

- Topics:**
- The potential physical hazards that can accompany chronic stress
  - How using your mind can be your best defense
  - Seven simple lifestyle tips to help combat your stress
  - Symptoms and coping strategies for job burnout

## Chronic Stress Can Be Hazardous To Your Health

Our bodies tell us when we are under excessive stress. We just need to recognize the early warning signs and take action. One problem is that we've learned to ignore these messages and push on no matter what. The result could be extremely detrimental to our health. A tension headache can become an ulcer - a raised pulse can become high blood pressure and a pounding heart can become a heart attack.



bad day, the stress we experience doesn't just go away - it usually is stored in the form of muscle tension.

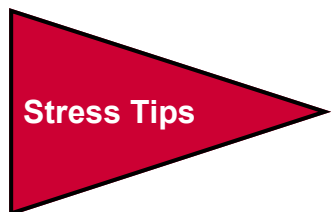
Everyone stores their stress in different places but finding a way to release this pent up energy is vital to good health. Some of the health problems

that are caused or exacerbated by stress include:

- Cardiac problems
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Ulcers
- Incontinence and colitis
- Allergies
- Back aches/muscle aches
- Immune system disorders
- Chronic fatigue
- Depression
- Headaches and migraines
- Some types of cancer

### Early Warning Signs Of Too Much Stress

- **Apathy:** Having the "blahs", feelings of sadness, not caring
- **Anxiety:** Restlessness, agitation, sense of worthlessness
- **Irritability:** Feeling hypersensitive, defensive, arrogant
- **Avoidance:** Keeping to yourself, neglecting responsibilities
- **Extreme Behaviors:** Alcoholism, indulging in frequent spending sprees, excessive gambling
- **Ailments:** Frequent headaches, insomnia, appetite changes, weight gain or loss, recurrent colds, nausea and over reliance on self-medication like aspirin, antacids etc.



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## Looking For A Proven Stress Eraser? Try Meditation

A good stress eraser is meditation. If you've tried it and been unsuccessful, you are not alone. Harvard professor, Dr. Herbert Benson, identified four prerequisites for effective meditation.

1) **A quiet environment.** You need to find a place where you won't be disturbed. Turn off the phone, close the door, and pick a place and time of day that is less hectic for you.

2) **Something to dwell on.** This is a word or phrase you've chosen to repeat silently to yourself. Try a short phrase like "I'm getting more and more relaxed," or one word like "peace," "calm," or "one." Repeat it silently over and over. Hear it in your mind's ear.

Breathe with it and stay focused on it. This internal focus keeps your mind from thinking about anything else. Most of the stress we experience begins in the mind.

3) **A passive attitude.** It's really hard to maintain a passive attitude about anything you really want to achieve. Chances are the first few times you try meditation, you may have this trouble. Remember, you can't force yourself to relax. You just have to sit there and let it happen. Do not worry if your mind wanders, just bring it back to the word or phrase.

4) **A comfortable position.** You can meditate sitting comfortably in a chair with your back straight, feet flat on the floor and your

hands resting in your lap. You don't have to sit with your legs crossed in a lotus position. It's better to meditate sitting up so you don't fall asleep.

Meditation is a state of mind that almost everyone has achieved at some point. Have you ever been so focused on a book, movie or some music that you were startled when someone else came into the room? While you were focused, your mind was somewhere else. Meditation helps you recreate this state of mind at will.



### Use Your Imagination to Banish Stress

When you come home from work fried, you don't want to stay scrambled. After a bad day, the stress you experience sometimes doesn't go away but can be stored in the body. Finding ways to release and discharge this tension is the key to erasing the stress. Besides meditation and physical exercise of all types, you can also try visualization exercises. This involves closing your eyes and visualizing yourself in a tranquil and soothing place like a beautiful beach at sunset or a green mountain retreat. Try to imagine the sounds and smells around you and really put yourself there. After about five minutes, open your eyes and resume your real life. You will probably feel more relaxed and energized. You can do this anywhere and any time you need it and as often as you

#### Additional Tips on Meditation.

- Try to take long, slow, deep breaths as you focus.
- If you find yourself having distracting thoughts don't let them bother you. Just notice them and let them come and go. The goal is to avoid any self-judgment of your performance.
- To begin, try meditating about 15 minutes every day. Don't give up without trying this for at least a couple of weeks.

## Actions Can Affect Your Emotions So Take Action Against Stress

In his book, “Control Theory,” Dr. William Glasser, M.D. makes the valid point that actions are much easier to control than thoughts and emotions. He offers the following 3-step exercise as proof:

1. Try to make yourself angry right now.
2. Try *not* to think about an elephant for one minute.
3. Raise your right arm.

