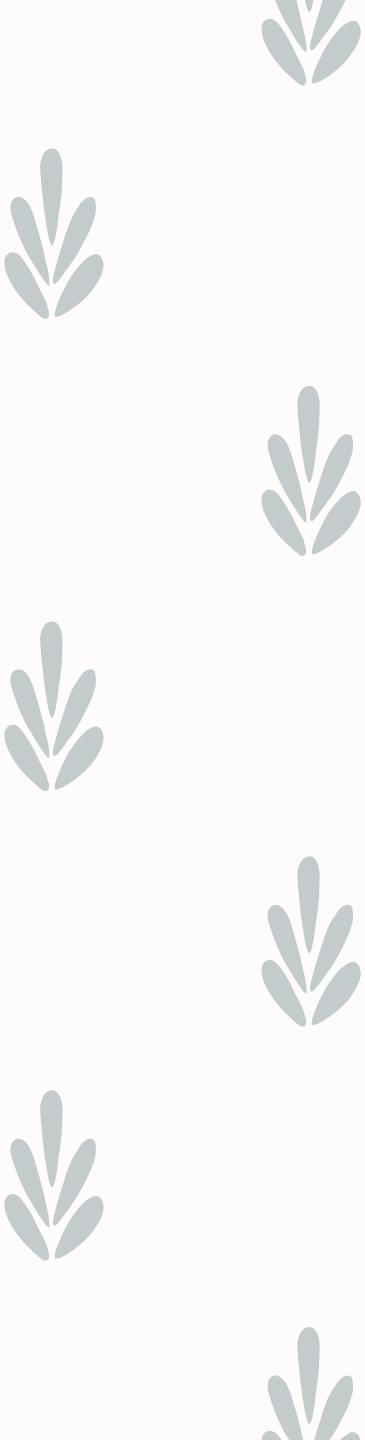
- Deep breathing exercises
- Muscle relaxation
- Yoga or gentle stretching
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Guided Imagery
- Prayer
- Gratitude
- Comfort/self-love
  - warm beverage, hot shower, weighted blanket, self pampering, aromatherapy
- Creativity
  - sketching, coloring, writing, playing music, cooking

# Learn and practice strategies to manage your thinking

- Positive self-talk
- Make a worry list
- Re-frame the negative
- Keep things in perspective

# Adopt better life habits

- Be organized and efficient
- Be flexible
- Set manageable and realistic goals
- Problem solve
- Manage money
- Communicate effectively
- Strive for work/life balance
- Unplug every so often
- Don't over commit



# Most importantly, know YOURSELF

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- Your unique physical, emotional and behavioral responses to stress
- Triggers
- Patterns



Work to increase your overall self-awareness...we can't cope or manage effectively if we are too busy to notice our heart, mind and body.

# Let's practice

Abdominal Breathing  
Body Scan Meditation  
5 Minute Gratitude Reflection

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# There's an app for that!

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- ❖ imood journal
- ❖ **Calm**
- ❖ **Headspace**
- ❖ Breathe2Relax
- ❖ Pacifica
- ❖ Daily Yoga
- ❖ Worry Box
- ❖ Worry time
- ❖ Insight timer
- ❖ Guided mind
- ❖ Nature sounds relax and sleep
- ❖ **Mindshift**
- ❖ Relax melodies
- ❖ **Stop, Think, Breathe**
- ❖ Aura
- ❖ 7s Meditation
- ❖ **Grateful**

**YouTube is a great  
resource!**