

# WHAT ARE STRESS: EFFECTS AND METHODS OF COPING WITH THEM

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**Received: 13/05/2023**

**Published: 16/02/2024**

## **Abstract**

Through his growth, man goes through different stages of life, each has its own requirements, and some of these requirements require him to change the course of his life and reconsider his way of life. However, meeting these requirements or changing the course of life is not always easy; people may be exposed to varying colors of stress forces that prevent satisfying a need or achieving a particular goal. Alternatively, practicing desirable behavior or it forces him to obey and submit against his will and inclinations (Radwan, 2007, p. 77).

These compressive forces vary from age to age, both in terms of the intensity and variety of stress, or in terms of the individual's response to it. Being exposed to life stress is inevitable, as the reality of life is fraught with traumatic events and experiences, failure and frustration; it is rare for an individual to experience one type of such stress, but the strongest possibility is that the individual may be exposed to more than one type of stress, whether willingly or not, all happen simultaneously, not at intervals (Ali, 1995, p. 25).

The topic of stress has received great attention from scientists and researchers; this is because of its great impact on individuals in various aspects of life, accordingly, many studies have emerged that address and research in this context. Several private centers for the treatment and reduction of negative stress have also appeared abroad.

Given the importance of this topic, we will try to shed light on what stress is and how it occurs, and the most important effects and consequences resulting from it, which especially affect university students, finally, we will mention the most important methods of confronting them.

**Keywords:** stress, mechanism of occurrence of stress, viewing stress, Psychological effects.

**Introduction:**

The individual faces in his life many stressful life situations that include unwanted experiences, and events involving many sources of anxiety and risk and threat factors in all areas of life, the effects of these stressful situations have been reflected in most aspects of the individual's personality, if the current era is described as the "Age of anxiety", some researchers have considered that we also live in an age characterized by psychological stress and crises, the present era is no longer the era of easy and affordable life, but life conditions have become complicated and patterns of negative behavior have begun to appear that lead to disruption of human relations and a lack of individual skills in dealing with and confronting them.

**Definition of stress:**

The term stress is derived from the French word *distress*, which means suffocation, feeling upset or oppressed; it has turned in English into a reference to something unloved or undesirable, the word has been used to express suffering, distress and persecution, it is a condition in which an individual suffers from a sense of injustice (Abdel Moaty, 2006).

The term stress is used in several meanings and connotations, in the Arabic language, the word stress corresponds to the words (*anguish, distress, stress*), the dictionary of psychology defines it as: "A state of physical and psychological stress, and hardship that is placed on the individual with demands and burdens that he must conform to, while for some it means an external situation or an Environmental condition (Fayed, 2005).

While some see stress as an appreciation of a social situation, others tend to consider it a response to the demands of reality, another group believes that stress is a term that reflects a reaction. Between the demands of the surrounding environment and the individual's ability to face these demands (Haidar, p. 80).

Threats, events and changes are usually called stressors; both positive and negative events may be stressful in human life, while large changes in life are the biggest stressors for most people, examples of major changes in life are: geographical mobility, transfer to a new school, marriage, pregnancy, new lifestyle, divorce, death of a loved one, exclusion from a job position.

### **The mechanism of occurrence of stress:**

The individual is exposed in his life to stresses in the environment in which he lives, after being exposed to the stressful event, an alarm occurs immediately after the individual realizes the threat that occurred to him, which makes him live in a state of stress that requires great effort and energy, here stress occurs, this condition intervenes the individual in non-adaptation. However, the individual may be able to adapt to the stressful situation by referring to previous experiences (Al-Rasheed, 1999, p. 21). However, if the period of exposure to stress is prolonged, this negatively affects the emergence of psychological and organic diseases in individuals as a result of the depletion of the organic system of its energy sources, pain emerges and sets the ground for diseases (Bourdaréne, 2005, p. 10).

To illustrate the mechanism of stress, we mention Selye's adaptation symptoms, as the symptoms of adaptation are a mechanism that activates in the face of any threatening event, this is to reduce physiological and psychological disorder and to achieve organic balance, and it is embodied in three stages:

#### **A- Warning Stage:**

You start to pay attention to the presence of a stressful event and this attention generates physiological changes, this stage is the stage of discomfort, so excitement occurs from outside the body and then the body turns to face the stressful event, he calls all his defensive forces to face the event he is exposed to. The reaction in such situations is to escape or confront.

