Stress is the body's reaction to external stimuli. This can be a reaction to something physical, emotional, or mental. The purpose of stress is to make us react to our surroundings. This is a primal instinct. Imagine a caveman not feeling fear as they walk into a den of hungry saber-tooth tigers. If the caveman didn't feel fear, he wouldn't have the instinct to run away from these hungry tigers. So without this instinct we would die. Everyone deals with stress in their daily lives. Stress shouldn't be getting in the way of functioning normally in daily life. When stress gets out of hand it can be "chronic stress."

Physical Effects of Stress:
- High blood pressure
- Muscle/joint pains from injuries or chronic issues
- Viruses, bacteria, or parasites which cause illnesses that in turn create stress

Emotional/Mental Effects of Stress:
- Low productivity
- Feelings of depression or other mental illnesses
- Emotional effects of excessive or lack of sleep (sleep disorders such as insomnia)
- Emotional eating- bulimia, anorexia.

Signs of Excessive Stress:
- Panic attacks
- Physical fatigue and drowsiness
- Chronic stress (which can overtime possibly lead to physical health conditions in some people)

How Stress Effects Health

Here are some resources that provide services for healthy ways to cope with stress, helping others to cope, mental health & crisis:
- www.nimh.nih.gov/stressandanxiety
- www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 
1-888-628-9454 for Spanish

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522

National Child Abuse Hotline:
1-800-4ACtild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453

National Sexual Assault Hotline:
1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Veteran's Crisis Line:
1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text: 8388255

Rescue Mission of Salt Lake Men's Facility, Homeless Service Center, and Corporate Offices
463 S 400 W
Salt Lake City, Utah 84101
801.355.1302

Rescue Mission Women's Center
1165 S State Street
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111
801.521.5925

These two Centers offer one on one counseling sessions.

Stress takes on various forms and is not always a bad thing. Eustress is seen as the positive form of stress where distress is associated with negative stress. Eustress does not always feel pleasant, but is a type of stress that pushes one to meet their goals. It acts as a fuel source that drives one to get things done, evaluate situations, and improve outcomes. Eustress views situations as challenges within one's control. Contrarily, distress causes a person to sense a situation as a threat or challenge outside of their control. It is important to note that distress over a situation can be transformed into eustress through having a positive mindset.

Identifiable Eustress Characteristics:
- Provides Motivation and focuses energy
- Short-term stress
- Viewed as within our coping abilities
- Feels exciting
- Improves performance

Identifiable Distress Characteristics:
- Promotes anxiety or concern
- Can vary in length of time
- Viewed as outside of our coping abilities
- Provides an unpleasant feeling
- Decreases performance
- Can lead to mental and physical problems
How Food Can Effect Stress

Poor food choices can lead to indigestion and drowsiness which can increase stress levels. Additionally, fatigue and unproductivity from unhealthy eating can lead to frustration and anxiety. Health ailments from poor eating lead to depression or stress, which in turn affect each other.

Mental Health from Reactions in the Gut

The gut contains hundreds of millions of neurons in connection with the spine and brain. When poor eating choices are made, bacteria within the gut is affected. When there's an imbalance of bacteria, the neurons and connections nearby are immediately affected. So, overall the healthiness of one’s gut can have a direct impact on how one may feel physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Ways To Cope With Stress

Connect With Others - talk to friends, family, or co-workers about what you are going through
Keep A Journal - sometimes it helps to write down what you are feeling
Get Regular Sleep - avoid excessive caffeine intake, and try to stay on a regular sleep schedule
Exercise - a walk or jog around the block can reduce stress and leave one feeling energized
Make Time For Yourself - take a break to do something that you enjoy
Avoid Drugs & Alcohol - intake of these may cause problems that can add additional stress
Recognize When You Need Help - if problems with stress are reoccurring or you are thinking of suicide, talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counselor

Stress and Its Relation To Eating Patterns

“Stress Eating” (Eating to Cope) vs Eating Under Stress

Stress eating occurs when hormones are released in response to stress. This may drive cravings for high-fat and high-sugar foods. Stress eating has even been observed in animals.

Eating under stress happens when one eats while feeling anxious, upset, or distracted. This can affect how the body uses this food for energy. Research suggests the body may burn fewer calories from a meal consumed under stress.

Stress eating and eating under stress can alter metabolism and negatively impact health. In both of these eating patterns, hunger and fullness signals may go unrecognized.

Tips For Mindful Eating

- Don't multitask while eating. Just eat.
- Put food on a plate or in a bowl rather than eating out of the bag or box.
- Even if you are eating alone, make the presentation attractive.
- Eat sitting down. (But not while driving!)
- Take it slowly. Try setting your fork or spoon down between bites.
- Notice flavors, textures, colors, and aromas.

These tips can help break stress eating and eating under stress patterns.

For some mindful breathing techniques visit: https://mrjamesnestor.com/breah-vids