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# LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO STRESS

BY REENU SAHORE



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## Introduction

In today's time when technology is accessible to most of us and Google has become our "know-all" Guru, Stress has become a cliched word used casually.

In my line of work i.e. Stress Management, I deal with numerous people going through a plethora of Stress related issues. Most of them are either ignorant or guided by half-baked information available on social media. This leads to a segmented understanding and more confusion. In order to clear the air, I felt a need to create this E-book which aims to provide all the information and solutions in a concise form.

Hope my effort makes it easier to understand "Stress", for a layman.

Stress, in general terms, is a feeling that people have when they are overloaded and struggling to cope with demands in life. These demands can be related to finances, work, relationships, basically anything that poses a real or perceived challenge or threat to their well-being.

We feel stressed when we have too much to do,

or

When we are sleep deprived,

or

When we worry about things like our job, money, relationships, an ill friend or family member who is in crisis.

In response to these strains our body automatically increases blood pressure, heart rate, respiration, metabolism, and blood flow & pressure to our muscles. This response is intended to help our body react quickly and effectively to a high-pressure situation. However, when the body keeps reacting to stressful situations constantly, without making adjustments, to counter the effects, we feel acute or chronic stress which can threaten our health and well-being.

A few people may differ and say that stress can be good, it is essential for human survival, and it is this stress which gives us a competitive edge and pushes us towards success.

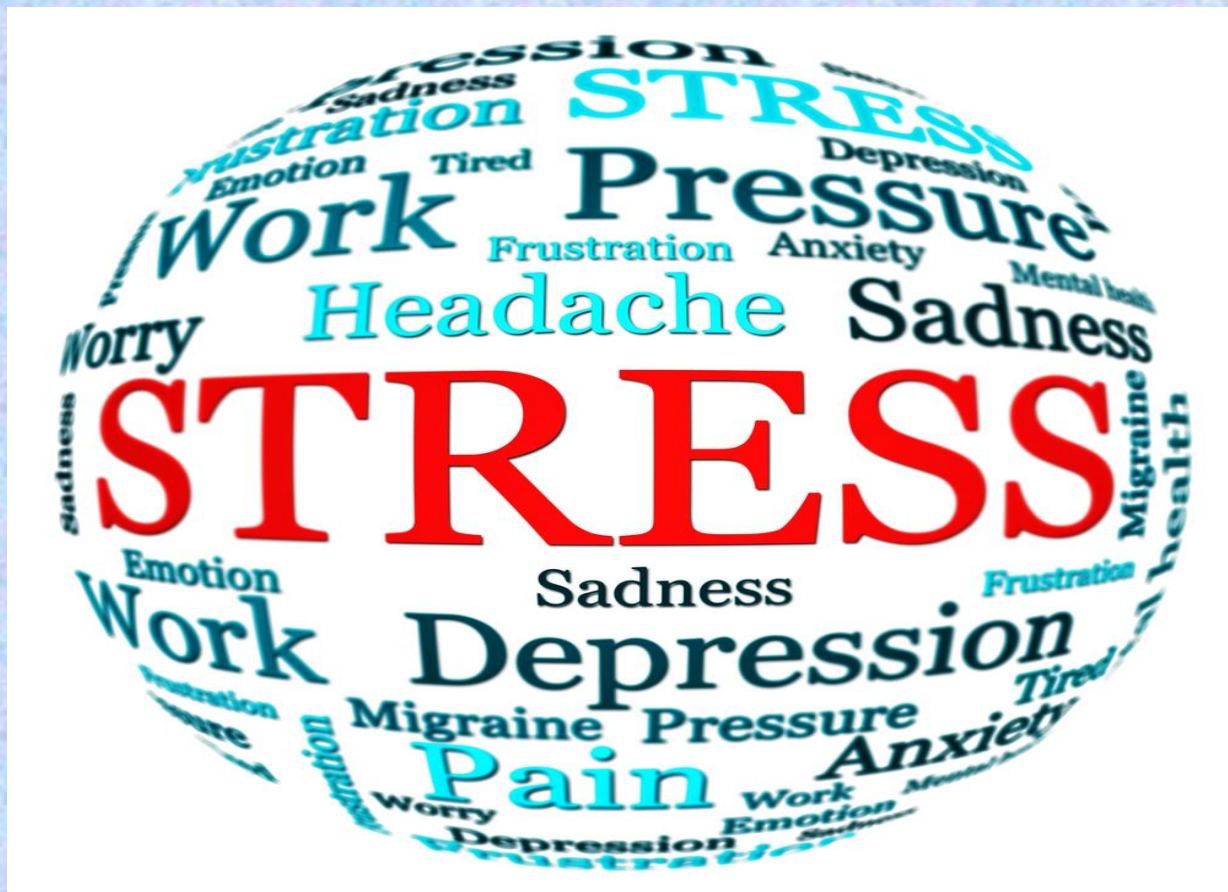
I agree to some extent.