#### **B- Resistance Stage:**

If the stressful event continues, the warning phase is followed by the resistance phase of the stressful event. The individual uses his or her resources to cope with or adapt to the event. If resistance succeeds, the body returns to its normal state, and if the stress of the individual continues for a long time, the resistance will continue and the body's energy to adapt will become exhausted and stressed, the means of resistance are weakened and generally unable to adapt, and the individual enters the second stage.

### **C- Burnout Stage:**

This stage appears unexpectedly, the energy has been exhausted, and the collapse occurs, continued defensive responses lead to adaptive diseases, such as: psychosomatic disorders and stress (Obaid, 2008, p. 129).

### **Views on the topic of stress:**

In the 20th century, three basic perspectives emerged with regard to the study of stress:

#### **1- Viewing stress as a response to a threat:**

Researchers on this topic link stress to survival for humans. Therefore, we find them pointing out that man has known stress since he was on earth; these stresses were seen as a reason for survival. Hans Seely defined stress as: The body's indefinite response to any demand imposed on it. In other words, Seeley viewed stress as arising from demands placed on the individual, whether these demands are of a physical or psychological nature that the individual faces in his life.

#### **2- Viewing stress as a threat in itself:**

The term stress is used here to refer generally to conditions that are often external as a source of stress, it leads to the individual feeling uncomfortable and stressed.

#### **3- Looking at stress as internal matters related to the individual:**

If stress is viewed as, internal matters related to the individual, represented by individual differences between individuals in relation to their responses to stress, depending on this point of view, researchers have focused on finding out what factors determine these differences or differences between individuals in relation to stress, among these factors, personal factors with their personality traits, methods of adaptation and personal possibilities such as intelligence, special skills, motivations and some personal variables that occur, in addition to the mood represented by social beliefs and previous or emerging events, which means social variables such as age, gender, race, economic and social status. Including genetic factors and biological factors (Al-Rasheed H. T., 1999, pp. 40-41).

We conclude from the above that stress is an internal effect of the individual resulting from the interaction between compressive forces and the components of personality; it may lead

to physical, psychological or behavioral disorders. Pushes him to deviate from normal functioning, or it stimulates it to improve performance.

### **Effects and consequences of life stress:**

The effects and consequences of stress on students vary, so that they can be divided into psychological and physical consequences, and to social behaviorism (Fayed, 2005, p. 210).

#### **1- Psychological effects:**

The most common of these effects are stress, anxiety, weakness, weakness or boredom, complaints of physical problems "delusion of illness", constant fatigue, and a sense of disappointment. With many types of defensive thinking and behavior, psychological consequences and responses to stress include behavioral, emotional and cognitive responses.

Behavioral outcomes depend on whether the stress is light, moderate, or severe and the emotional consequences include depression, it is the most common psychological effect as it is related to stress significantly, which may lead to the appearance of more dangerous effects of suicide, he described suicide as a failure to cope and respond to stress (Haidar, p. 85).

#### **2- Physical effects:**

Psychosomatic complaints that students complain about include: headache, asthma, allergic diseases, gastric ulcers... Etcetera. This is related to academic difficulties, family problems, lack of health facilities for students at university and in university residences, they are all stressors that affect a student's physical health (Bushra, 2004, p. 210).

Internal body systems are affected when trying to cope with these stresses, and some physical disorders. May be short-term such as: stomach upsets, others are chronic, such as: stomach ulcers, prolonged stress also leads to diseases of the heart, kidneys and blood vessels, or other parts of the body (Haidar, p. 86).

#### **3- Behavioral and social effects:**

Among them are crime, delinquency, failure in study Perhaps one of the most important effects of social behavioral stress among students is the use of alcohol and the use of drugs and psychoactive substances, the student may resort to this to escape the face of stress due to the severity of his suffering from it (Bushra, 2004, p. 211).

