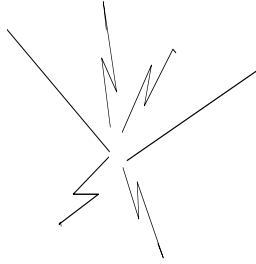


# STRESS

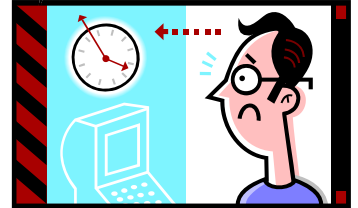


## What Is Stress?



several times in the same spot).

**In Engineering parlance, Stress**, is that physical force which is exerted on a body as it does work. The maximum stress that the body can bear is the force exerted just before the device breaks down because of structural failure. (Try flexing a wire coat hanger



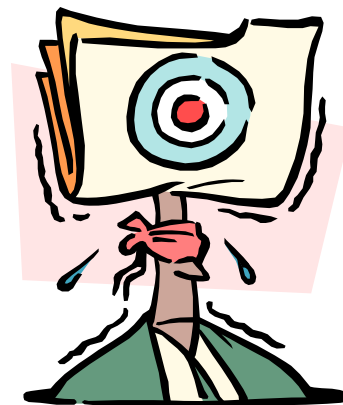
**The Counterpart in Humans** is that we are under physical, mental and emotional stress because of our environment- whether at work, at home, or at play.

**So "Stress" In Humans Can is Defined As....** a Pattern of behavioral responses to real or imagined environmental factors that are perceived as threats to our well-being or as causing changes in our life environment (our day-to-day pattern).

These environmental factors are called STRESSORS.

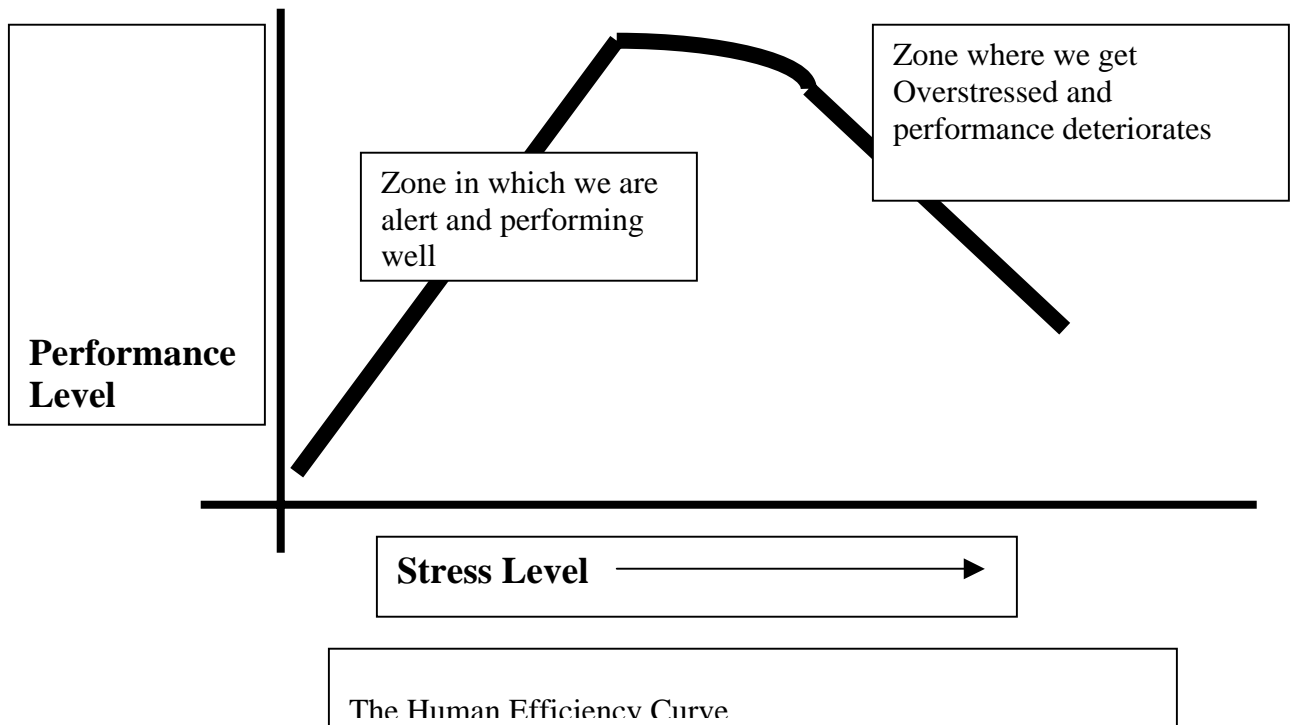
**Stress Can Also Be Defined as....** A biological response that is experienced as an emotion that varies in form depending on the type of Stressor. In some incidents we will feel afraid, or feel extreme pressure and tension, while in others we may feel extreme excitement -anticipation -like a child on Christmas morning.

