

Schafer (2000) defined **stress** as the arousal of mind and body in response to demands made on them. This definition suggests that stress affects us on many levels and is an inevitable part of life.

- **Is all stress is bad?**—Since stress is so often *distressing*, the idea that it can be helpful may sound strange. In fact, positive stress (as it's referred to) can help a person be more productive, perform well under pressure, and realize personal potential.
- **The less stress, the better, right?**—Studies have shown an interesting phenomenon about stress and performance. Too *little* stress can lead to a lack of preparedness, but too *much* stress can **be disabling** (hinder performance?). Ideally, stress should motivate action and increase attention.
- **Are some people are simply more prone to stress?**—Genetic predispositions and environmental influences affect stress levels to some extent, but it is more strongly influenced by personal perceptions of stress and how effectively it is managed.
- **Can't stress just be adapted to?**—Even though stress is inevitable, that does not mean that it has to be endured. Being pushed beyond the limits of stress has harmful effects and leads to exhaustion. Instead, learn to manage your stress and it will feel less overwhelming.

In the process of learning how to manage stress, use the following guidelines:

- Before developing stress management techniques, **analyze** the times that had been most stressful in your life. Start by bringing them to mind and considering the **factors** (sources?) that were influencing your feelings. This step is essential for managing stress in the long-term because it promotes the awareness of environmental cues that are stress-provoking and can promote healthier, preemptive responses to stress.
- Following this newly-found awareness, **take action!** Your response to stress is ultimately under your own control, not the environment. So, manage stress levels with regulatory techniques (**like the ones listed below**).
- One technique alone will not manage stress and multiple techniques practiced at full capacity will not either. Try a few **techniques** that you find personally effective. Consider developing better eating habits, setting out a time to relax or meditate, or practicing a channel of self-expression that helps release anxious feelings. Keep in mind that these techniques, as well as others, become more effective with practice and are unique to you!
- Lastly, realize that there will be periods of greater and lesser stress in life. This speaks to the need to **find a balance** between life's dual forces like work and play; thought and action; and excitement and stillness. But this balance takes time to discover and each person has to find their own.

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