The following is a table summarizing the most important effects of life stress:

<b>Physiological consequences of increased stress</b>	<b>Cognitive effects to increase stress</b>	<b>Emotional effects of increased stress</b>	<b>General behavioral effects of increased stress</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased adrenaline in the blood, which leads to activation and increase of reflex, and if this stress continues for a long time, it may lead to the failure of those organs such as: circulatory disorder and heart disease.</li> <li>-Increased thyroid secretion, which leads to increased energy depletion, and if this stress lasts for a long time, there is stress, weight loss, and finally physical collapse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inability to concentrate.</li> <li>- Rapid responses are reduced, leading to wrong and hasty decisions.</li> <li>-The error rate increases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased tensions, reduced ability to relax, - increased sense of illness.</li> <li>-The occurrence of changes in personal qualities.</li> <li>-Growing personal problems.</li> <li>-Allergies and excessive anxiety.</li> <li>-The appearance of dissatisfaction and depression.</li> <li>- Low self-esteem.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increased speech and communication problems and stuttering.</li> <li>-Lack of interest, enthusiasm and giving up on life goals.</li> <li>-Energy level drops and declines from day to day, for no apparent reason.</li> <li>-Blame others.</li> <li>-The appearance of abnormal behaviors.</li> <li>-Solve problems in a superficial way.</li> </ul>

**Means of measuring stress:**

Human stress is measured using multiple tools and means, among these tools is the psychometrics used by psychometric specialists. Mattison and Avansvik (1987) noted that there are four basic types of stress scales:

### **1- Self-report scales:**

It involves asking individuals directly how they feel about factors associated with various stressful aspects of life, this method is summarized by presenting many life situations or incidents in front of the examinee, and be asked to determine the intensity of stress in the light of a scale graded in front of all situations, whether related to family, work or study, and other areas (depending on what is required to be measured), this scale is a simple way to get many responses (Askar, 2000, p. 52).

### **2-Chemical scales:**

This type of scales provides a report or assessment of the functions of biological systems in the body, and, of course, it focuses on the activity of the glandular system (Bushra, 2004, p. 107).

### **3- Psychophysiological scales:**

Scales the activity of a body system, it is a method that relies on technical devices to measure the reactions or responses of some members of the body when exposed to various stresss, like a pacemeter.

### **4- Performance scales:**

Scales the effects of stress on an individual's ability to perform the task at hand (such as scales problem-solving skills). In this way, the level of performance of a particular task at a time that is not commensurate with its size is compared to the performance of the same task itself in a normal situation, or scales the level of achievement and compare it with the standard levels, if available (Bushra, 2004, p. 107).

In general, these scales can be used together to scale stress in individuals, this is to overcome the weakness and deficiency in the use of only one method. In addition to the use of these metrics, there are other effects noted, it helps to know the level of stress that the individual

is experiencing, the fact that stress has effects that encompass different aspects of an individual's life.

### **Methods of coping with stress:**

Interest in studying the subject of methods of coping with stress began since the past four decades, Murphy's 1962 study is one of the first to use the term stress management, this is to refer to the methods used by the individual in dealing with threatening situations in order to control them (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p. 14).

Wolman believes that stress coping methods are a set of means that facilitate adaptation to the environment and its stressful attitudes in order to achieve one or some goals (Wolman & et- al, 1972, p. 79).

Hence, different methods or strategies can be used to cope with stress, including: 1- Positive strategies:

#### **1- Positive strategies:**

They are those employed by the individual in breaking into the crisis and overcoming its effects, through the following positive methods:

- Logical analysis of the stressful situation in order to understand it and prepare the mind for it and its ranks.
- Positive re-evaluation of the situation where the individual cognitively tries to clarify the situation and reconstruct it in a positive way while trying to accept reality as it is.
- Seek information related to the stressful situation and help from others or community institutions expected to be associated with the stressful situation.
- Use problem-solving to address the crisis directly.

#### **2- Negative strategies:**

They are those employed by the individual to avoid the crisis and refrain from thinking about it, through the following negative methods:

- Cognitive reluctance to avoid realistic and possible thinking in crisis.
- Accepting the surrender to the crisis and taming oneself to accept it.

- Search for alternative rewards or rewards, by engaging in alternative activities and trying to integrate into them in order to generate new sources of satisfaction and adaptation away from facing the crisis.
- Emotional venting and discharge by verbally expressing unpleasant negative emotions, and actually through direct individual efforts to reduce tension (Aldaribii, 2010, pp. 680-681).

### Conclusion:

Finally, we conclude that pressure is an insurmountable state, because every requirement of our lives needs energy and forms stress even during sleep. These stress often constitute an insurmountable stress, resulting in physical, psychological and even social effects, from this standpoint, it is necessary to stay away as much as possible from stressful events or self-activation and activate them to face these stress, regardless of their type or level of intensity. In addition, adopt the aforementioned strategies so that the individual can live with the various stress.

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