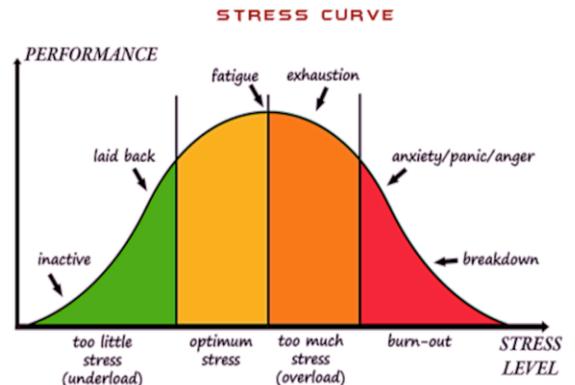


Why care about stress? Stress is a physical, mental, or emotional strain that challenges your body's ability to meet these demands. Stress is part of life. It may be due to money, work, family, legal, or health worries. Your body's response to stress depends on the *how much* stress you feel and *how long* it lasts. *A little bit* of stress for a short time can help you perform better. *Too much chronic stress* upsets the normal balance of body hormones and chemical messengers in the brain. This lack of balance can cause mental and physical 'overload.'



Mental effects of stress can be anger, anxiety, feeling nervous, and depression. Mental stress may also keep you from choosing healthy eating habits, exercising, taking medicines, and getting health check-ups. Physical effects of mental stress can be fatigue, body aches, and headaches. Other physical effects are high blood pressure, gaining or losing weight, and sleep problems – all bad for your heart. You may also feel your heart pounding, racing, fluttering, or have chest pain. Even if you think your heart symptoms are from stress, contact your health care provider. It is easy to use habits like smoking, eating junk foods, drinking too much alcohol, or spending too much time in front of the TV or on the computer to 'cope' with stress. Over time these habits will cause health problems and *more* stress.

Using the "5 Ps" to Manage Stress

Prioritize

Focus on the important people and activities in your life

- Make a "to do" list or calendar to remind you of important dates and tasks
- Start your week and each day by looking at your list

Practice Relaxation

Block out the world for a short time each day

- Practice meditation, yoga, Tai chi, Qigong, and mindfulness-based stress reduction to reduce stress hormones and improve symptoms caused by stress

Promote Social Relationships

Stay close to friends and family members you trust

- Share your thoughts, concerns, and fears with them
- Seek advice and emotional support often

Physical Activity

Get active, to reduce tension, boost self-confidence, and keep your mind and body healthy

- Go for walks
- Work out at home
- Take a kick-boxing class
- Spend time in the garden

Personal Time

Carve out 15 minutes of personal time away from the demands of work, family and other tasks each day to do something that relaxes and grounds you

- Listen to or play music
- Read a book or magazine
- Go for a walk or do a hobby