However, if the mechanism flight is triggered too easily and there are too many stressors at one time, it can undermine a person's mental and physical health and become harmful.



## Quick facts on Stress.

- Stress helps our body prepares to face sudden danger.
- The symptoms can be both physical and psychological.
- Short-term stress can be helpful, but long-term stress is linked to various health conditions.
- We can prepare ourselves for stress situations by learning some self-management techniques.



## **About Stress-What exactly is it?**

Stress is body's natural defense against any real or perceived danger. It flushes the body with hormones to prepare systems to evade or confront danger. This is known as the "fight-or-flight" mechanism. When we are faced with a challenge, part of our response is physical. Our body activates resources to protect us by preparing us either to stay and fight or to get away as fast as possible.

Our body produces larger quantities of chemicals such as Cortisol, Adrenaline, and Noradrenaline. These trigger an increased heart rate, heightened muscle preparedness, sweating, and alertness. All these factors improve the ability to respond to a hazardous or challenging situation.

Factors of the environment that trigger this reaction are called Stressors. Examples include noises, aggressive behavior, a speeding car, scary moments in movies, or even going out on a first date. The more stressors we experience, the more stressed we tend to feel.

**"The truth is that there is no actual stress or anxiety in the world, it is your thoughts that create these false beliefs. You cannot package stress, touch it, or see it. There are only people engaged in stressful thoughts".**

**- Wayne Dyer**

## **The changes body goes through during stress.**

Stress slows down normal bodily functions, such as the digestive and immune systems. All resources can then be concentrated on rapid breathing, blood flow, alertness, and muscle use. The body changes in the following ways during stress-

Blood pressure and Pulse rate rise

Breathing is rapid.

Digestive system slows down.

Immune activity decreases

Muscles become tense.

Heightened state of alertness prevents sleep.

