

Stress is a feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure. Stress occurs when we are not able to cope with the demands. There is a difference between stress and pressure. An individual could be under pressure but still able to cope with it. (NHS Inform, 2017). People experience stress and anxiety very often as it is a part of life. Not very high levels of stress could be beneficial for us, as it encourages us towards change and growth. However, when stress and anxiety persist over a long period, it can become a health risk.

One of the types of stress is acute stress. It is an immediate reaction of the body to a new challenge, event, or demand, which provokes a biological response. An individual experiencing stress may notice that his/her heart pounds, his/her breathing quickens and muscles tense, also sweating. This is sometimes known as the “fight or flight response”. Acute stress is not always negative. Rare episodes of acute stress should not have a negative impact on health. Though, if a person had experienced acute stress of a high level such as stress suffered as the victim of a crime or life-threatening situation, it can lead to mental health problems. When acute stress happens often, it becomes an episodic acute stress. Individuals, who always seem to be going through life difficulties, tend to have episodic acute stress. It is more likely they are short-tempered, irritable, and anxious. There is more research evidence of health problems experienced by people with episodic acute stress. If acute stress starts to increase or lasts for a long time, it becomes chronic stress. This type of stress is permanent and does not disappear. Chronic stress can be damaging to health, as it can lead to some serious diseases and needs professional attention to help an individual to overcome it.

Huge contributions in tackling stress have rest and sleep. Not getting enough sleep results in impaired thinking, poor decision-making, illness, and simply, prevents an individual from accomplishing everyday tasks. Fulfilling of academic demands successfully requires a high level of time management. It is very important not to get distracted by new friends, and not to get overloaded with newly available activities and commitments. Delaying assignments submissions and leaving it to the last minute leads to stress. Thinking through what is needed to be accomplished; knowing academic goals early will help to manage the demands of being a student. A great number of students experience feeling of loneliness. Student life is very demanding and has tremendous influence on their emotional and psychological state. They try to adapt to the new environment, to figure out how to “fit in” and how to be academically successful. It is important to find out where to get advice if support is needed, to talk to somebody or ask questions. Most higher education providers have student support services in place, which provide emotional and psychological help. Professional support assists with managing stress and can help to feel more in control.

It is important to note that some level of stress does not necessarily have to have a negative impact and can be stimulating. There is a lot of research evidence that stress can have a positive effect on individuals. Hans Selye was one of the founders of stress research. His research led to a conclusion that the biochemical effects of stress would be experienced, irrespective of whether the situation was positive or negative. Also he stated that, “Stress is not necessarily something bad – it all depends on how you take it.” In many cases, stress is considered to be negative, with a range of harmful effects. These effects have rarely been observed in positive situations. However, there is great amount of evidence that stress (or a degree of it) can improve performance of the effected individual.

Stress is a reaction of our body to a challenge. The right kind of stress can sharpen the mind and reflexes. It might be able to help the body to perform at its best or to escape a dangerous situation. The experience of being a student is exciting and filled with a variety of opportunities and challenges. Knowledge of how to avoid high levels of stress, while studying, can help to enjoy the experience and to receive the benefits that higher education can offer.

