

Stress - Mind & Body

Stress is an ordinary part of life and everybody experiences it. What causes stress in one person may be of little concern to another and some people are just better able to handle stress than others.

When you don't know how to handle it, your behaviour, health and your mind respond. Under the current situation our stress levels may change.

Fear, anxiety and panic quickly can escalate when we hear the words 'Pandemic', 'Disease', 'Deaths'. Whether these words, affect us directly or not It can all be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in both children, adults, front line responders the elderly. Being overwhelmed particularly happens during uncertain times. It is crucial to take care of your mental health during this coronavirus outbreak.

We can become snappy and short tempered, either not eating or eating too much, procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities, increasing our use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes, exhibiting more nervous behaviours such as nail biting, fidgeting, and pacing. Sleep patterns may change, even concentrating may be difficult or remembering simple things.

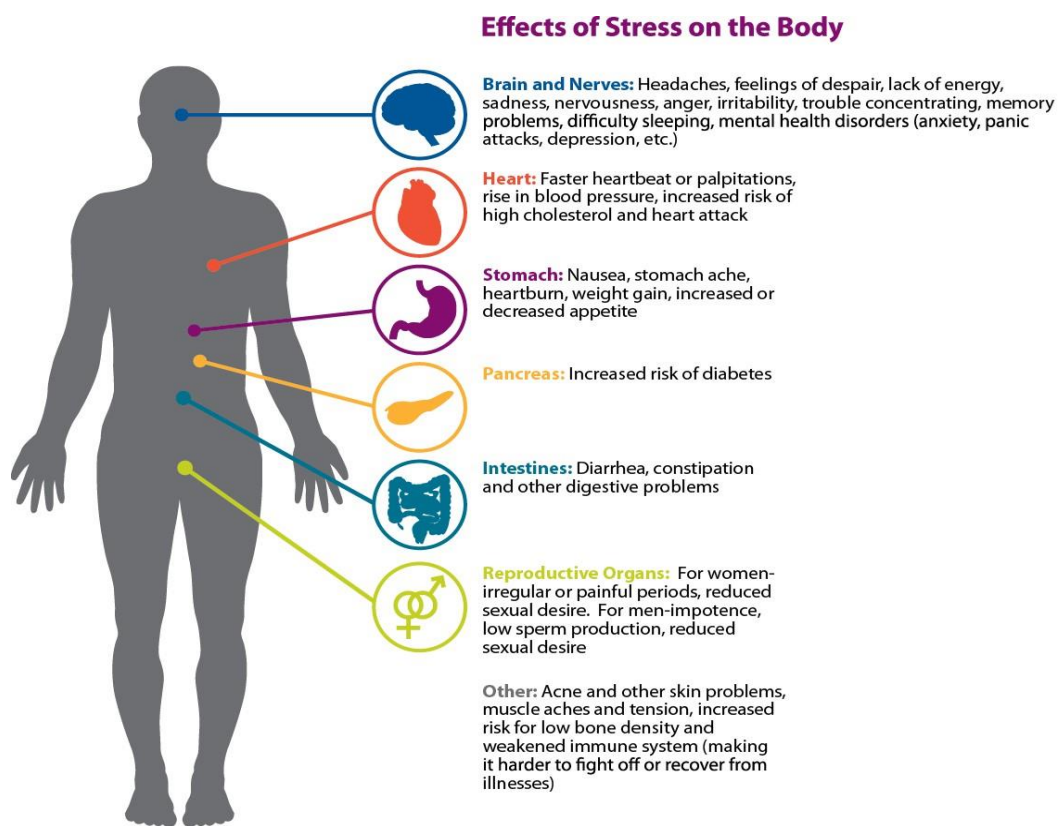
If you are extremely affected by what is happening around you, at this unusual time you may experience more extreme reaction like shallow breathing, low energy, headaches, upset stomach, aches, pains, and tense muscles, chest pain and rapid heartbeat, insomnia, a lowered immune system, loss of sexual desire and/or ability. Even a dry mouth and difficulty swallowing, nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear, cold or sweaty hands and feet, clenching of the jaw and grinding teeth. You may even feel you are 'losing it'.

The latest information is changing sometimes within minutes. Try relaxing when you hear something knowing it could very well change for the better very quickly.

Why we get stressed

Not knowing what is going to happen, constant media exposure, information, conversations and the increased levels of stress in your community, family at the shopping centre all contribute.