It’s almost *impossible* to artificially create an emotion like anger and it’s *difficult* to prevent yourself from thinking about an elephant but it’s *easy* to raise your right arm. That’s because actions are easy to control. Interestingly, your actions can affect your thoughts and emotions and help you fight stress.



### Fight Stress By Replacing It With Joy

**Make a Joy List.** Write down 20 things that are fun, easy to do, cost little or nothing and bring you joy. Try to do at least three every day.

**Give the gift of joy.** Smile more. Volunteer your time. Help someone. Making other people happy makes you happy too.

**Experience the joy of everyday life.** Stop and smell the roses. Watch the sun go down. Spend *unhurried* time with your children.

**Think joyfully.** You can choose how you want to think. Choose to interpret events positively and not negatively. Think that the glass is always half full, not half empty.

### 5 Ways To Take A “Time-out” From Stress

- \* **Go for a walk.** Deliver something to the other end of the building or another floor.
- \* **Change what you’re doing.** Work on something completely different. Let the new activity be a break from the frustrating activity.
- \* **Stretch right at your desk.** Put both arms over your head and reach as high as you can. Then keeping them parallel. Lean sideways to the right and left. Repeat.
- \* **Tackle the problem tomorrow morning when you’re fresh.** This is not always an option but when it is you’ll be amazed how well it works.
- \* **Do some physical work.** Lifting or even putting files away can relieve stress.

### Where to find more information

To learn more, don’t overlook these important sources of information:

- ✓ Your local library or the web for articles
- ✓ Your health care provider for treatment or advice
- ✓ Mental health centers
- ✓ Religious leaders

**Don’t let stress run - or ruin - your life.**

## Almost Every Job has Stress—It's a Fact of Life!

Physical exercise is a terrific stress eraser.

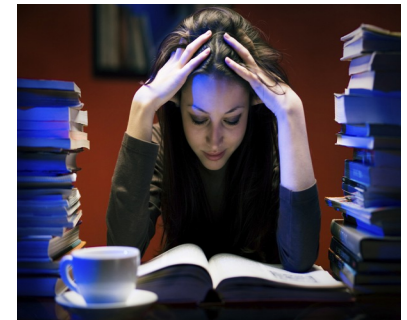
20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise releases endorphins, which are the body's natural tranquilizer.

*Endorphins are 200 times more powerful than morphine.*

### Warning Signs of Job Burnout

- ⇒ Irritability
- ⇒ Hostility
- ⇒ Anxiety
- ⇒ Sleep problems
- ⇒ Loss of self-esteem
- ⇒ Withdrawal from friends, relatives and co-workers
- ⇒ Inability to enjoy life
- ⇒ Loss of concentration
- ⇒ Apathy
- ⇒ Feelings of helplessness
- ⇒ Substance abuse

Job stress is the pressure on the job that makes you feel nervous, anxious or upset. For instance, if you face many deadlines or last minute changes in your job, you may be under a high degree of job stress. Some stress is good for you. It can spur you to find the answer to a difficult problem or to meet a specific goal. But too much stress can leave you tired, angry, frustrated, depressed and lead to burn-out. Job burnout can not only make you sick but it can also wreck your emotional well-being and hurt work and family relationships. The key to relieving burnout is to **recognize the warning signs** and then to **take steps to reduce stress** by finding stress-reduction techniques that you enjoy and sticking with them.



### A Few More Tips For Managing Stress

**Get enough sleep.** This will help you meet each day's challenges with energy.

**Manage your time wisely.** Make a list of things to do each day so you can keep your routine orderly and efficient. Be realistic. Don't try to do everything at once.

**Eat right.** Eat right to feel right. Cut down on sugar, sodium and fatty foods. Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods.

**Work out anger.** Don't let anger get the best of you. Get involved in some useful physical activity instead.

**Talk out problems.** Talking with a trusted friend can help you put your problems in perspective. Share your problems with someone who knows you, understands you and will listen to you. This can aid you in working things out.

**Be kind to yourself and do things you enjoy.** Acknowledge your successes! Soak in a hot tub, attend a sports event, visit a friend or take up a new hobby. Finding a creative outlet can lessen fatigue and refresh your mind, body and spirit.

**Know what's important.** Take time to find out what is important in your life. Seek a professional if you've been feeling depressed for a long time. Counseling can help.

**Contact Us at: University Human Resources,  
Learning & Professional Development**

Hearty laughter has a measurable physical effect on the body that is therapeutic. Look for opportunities by seeking out people, activities and things that you find very funny. Laughter really IS the best medicine so try to take it daily.