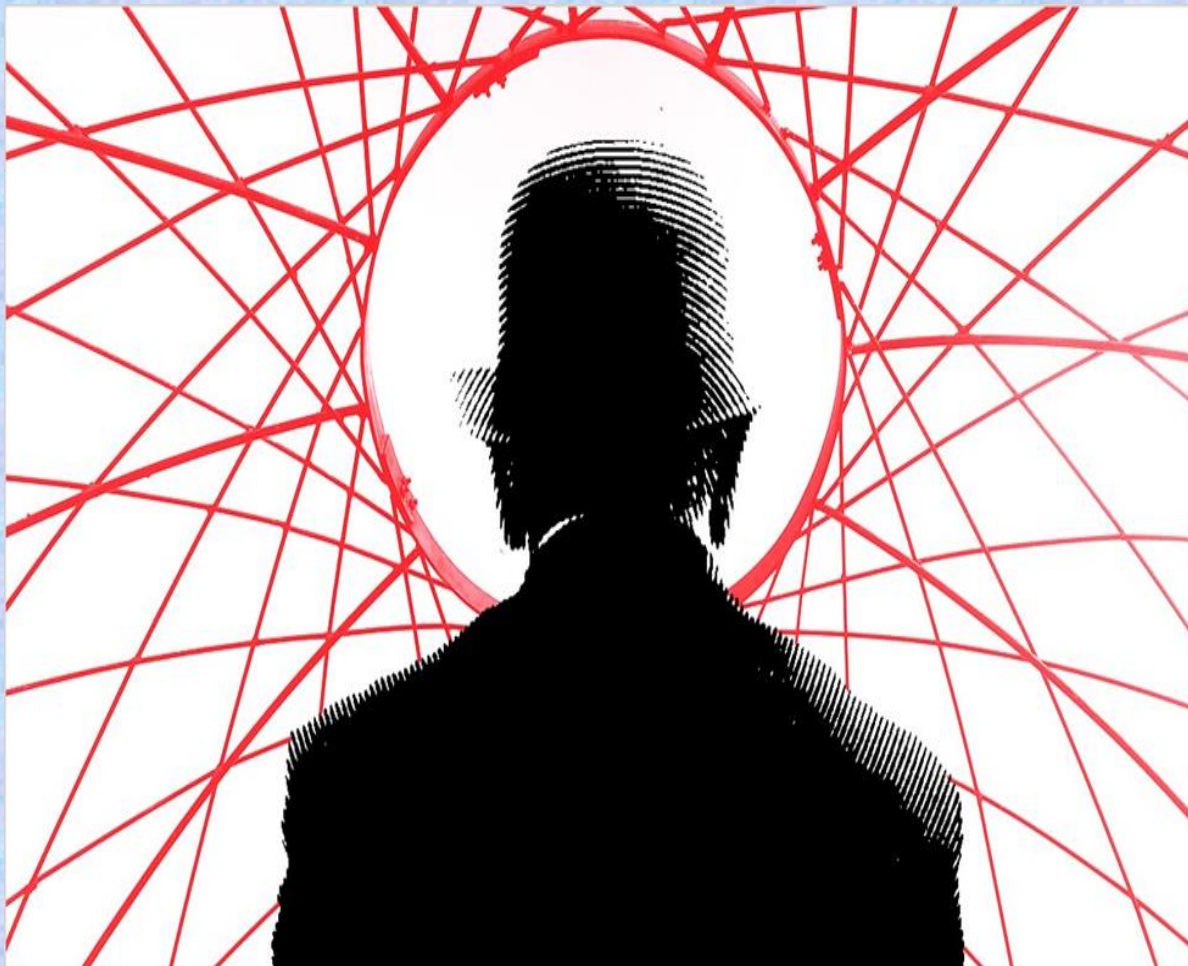
How we react to a difficult situation will affect how stress affects us and our health. A person who feels that he does not have enough resources to cope, will be more likely to have a stronger reaction which can trigger health problems. Stressors affect individuals in different ways.

Some experiences that are generally considered positive can also lead to stress, such as getting married, having a baby, travelling, changing house, being promoted etc., basically anything which involves a major change, extra effort, new responsibilities, and a need for adaptation. They are also stepping into the unknown or future and not knowing creates anxiety.

A persistently negative response to challenges can have a detrimental effect on health and happiness. However, being aware of how you react to stressors can help reduce the negative feelings and effects of stress, and to manage it more effectively.

**Stress comes from within. It is your reaction to circumstances, not the circumstances themselves.**

**Brian Tracy**





## **Various Types of Stress.**

In a broader description, there are three different types of stress that require different levels of management.

### **Acute stress**

This type of stress is short-term and is the most common way that stress occurs. Acute stress is often caused by thinking about the pressures of events that have recently occurred, or upcoming demands of the future.

For example, if someone has recently been involved in an argument that has caused him/her to be upset or have an upcoming deadline, they may feel stress about these triggers. However, the stress will be reduced or removed once these stressors are resolved.

It does not cause the same amount of damage as long-term, chronic stress. Short-term effects include tension headaches and an upset stomach, as well as a moderate amount of distress.

Repeated instances of acute stress over a long period can become chronic and harmful.

### **Episodic acute stress**

People who frequently experience acute stress, or whose lives present frequent triggers of stress, have episodic acute stress.

A person with too many commitments and poor organization can find themselves displaying episodic stress symptoms. These include a tendency to be irritable and tense, and this irritability can affect relationships. Individuals that worry too much on a constant basis can also find themselves facing this type of stress.

This type of stress can also lead to high blood pressure and heart disease.

### **Chronic stress**

This is the most harmful type of stress and grinds away over a long period.

Ongoing poverty, a dysfunctional family, or an unhappy marriage, going through a divorce, overcoming grief can cause chronic stress. It occurs when a person never sees an escape from the cause of stress and stops seeking solutions. Sometimes, it can be caused by a traumatic experience early in life.

Chronic stress can continue unnoticed, as people can become used to it, unlike acute stress that is new and often has an immediate solution. It can become part of an individual's personality, making them constantly prone to the effects of stress regardless of the scenarios they come up against.

People with chronic stress are likely to have a final breakdown that can lead to suicide, violent actions, heart attacks, and strokes. We all react differently to stressful situations. What is stressful to one person may not be stressful to another. Almost anything can cause stress. For some people, just thinking about something or several small things can cause stress.