When you continually are exposed to high-stress situations without the tools to alleviate your body's natural responses you can impact and undermine your health and contentment.



Source: www.mentalhealthamerica.net

Try not to overestimate how badly you'll be affected by negative events and don't underestimate how well you'll cope with and adjust to difficult situations.

Life lessons for tough times

Getting good at being OK when things are not Ok is a learned activity. With learning, practice, persistence and patience, you **can** conquer your stress and ease the response to the current situation. Take a look at the suggestions below, and a few might offer immediate relief or even eliminate some symptoms, but please bear in mind that if you see no overall relief after two or three weeks you may need to take other measures - like popping off to your doctor, talking to a professional or taking a [Stress Management class](#) going online to [YouTube](#) stress management sessions or constructive reading at [Kindle](#) or [Audible](#).

Stop your mind being exposed

Be mindful of exposure to information through TV, newspapers, gossip and social media. It can be helpful to take a break from the 24-hour news cycle. Just remember you can't always believe what you hear. Information is constantly changing from minute to minute. Try not buy into EVERYTHING that is being said. Seek news only from reliable sources, and only in short stints. As with all things, we can find ourselves over-consuming news and updates. Try not to become absorbed in the coverage for long periods of time, find opportunities to appropriately disconnect.

Be kind to yourself

Do things that make you feel physically and emotionally safe, be with those or phone the people who are helpful to your wellbeing. Stress can be relieved by just five to twenty minutes of quiet meditation/reflection each day. Done regularly, it will also build up your stress tolerance levels. Play some music, relax and try to focus on pleasant things, perhaps find a mental getaway place that makes you happy, or simply clear your mind.

Visualisation

Use your imagination to more effectively handle upcoming stressful situations. Whether it's a trip to the shops, Dr's or visitor coming having a visual rehearsal can assist. Increase your confidence and/or allow you to take a more positive attitude to a challenging task for a better result.

Routine

Do one thing at a time. Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities. Regular exercise doesn't mean you have to go to a gym. A walk in your garden can be most beneficial.

Get a hobby

Social Distancing means we can get to enjoy or start something like gardening, painting, golfing or even reading... they can take your mind of the situation and help relieve stress.

Chat to your friends

Sharing your feelings with a mate or relative can relieve the loneliness of thinking you are the only one in your situation. Keep friends and family close and ask them how they are coping or have cope in the past with uncertainty. You might be surprised by their points of view and suggestions.

Learn to compromise

Start by being willing to compromise, to do things differently and by not fighting change. It might even help you come up with new and unique solutions. You can even surprise yourself with how it is a nice feeling to 'change' your normal.

Do you expect too much of yourself or others?

Criticism almost always leads to extra stress. You can control no one but yourself in the short term, so try not to be disappointed in a friend or with a child or loved one. Criticising them aloud (or just in your head) won't help. Instead, try to offer constructive advice if they are in the frame of mind to listen.

Look after yourself

Many are working from home, social distancing and living a different way from weeks ago. With our 'normal' lifestyle changing it's easy to let things slide.....Remember to eat healthy, get enough sleep, keep ringing that friend/elderly relative, don't drink/smoke more and keep moving your body with some sort of exercise. Play a game. Watch a movie. Take a yoga class online. Try a meditation app.

While COVID-19 is bringing new and difficult challenges to so many, let's continue to show up for each other, and be ready to help a friend who is struggling – even if that help is through a remote connection.

*Remind yourself continually of what you CAN control
and try to accept what you can't control*

Many therapists also offer counselling via phone or video conference if leaving the house or being distanced from your typical therapist is of concern. Ask about their options and explore ways to get extra support during this time. And if you need it see our list below..

National 24/7 crisis services Australia

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 or suicidecallbackservice.org.au

beyondblue: 1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au

Additional youth support services

headspace: visit headspace.org.au to find your nearest centre or call eheadspace on 1800 650 890

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au

ReachOut: reachout.com.au

SANE Australia: 1800 187 263 or sane.org

Call the **COVID-19 Health Information Line on 1800 020 080**. The line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Call **13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)** for further advice if you are concerned you or your family members may have symptoms.

Stress, Anxiety and Panic Course www.mindsetsuccess.com.au/stressanxietypanic



[About the author Andrea Szabo](#)