

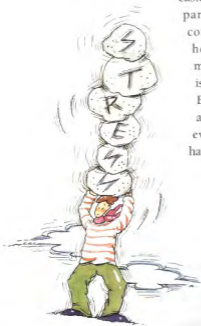
Issue 27

Stress



Despite decades of studies on stress management, tension and burnout⁺ are still major problems for modern urban dwellers, both mentally and physically. Though there is wide consensus among professionals that stress causes illness, it is much less clear how much damage it does us. Part of the problem is that stress levels affect people differently. A few have learned how to shrug off⁺ stress with little thought—or perhaps they merely think so, perhaps it is bothering them much more than they realize—but for others even minor frustrations cause them to go to pieces.⁺ Nevertheless, some aspects of the illness seem clear. As with most health-related issues, a good diet and low alcohol and tobacco intake make it

easier to manage stress; intense exercise is particularly helpful. Being able to concentrate on some project, perhaps a hobby such as painting or playing a musical instrument, is also very useful, if it is unrelated to the stress-causing activity. But, most valuable of all is developing the ability to step outside oneself, put everything in proper perspective,⁺ and have a good hearty laugh!



- **burnout** : fatigue and frustration resulting from prolonged stress and overwork
- **shrug off** : get rid of (sb) or (sth); consider (sb) or (sth) as being of little importance
- **go to pieces** : lose control of oneself
- **perspective** : a mental outlook

Comprehension



1. Why is it so hard to treat stress properly?
2. What do doctors know about stress?
3. What are the best ways to deal with the problem?

Express Yourself



1. Who suffers from the most stress, in your opinion?
2. Who handles stress better, in general, men or women?
3. Can we be stress-free? How?
4. How do you deal with stressful situations?
5. Do you think living in a complex society is more or less stress-creating than in a simpler society, or is there no difference?

More Talking Points

Talk about the kinds of stress these people are likely to suffer:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| a. employees | b. employers | c. the elderly |
| d. stock investors | e. the jobless | f. the handicapped |
| g. high school students | h. college students | i. taxi/bus drivers |
| j. husbands | k. wives | l. young children |
| m. unmarried people | | |

Opinion Samples



1. It doesn't make any difference about a person's job, or what the particular cause of the stress is—the one who suffers the most stress is the one who doesn't realize how much stress he is under. The strong, silent type—the doggedly stubborn—the robot on autopilot⁺—these are the ones who are most apt to break down. Many times, they engage in obsessive behavior as an unconscious means of stress relief, but such behavior merely exacerbates⁺ the problem. The ones who deal with the problem most successfully are, first, the ones who realize there is a problem and, second, actively take steps to manage the stress effectively.

2. In “the good old days” many problems probably existed that were either taken for granted⁺ or for which no adequate vocabulary existed in order to discuss them. I'm sure that just as many people suffered from stress—due to family situations, economics, death and illness, and so forth—but thought that it was “just life.” It wasn't until professionals began to consider stress to be an illness, not just an ordinary condition, that they began to learn how to control it.

3. Athletes know they have only a short time to be in their best physical condition. The body inevitably ages, gets weaker, less coordinated. And in sports there is only one winner. Even second place is a tremendous disappointment. And there is the constant refrain⁺ of “what-if”: what if I had been just a fraction of a second⁺ faster, what if I had passed the ball instead of trying for the shot myself, what if I had stayed on second instead of trying to steal third.....?

4. Being a judge must be one of the most frustrating jobs in the world. Many times a person may seem clearly guilty in a commonsense way, and yet be technically innocent in terms of evidence or legal procedure. So which is more important, justice or the law? And how can a judge neglect one or the other without feeling compromised?⁺

- **autopilot** : automatic pilot

- **exacerbate** : make (sth) worse or more severe; aggravate

- **take for granted** : fail to appreciate the value of (sb) or (sth)

- **refrain** : a repeated utterance

- **a fraction of a second** : a moment

- **compromise** : settle by concessions

Useful Expressions



1. Don't be afraid to enjoy the stress of a full life.
→ _____
2. Remember that having too many things is one of the major sources of psychological stress.
→ _____
3. Distract your mind when you're under pressure. Do something frivolous,⁴ non-stressful, and unrelated to "real life."
→ _____
4. Most of the stress we bring on ourselves is due to bad habits and bad attitudes.
→ _____
5. Shun⁴ the "Superman" urge. No one can be perfect in everything.
→ _____
6. A lot of people who are worrying about the future ought to be preparing for it.
→ _____
7. Instead of counting their blessings, many people magnify their problems.
→ _____
8. Wealth is a worry if you have it, and a worry if you don't have it.
→ _____
9. It's foolish to worry about something beyond your control—such as your life.
→ _____
10. "Don't worry" is a better motto if you add the word "others."
→ _____

⁴-frivolous : not deserving of serious attention; inappropriately silly

⁴-shun : avoid (sb) or (sth) deliberately and consistently; keep away from