## **Events that can trigger stress include-**

Job issues or retirement

Lack of time or money

Bereavement

Family problems

Illness

Moving or changing home

Relationships, marriage, and divorce

Other commonly reported causes of stress are.

Excessive Noise, Overcrowding and Pollution

Driving in heavy traffic or fear of an accident

Fear of crime or problems with neighbors

Uncertainty or waiting for an important outcome

Miscarriage

Burnout, Lay offs

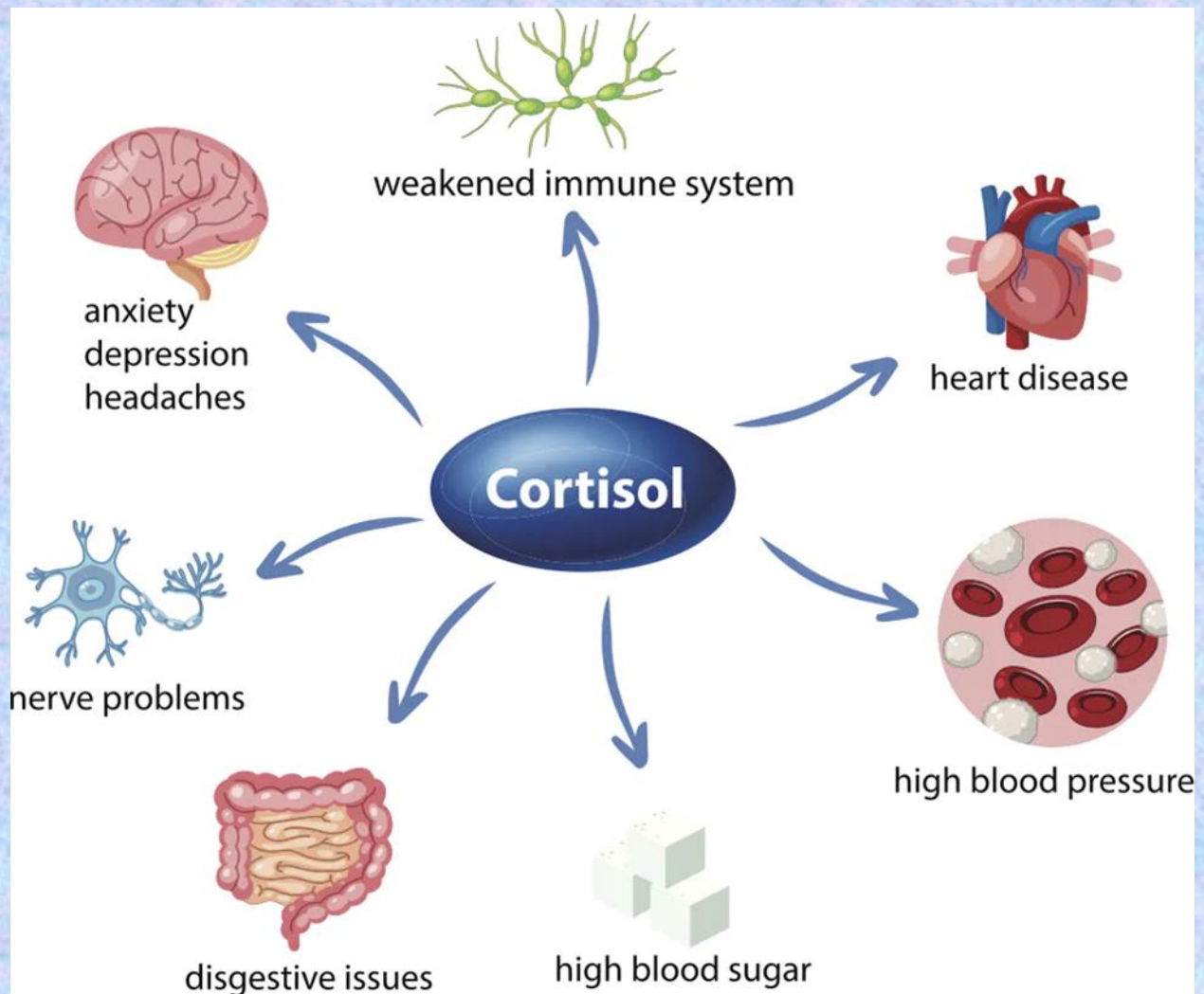
An Epidemic or a Pandemic.

