



Everyone experiences stress as part of day-to-day life, but what exactly is it?

- *In physics, it's the average amount of force exerted per unit.*
- *In Hong Kong, it's a card game.*
- *In music, it's the title of the second album by the artist Anonymous.*

In discussing psychological wellness, stress is an individual's reaction to situations that disrupt the balance of his or her daily life. How a person responds to the disruptions determines the degree of stress felt.

STRESS 101

Stress takes its toll on our bodies as well as our minds.

Some common physical reactions to stress are:

- Your heart beats faster than normal without physical exertion.
- Your breathing becomes more rapid and shallow.
- You may feel confused and lack focus.
- You may see the situation as hopeless.
- You may feel angry and irritable.
- You may experience a sudden burst of energy, quickly followed by fatigue.

Manage stress poorly and you might set yourself up for some serious health conditions, including:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Migraines
- Heart problems
- Stomach ulcers
- Eye twitching
- Eating disorders
- Alcoholism, drug addiction.

Click here for tips on reducing stress



Here are a few tips to help you through **a stressful situation:**



- Consciously calm yourself; take deep breaths, stretch and try to relax.
- Keep your head clear and think through your options.
- Decide on a course of action...
- ...then carry it out.

Let's take Sailor Joe, who has received an unexpected bill and doesn't have the money to pay it. He can hide the bill under a stack of magazines — increasing his stress level by avoiding the inevitable — or he can take constructive action, decreasing his stress.

*By working to solve his problem and accepting the emotions that stress brings, Joe is building **resilience.***

Joe takes some controlled, deep breathes and starts to assess his situation. He decides not to borrow money to pay the bill because it will further increase his debt. He decides instead to call a friend for advice. The friend suggests calling the creditor to see if a payment schedule can be arranged.

After talking with his friend, the bill still isn't paid but Joe feels more calm, less stressed and on his way to a solution. He is using an active coping style to face his concerns.

There are a number of lifestyle choices that also help you build resilience and deal with life's curve balls, including:

- Regular exercise
- Eating balanced meals on a regular basis
- Getting enough sleep
- Playing
- Limiting your caffeine intake
- Not drinking alcohol or taking drugs to lessen your stress. When the buzz wears off, the stress — and usually more of it — is still there.