

EQ in your PJs

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Online with R. Keeth Matheny

MANAGE STRESS BEFORE IT MANAGES YOU Part 1: Stress — Cause and Effects

What Is Stress?

We have all experienced stress. We know what it can do to our mood, and how it feels in our bodies.

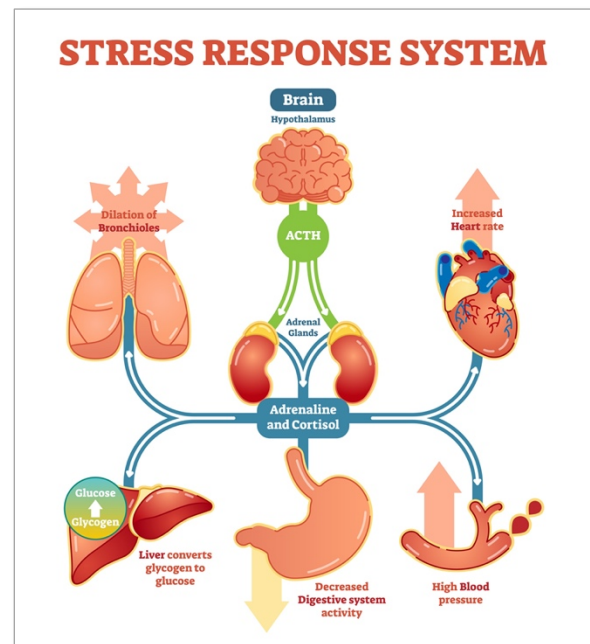
But what exactly is stress? Understanding what stress is — and how it affects both our mind and our physiology — is the first step in learning how to direct or reduce it.

In the most general sense, stress is a feeling of strain, pressure, or anxiety that occurs as a result of particular experiences. Such experiences are called **stressors** and they can be external (an important basketball game, a big test) or internal (negative perceptions about one's self or an interaction).

When you experience something you perceive to be a stressor, your body triggers a series of physical reactions called a **stress response**. First the hypothalamus (a part of the brain) instructs the adrenal glands to ramp up production of hormones and release adrenaline and cortisol into the bloodstream. Adrenaline and cortisol increase your heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure, and metabolism. Blood vessels dilate — or widen — to deliver more blood to the muscles, and pupils dilate to sharpen vision. The liver releases glucose, which delivers a jolt of energy, and you sweat to cool off. All of these changes help prepare you to tackle the stressor with focus, strength, stamina, speed, and alertness.

Is Stress Good, Bad, or Both?

When we talk or think about stress, we often cast it as negative. But stress can be both good and bad.



Graphic: ©iStock/VectorMine

In small doses the stress response allows us to address challenges with speed and dexterity. In large doses, it can have the opposite effect, and chronic, ongoing stress can cause major health problems. The key is identifying when stress is helping us and when it is hurting us.

In emergencies, the stress response will help you react quickly and effectively. For instance, a mother lion may need the fight response to defend her cubs or the flight response to help them run to safety. This is why the response is also referred to as **"fight or flight."** The stress response is also helpful in less dire situations that still require boldness and alertness, such as delivering a big speech or taking the game-winning foul shot. These small doses of stress are healthy and will help you undertake challenges. And, importantly, your nervous system will swiftly recover and return to its normal resting state.

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MANAGE STRESS BEFORE IT MANAGES YOU Part 1: Stress — Cause and Effects, cont'd

How does stress affect you, personally?

What adds stress to your life? List at least five things you stress or worry about:

WORDSEARCH: Stress triggers your body to react.

Find ten terms related to the "stress response."

(*Words may be diagonal and/or backwards.)

For writable PDFs, enter row # here:

ADRENALINE _____
BRAIN _____
CORTISOL _____
GLUCOSE _____
HEART _____
HORMONES _____
HYPOTHALAMUS _____
LIVER _____
LUNGS _____
PUPILS _____

(If you are using a writable PDF, write the row # of the first letter.)