Some situations will affect some people and not others, our past experiences will impact how a person will react.

Sometimes, there is no identifiable cause. Mental health issues, such as depression, or an accumulated sense of frustration and

anxiety, can make some people feel stressed more easily than others.

Many of us experience ongoing stress after a traumatic event, such as an accident or abuse. This is known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Those who work in stressful jobs, such as the military, or emergency services, will have a debriefing session following a major incident, and are monitored for PTSD.



## Main Symptoms & the Physical effects of stress include

Effect of Stress.	Effect of Stress	Effect of Stress
Emotions	Physical Body	Behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Anger</li> <li>-Anxiety</li> <li>-Burnout</li> <li>-Concentration issues</li> <li>-Depression</li> <li>-Fatigue</li> <li>-Feeling of insecurity</li> <li>-Forgetfulness</li> <li>-Irritability</li> <li>-Nail biting</li> <li>-Restlessness-sadness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sweating</li> <li>-Pain in the back or chest</li> <li>-Cramps or muscle spasms</li> <li>-Erectile dysfunction and loss of libido</li> <li>-Fainting</li> <li>-Headache</li> <li>-Heart disease</li> <li>-High blood pressure</li> <li>-Lower immunity against diseases</li> <li>-Muscular aches</li> <li>-nervous twitches</li> <li>-pins and needles</li> <li>-sleeping difficulties</li> <li>-stomach upset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Food cravings and eating too much or too little</li> <li>-Sudden angry outbursts</li> <li>-Drug and alcohol abuse</li> <li>-Higher tobacco consumption</li> <li>-Social withdrawal</li> <li>-Frequent crying</li> <li>-Relationship problems</li> </ul>

A 2019 study suggests that the stressors experienced by parents, such as financial troubles or managing a single-parent household, can lead to obesity in their children.

## **Ways to find out levels of stress.**

A Doctor will normally diagnose stress by asking the patient about symptoms and life events.

Diagnosis may be cumbersome & complex. It depends on many factors. Questionnaires, biochemical measures, and physiological techniques, but these may not be objective or effective.

The most direct way to diagnose stress and its effects on a person is through a comprehensive, stress-oriented, face-to-face interview.



## **Mode of Treatment**

Treatment includes self-help and, in instances where the stress is caused by an underlying condition, certain medications.

Therapies that may help to induce relaxation include Aromatherapy or Reflexology, Body scans, Meditations.

Some insurance providers cover this type of treatment but be sure to check before pursuing this treatment.

**“Worry and stress affects the circulation, the heart, the glands the whole nervous system and profoundly affects heart action”.**

**Charles W Mayo, MD**

## **Medicines**

Doctors will not usually prescribe medications for coping with stress, unless the patient has an underlying illness, such as depression or a type of anxiety.

In that case, the doctor is treating a mental illness and not the stress, in such cases, an anti-depressant may be prescribed. However, there is a risk that the medication will only mask the stress, rather than help you deal and cope with it. Antidepressants can also have adverse effects.

Developing some coping strategies before stress hits can help an individual manage new situations and maintain physical and mental health. If you are already experiencing overwhelming stress, seek medical help.

**“Stress increases stress hormones (adrenaline & cortisol) and causes blood sugar swings both which contribute to stress hormones being too high at night (a common denominator in insomnia)”.**

**Catherine Crow**



## **Management of Stress.**

As we say prevention is better than cure. Here are a few lifestyle choices we can take to manage or prevent the feeling of being overwhelmed.

Massages, Yoga, or listening to music can help distress or prevent Stress from building up.

### **Stress Management Techniques**

Stress Management Techniques can help remove or change the source of Stress, a few of them can-

Alter the way of seeing a stressful event.

Lower the impact that stress might have on your body.

Help learn alternative ways of coping.

Stress Management Therapy pursues one or more of these approaches.

Certain Relaxation Techniques.

Remember, most of your stress if not all comes from the way you respond to situations, not the way your life is try adjusting your attitude and all that extra stress can be a talk of the past.

## **My Tips for Reducing/Controlling Stress.**

If you are feeling stressed, there are steps you can take to feel better. As you read the following suggestions, remember that conquering stress will not come from a half-hearted effort, nor will it come overnight. It will take determination, persistence and time. Some suggestions may help immediately, but if your stress level doesn't seem to improve, it may require more attention and/or lifestyle changes.

