A Literature Review on the Connection between Stress and Self-Esteem

<https://file.scirp.org/Html/5-6901721_66480.htm>

<http://www.stress.org.uk/what-is-stress/>

How to create calm in your life

Be smart 🡪 keep calm ☺

**What Is Stress?**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09Rnq-FhnGs&feature=youtu.be>

Learn how to create calm in your life.

A lot of research has been conducted into stress over the last hundred years. Some of the theories behind it are now settled and accepted; others are still being researched and debated.

During this time, there seems to have been something approaching open warfare between competing theories and definitions: views have been passionately held and aggressively defended.

What complicates this is that intuitively we all feel that we know what stress is, as it is something we have all experienced. A definition should, therefore, be obvious... except that it is not.

**Definition of Stress**

Hans Selye was one of the founding fathers of stress research. His view in his book "The Stress of Life" was that "stress is not necessarily something bad – it all depends on how you take it. The stress of exhilarating, creative successful work is beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation or infection is detrimental." Selye believed that the biochemical effects of stress would be experienced irrespective of whether the situation was positive or negative.

Since then, a great deal of further research has been conducted, and ideas have moved on. Stress is now viewed as a "bad thing", with a range of harmful biochemical and long-term effects. These effects have rarely been observed in positive situations.

The most commonly accepted definition of stress (mainly attributed to Richard S. Lazarus in his book "Psychological Stress and the Coping Process") is that stress is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that "demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize." In short, it's what we feel when we think we've lost control of events.

This is the main definition used by this section of Mind Tools, although we also recognize that there is an intertwined instinctive stress response to unexpected events. The stress response inside us is, therefore, part instinct and part to do with the way we think.

**Stress may be related to:**

* work – for example, unemployment, a high workload or retirement (see Beat stress at work)
* family – for example, divorce, relationship difficulties or being a carer
* housing – for example, moving house or problems with neighbours
* personal issues – for example, coping with a serious illness, bereavement or financial problems

**Why it is important to manage stress**

It's important to tackle the causes of stress in your life if you can. Avoiding problems rather than facing them can make things worse.

But it's not always possible to change a stressful situation. You may need to accept there's nothing you can do about it and refocus your energies elsewhere.

For example, if you're a carer, find ways to take breaks and do the things you enjoy.

**The Effects of Stress**

As demonstrated in the above list, stress can have wide ranging effects on emotions, mood and behavior. Equally important but often less appreciated are effects on various systems, organs and tissues all over the body, as illustrated by the following diagram.

**What causes stress?**

Big life changes often create stress, even happy events like having a baby or planning a wedding.

Feeling like you aren't in control of events in your life – for example, if you're diagnosed with a serious illness or you get made redundant – can also cause stress.

**How We Respond to Stress**

Some of the early research on stress (conducted by Walter Cannon in 1932) established the existence of the well-known "fight-or-flight" response. His work showed that when an organism experiences a shock or perceives a threat, it quickly releases hormones that help it to survive.

In humans, as in other animals, these hormones help us to run faster and fight harder. They increase heart rate and blood pressure, delivering more oxygen and blood sugar to power important muscles. They increase sweating in an effort to cool these muscles, and help them stay efficient. They divert blood away from the skin to the core of our bodies, reducing blood loss if we are damaged. As well as this, these hormones focus our attention on the threat, to the exclusion of everything else. All of this significantly improves our ability to survive life-threatening events.

Not only life-threatening events trigger this reaction: we experience it almost any time we come across something unexpected or something that frustrates our goals. When the threat is small, our response is small and we often do not notice it among the many other distractions of a stressful situation.

Unfortunately, this mobilization of the body for survival also has negative consequences. In this state, we are excitable, anxious, jumpy and irritable. This actually reduces our ability to work effectively with other people. With trembling and a pounding heart, we can find it difficult to execute precise, controlled skills. The intensity of our focus on survival interferes with our ability to make fine judgments by drawing information from many sources. We find ourselves more accident-prone and less able to make good decisions.

There are very few situations in modern working life where this response is useful. Most situations benefit from a calm, rational, controlled and socially sensitive approach.

In the short term, we need to keep this fight-or-flight response under control to be effective in our jobs. In the long term we need to keep it under control to avoid problems of poor health and burnout.

**Warning:**

Stress can cause severe health problems and, in extreme cases, death. While these stress management techniques have been shown to have a positive effect on reducing stress, they are for guidance only, and readers should take the advice of suitably qualified health professionals if they have any concerns over stress-related illnesses or if stress is causing significant or persistent unhappiness. Health professionals should also be consulted before any major change in diet or levels of exercise.

**How to tackle stress -** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/understanding-stress/>

You can't always prevent stress, but there are lots of things you can do to manage stress better.

You could:

* try these [10 simple stress busters](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/reduce-stress/)
* use these easy [time-management techniques](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/time-management-tips/)
* try [mindfulness](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/) – studies have found mindfulness can help reduce stress and improve your mood
* use [calming breathing exercises](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/)
* download some [relaxation and mindfulness apps](https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/category/mental_health/) on to your phone
* listen to an [anxiety control audio guide](https://www.nhs.uk/Video/Pages/anxiety-control-training-podcast.aspx?searchtype=Tag&searchterm=Mental+health__Moodzone&)

Other things that may help:

* share your problems with family or friends
* make more time for your interests and hobbies
* take a break or holiday
* take some regular [exercise](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits/) and make sure you're [eating healthily](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/)
* make sure you're getting enough sleep (see tips on [better sleep](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/))

Read how workaholic Arvind learned to [deal with stress](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/how-ive-learnt-to-deal-with-stress/).

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**The Stress of Life**

– March 1, 1978

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