1	Q	X	R	U	Q	D	L	B	F	L	Q	K	I	E	R
2	U	S	T	A	V	P	H	R	V	H	S	Q	F	F	D
3	A	Y	N	A	F	J	M	A	S	R	R	W	Y	C	H
4	R	S	T	E	Q	B	V	I	S	L	Z	I	C	T	U
5	G	L	U	C	O	S	E	N	O	M	R	O	H	P	N
6	C	I	B	D	G	F	N	S	A	K	E	W	C	G	G
7	B	P	R	Q	F	H	I	D	Z	B	V	B	X	S	Z
8	C	U	M	T	U	T	L	L	C	X	I	W	Q	H	Z
9	W	P	I	U	R	U	A	I	N	J	L	T	H	M	G
10_	Z	C	L	O	N	A	N	E	X	P	Q	W	J	V	L
11_	K	F	C	G	C	K	E	K	T	G	O	G	Q	H	O
12_	B	X	S	Y	U	F	R	H	F	U	Z	T	R	O	O
13_	P	L	O	D	J	V	D	N	D	C	T	N	T	M	G
14_	H	Y	P	O	T	H	A	L	A	M	U	S	K	E	F
15_	H	C	C	Q	T	O	G	S	A	R	P	A	H	N	I

What did you learn? From the "EQ in your PJs" video and article, summarize how our bodies respond to stress. List at least three interesting facts:

- ✓
- ✓
- ✓

What term did Mr. Matheny use to describe an emotional response that was important in prehistoric times, but may be in less helpful in today's modern world?

What do you think? How is the stress response helpful and how might it be hurtful?

What do you know? Share with a family member(s) what you learned about stress today. Then ask: "What did you learn about stress that you didn't know before?" Write down their response(s):

PASSWORD to EQ in your PJs Video 2: What does the liver release during a stress response? _____
[all small letters, no caps]

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MANAGE STRESS BEFORE IT MANAGES YOU Part 2: Perception of Stress

How do thoughts affect stress levels?

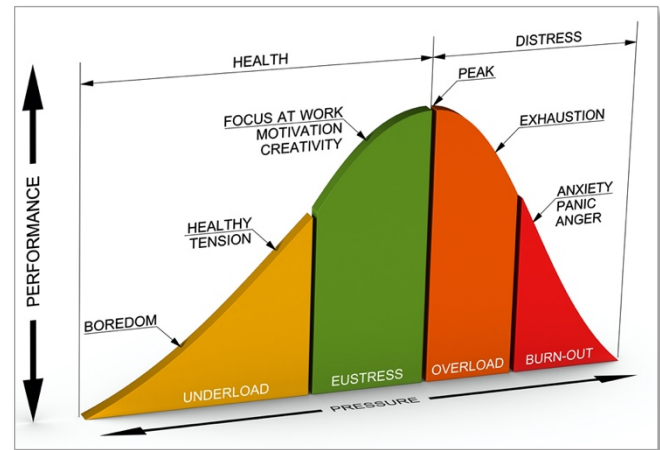
Our beliefs or “mindsets” can greatly affect our behavior and life experiences. For example, a belief that we can learn and “grow smarter” through effort increases our motivation to learn and our academic achievement. In a similar way, our beliefs about stress can affect how our body responds to stress—and ultimately how healthy we are—and even our academic performance.

A positive mindset about stress helps us understand that it can be stimulating and beneficial to us. Stress helps us focus our attention on things we want to accomplish or pursue and motivates us to work towards our goals. Good stress is often called “**Eustress.**” You may experience it playing a sport, working on a deadline, setting a challenge or goal you care about, or trying something new for the first time.

Without some stress we might not live up to our potential in what we can do and achieve. And without any stress, life might seem boring and unexciting—even depressing. Some people like the stress that adventures bring on. Adventure-seekers often say that it is when they feel “most alive.”