### **Be realistic.**

If you feel overwhelmed by some activities (yours and/or your family's), learn to say NO. Eliminate an activity that is not absolutely necessary. You may be taking on more responsibility than you can or should handle. If you meet resistance, give reasons why you're making the changes. Be willing to listen to other's suggestions and be ready to compromise.

### **Do away with the Perfectionism.**

No one is perfect, so don't expect perfection from yourself or others. Ask yourself, "What really needs to be done?" How much can I do? Is the deadline realistic? What adjustments can I make?" Don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.

## **Meditate.**

Just five to ten minutes of quiet reflection may bring relief from chronic stress as well as increase your tolerance to it. Use the time to listen to music, relax and try to think of pleasant things or nothing at all, just being in the moment.

## **Visualization Helps.**

Using your imagination and picture how you can manage a stressful situation more successfully. Whether it's a business presentation or moving to a new place, many people feel visual rehearsals boost self-confidence and enable them to take a more positive approach to a difficult task.

## **Take one thing at a time.**

For people under tension or stress, their day-to-day workload can sometimes seem unbearable. The best way to cope with this feeling of being overwhelmed is to take one task at a time. Make a list of things you need to get done and start with one task. Once you accomplish that task, choose the next one. The positive feeling of "checking off" tasks is very satisfying. It will motivate you to keep going.

## **Physical Activity**

-Exercise every day. Regular exercise is a popular way to relieve stress. Twenty to thirty minutes of physical activity benefits both the body and the mind.

## **Follow Hobbies.**

Take a break from your worries by doing something you enjoy. Whether it's gardening or painting, schedule time to indulge your interest.

## **Share your feelings.**

A conversation with a friend lets you know that you are not the only one having a bad day, caring for a sick child or working in a busy office. Stay in touch with friends and family. Ask them how they have dealt with a similar situation that may be "stressing you out." Let them provide love, support and guidance. Don't try to cope alone.

## **Be flexible.**

If you find you are meeting constant opposition in either your personal or professional life, rethink your position or strategy. Arguing only intensifies stressful feelings. Make allowances for

other's opinions and be prepared to compromise. If you are willing to be accommodating, others may meet you halfway. Not only will you reduce your stress, might find better solutions to your problems.

### **Go easy with criticism.**

You may expect too much of yourself and others. Try not to feel frustrated, disappointed or even "trapped" when another person does not measure up. The "other person" may be a coworker, spouse, or child whose behavior you are trying to change or do not agree with. Avoid criticisms about character, such as "You're so stubborn," and try providing constructive suggestions for how someone might do something differently.

### **Getting Help.**

If you think that you or someone you know may be under more stress than just dealing with a passing difficulty, it may be helpful to talk with your doctor, clergy person, or employee assistance professional. They may suggest you visit with a psychiatrist, psychologist, coach, social worker, or other qualified counselor.

In crisis- If you or someone you know is in crisis, seek help immediately from a Professional.

## **Questions to ask self before approaching a professional help.**


- How does this stress and tension affect you, your family and your job?
- Can you identify the stress and tensions in your life as short or long term?
- Do you have a support system of friends/family that will help you make positive changes?
- What are your biggest obstacles to reducing stress?
- What are you willing to change or give up for a less stressful and tension-filled life?
- What have you tried already that didn't work for you?

## **Conclusion**

Finally, we need to understand that when we are overwhelmed, its easy to get into the loop of negativity, but with our stronger internal resilience we can be proactive to see difficult circumstances as learning opportunities rather than as a time to shut down. When it comes to handling Stress, starting with self-awareness & self-understanding may be the best way to tackle it.

Leave your valuable views, comments or questions & do connect with me for your free 30-minute session for discussing further on whatever you want to find a solution on.

★ Change Your Mind(set) ★



**-Don't think of STRESS as**

- a threat
- a demoralizer
- pressure
- overwhelming
- debilitating

**-Don't focus on problems**

**-Don't fight stress**

**+Do think of STRESS as**

- a challenge
- a motivator
- an opportunity
- manageable
- energizing

**+Do focus on possibilities**

**+Do embrace stress**

**I will leave you with this thought-**

**If your near or dear one is going through a stressful situation- How will you help him?**

**Connect with me @**

**reesahore@gmail.com**

**www.stressfreeall.com**