**And a Stressor** is any event in which demands are placed on the individual to the point where it taxes or exceeds the person's ability to adapt.



Stress involves both the stressful event AND our psychological appraisal (interpretation) of them as well as our response. Much of what we perceive as “Stressful” is “Situational Stress”; that is, we evaluate situations against our internal standard of performance and coping abilities . Hence, when demands of a situation are judged as beyond our ability to cope or succeed , the stress level we experience heightens. This is the link between Stress and Anxiety. <sup>1</sup>

But It is Also Important to Recognize that NOT ALL STRESS IS BAD!!! In preparing for a vacation trip, in accepting a promotion, and when going on a date for the first time we experience a certain degree of stress (in the shape of pressure to perform and plan for the unknown). Stress is hence a vital part of motivating us and keeping us alert. Helen Kennerley in her book on stress and anxiety (see References), diagrams it in this fashion ---



### What About Worry?



“Worry” is the tendency to “fret” about the things that are making us stressed and anxious. We mentally replay the same anxious thoughts and “what ifs” over –and – over. We “ruminate” and even worry about worrying. Compton’s Dictionary defines worry, in part, as: *to feel troubled or uneasy; make anxious; distress -- 2 to feel distressed in the mind; be anxious, troubled, or uneasy* <sup>2</sup>



Dr. Leahy (Psychology Today, Nov.2005) posits that “worry” is a coping strategy we adopt as a means of

<sup>1</sup> Zeidner, Moshe (1998)“ *Test Anxiety – The State of The Art*”. New York, NY: Plenum Press

<sup>2</sup>From Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia © 1998 The Learning Company, Inc.

adapting to a reality that is uncertain, outside of our control, or filled with danger. Worry, in this context is our attempt at acting responsibly and hence forestall or prevent our worst fears from coming true. Worries then are largely about an unknown future - a future that may never occur. So the mental energy we expend in worrying can better be invested in planning and other productive pursuits.

## STRESS and the BODY

Stress takes a toll on the body. Here are some typical warning signs that you may be under too much stress.

1. Headaches
2. Shaking and trembling for no apparent reason.
3. Difficulty sleeping
4. Racing thoughts;
5. Thoughts that you are losing your grip on reality or life is spiraling out of control.
6. Tense muscles; muscle aches and pain; back pains; and / or neck pains
7. Constant feeling of carrying an invisible weight.
8. Emotions (anger, frustrations, sadness, tendency to cry) are close to the surface.

## SIX WAYS of relieving Stress

1. Exercise ... join a gym, take up jogging , engage in whatever activity you find is a healthy diversion from the stress of daily life. [ BUT, avoid the pitfall of adding this to you “list of must do’s” , resulting in adding to your stressors ]
2. Take up a Hobby ... find some pastime that is both relaxing and allows you to explore some aspect of yourself that is new, different and undeveloped – such as photography , painting or woodworking.
3. Go for walks – preferably somewhere quiet. Take time to enjoy nature. Feel the grass , touch the trees , breath in the air.
4. Take up Gardening. Working with the soil, planting and watching things grow can be very therapeutic and relaxing [unless you’re a person who frets over not having a perfect, prize winning floral exhibit ].



5. Learn to meditate. This word worries some in the Christian community as they associate it with mysticism. However in therapeutic parlance, it means simply to RELAX and turn one's mind away from the mental 'To Do lists' and ponder the pleasantries and wonders of nature.
6. Learn to Prioritize and Learn to say NO to unreasonable demands.

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