Studies show that Eustress has many benefits. It can

- Be motivational
- Enhance learning
- Boost brain function
- Be good for internal organs
- Get us sweating, which cleans out our skin pores



Graphic: ©iStock/Olivier Le Moal

Bad stress is called “**Distress.**” This is usually ongoing stress that builds over time. It can include the stress of feeling unsafe and not having a sense of control over what happens in our life. We don’t have the chance to recover when our mind and body is in a constant threatened state. Yet how our mind thinks about stress affects how *much* distress we experience.



By understanding that Eustress can build stronger brains and more optimistic outlooks, we can learn to seek the help we need and manage our stress level to make stress work for us, rather than against us.

✓ **Recommended Resource:** Check out Dr. Kelly McGonigal’s TedTalk: How to Make Stress Your Friend. Available on YouTube.

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MANAGE STRESS BEFORE IT MANAGES YOU Part 2: Perception of Stress, cont'd

EQ in your PJs Video Review:

In the "EQ in your PJs" video, part 2, Mr. Matheny describes how our thoughts about a situation can influence our emotions, our actions, and the outcome.



THOUGHTS: What are your predominant thoughts about the Coronavirus and the precautionary methods (e.g., quarantine, school closures)?

EMOTIONS: What emotions best describe how you're feeling about the Coronavirus? Circle your top five:

amusement	contentment	happiness	loneliness	pleasure
anger	disappointment	hope	melancholy	regret
annoyance	envy	insecurity	optimism	sadness
anxiety	excitement	irritation	panic	sorrow
caring	fear	isolation	pity	worry

PERCEPTION: To gain perspective about your ability to influence your emotions, it is better to say:

I feel _____ about the Coronavirus.

Instead of:

The Coronavirus makes me feel _____.

The first statement gives you more of a sense of power over your emotions (rather than helplessness). This dynamic is called "**emotional locus of control.**" By changing your perspective about the situation, you are better positioned to understand, accept, manage, and potentially reframe your emotions.

To help with a perception shift, list at least eight good things that have happened or could happen during quarantine time (e.g., extra sleep, time with family):

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1) | 5) |
| 2) | 6) |
| 3) | 7) |
| 4) | 8) |

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MANAGE STRESS BEFORE IT MANAGES YOU Part 2: Perception of Stress, cont'd

How does stress affect you, personally?

Refer back to the "Perception of Stress" article (pg. 3) and apply it to everyday life. On average, do you experience "no stress," "eustress" or "distress" in the following areas? Categorize them below.

- Math schoolwork
- English schoolwork
- Social studies schoolwork
- Science schoolwork
- With friends
- With family
- At work (if applicable)
- In sports
- Giving a presentation
- Taking a test
- Coronavirus outbreak
- Add one: _____

NO STRESS	EUSTRESS	DISTRESS

What do you think? How are your thoughts influencing your stress level? Choose two of the items you put in the "DISTRESS" column above. What is a negative thought you might have about that subject? What is an alternative thought that would help you get in the Eustress zone?

Negative thought causing DISTRESS:

1) Example: "I'm going to fail the math test this week."

2)

3)

Alternative thought to promote EUSTRESS:

→ Example: "I'm going to try Khan Academy to figure out how to do these math problems."

→

→

What did you learn? From the "EQ in your PJs, Part 2" video and article, summarize how you can have more mastery over your emotions. List at least three interesting facts:

✓

✓

✓

PASSWORD to EQ in your PJs Video 3: What is "good stress" often called? _____

[all small letters, no caps]

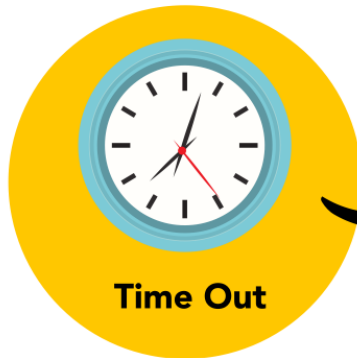
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MANAGE STRESS BEFORE IT MANAGES YOU Part 3: Stress Management Strategies

Stress Management Strategies

Strategy:



Time Out

Why It Works:

Gives you a chance to cool down away from the pressure of the situation

Why It Works:

Releases natural chemicals that help you let go of tension and feel better

Strategy:



Walk It Out

Strategy:



Talk It Out

Why It Works:

Helps you understand the source of your stress and connect with others

Why It Works:

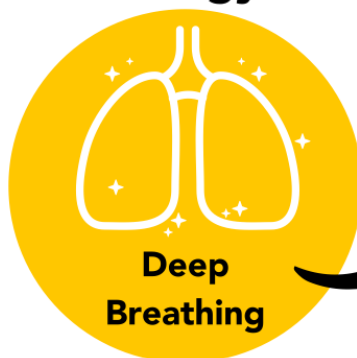
Helps you get some distance, think things through and review your progress

Strategy:



Write It Out

Strategy:



Deep Breathing

Why It Works:

Moves your focus from your stress to your breath, helps you release tension, and gets more oxygen to your brain for clearer thinking

Why It Works:

Helps let go of unwanted thoughts, decreases your pulse rate, and changes your focus.

Strategy:



Mindful Moment

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MANAGE STRESS BEFORE IT MANAGES YOU Part 3: Stress Management Strategies, cont'd

How does stress affect you, personally?

Review the infographic on the previous page. List six things that can stress you out then draw a line to match the stressor with a stress management strategy you think would work best for you. You can choose the same strategy more than once.

PERCEIVED STRESSORS:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

STRATEGIES:

- a) Time Out
- b) Walk It Out
- c) Talk It Out
- d) Write It Out
- e) Deep Breathing
- f) Mindful Moment

ACTIONS: "Social distancing" during Coronavirus school closures can impact your routine and regular de-stressers in your life like talking to friends, exercising, and being outside. Social isolation can lead to low energy levels and decreased optimism. How can you add exercise, fresh air, social interactions (online or in person), and/or mindful moments to your current stay-at-home routine? List at least three de-stress strategies you'll try in the next few days:

What will you do to de-stress?	Where?/How?	When?
1)		
2)		
3)		

REFLECTION: After you do your de-stress strategies, reflect on the experience. How did it affect your thoughts and emotions?

PASSWORD to EQ in your PJs Video 4: Talking it out helps you _____ with others.
[all small letters, no caps]

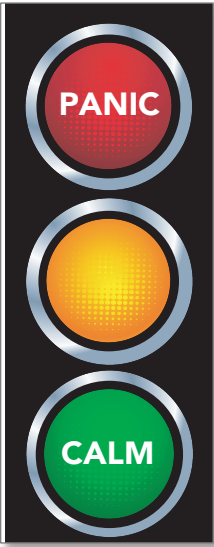


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MANAGE STRESS BEFORE IT MANAGES YOU Part 4: Awareness and Application

Stress Management Starts with Awareness

What are the indicators of low, medium, and high stress levels? Describe the thoughts, physical sensations, and behaviors you experience in each zone:

	THOUGHTS	PHYSICAL FEELINGS	BEHAVIORS
 <p>PANIC (Stress response!)</p>			
 <p>YELLOW (Getting worried)</p>			
 <p>CALM (no worries)</p>			

APPLICATION: Think about a movie or literary character who was in a stressful situation then went from yellow (medium stress) to full-blown red-level stress. What were the indicators s/he was in red-level stress?

What do you think s/he could have done to de-escalate the situation?

When have you been in a situation that you were able to successfully de-escalate your stress level?

What are "triggers" that may escalate your stress level? And what are strategies you will use in the future to de-escalate your stress?

INTERACTION: Reach out to three people and ask them what they are doing to de-stress during quarantine time. Ask if you can teach them a stress management strategy you learned.

Who did you talk to? What strategy did you teach them? And what was their response?

GRATEFUL BREATH: Get creative with the "Grateful Breath" coloring page then post it on the back of your bedroom door. Deep breaths and gratitude help regulate emotions and set you up for a great day.

Upload your "Grateful Breath" to #EQinyourPJs @coach_rudy for \$20 to Amazon, iTunes or Red Cross. Awarded to top three entries

Gratulations

