



## Managing Stress During Uncertain Times

By

**Randy Brazzel MA, LPC, LMFT**

These are stressful times. Many people have either lost their jobs or are fearful of losing their jobs in the future. The uncertainties of the day can undermine our sense of security and increase our feelings of stress. In fact, prolonged feelings of stress and uncertainty can lead to feelings of hopelessness, despair, and depression. As a result, it is important to keep in mind, the proven strategies that can help us manage the stressors of the day.

### Learn To Listen to Your Body

Our body is an amazing mechanism. When we feel stressed, our body tends to give us warning signs, such as fatigue or physical pain. When you don't pay attention to your body, the early warning signs of stress can evolve into major health issues. Learn to pay attention to your body and respond to what it needs.

### Learn to Relax

Not everyone relaxes the same way. Some relax by reading a good book, while others relax by playing basketball. Whether you relax by being active or by having "down time," make sure that you actively include it within your life.

### Exercise

Physical activities are a great way to discharge stress. Sustained exercise can release endorphins within the brain, which improves the overall feeling of well-being and improves the ability to focus and concentrate.

### Talk Out Your Worries

Words are by far the best tool we have to deal with emotions. The more we are able to talk through our worries the more we are able to put them into proper perspective.

### Learn To Accept What You Cannot Change

If you want to make yourself crazy, try to change everything and everyone around you. The

more we try to change the things we have no control over, the more overwhelmed we tend to feel. Learn to accept what you cannot change and put your energy and thoughts where you can make a difference.

### Avoid Self-Medication and Maintain Good Nutrition

Drugs, alcohol, and overeating only masks stress. Poor nutrition and overconsumption of alcohol can increase fatigue and feelings of depression. Learn to listen to your body rather than numbing it out.

### Balance Work and Play

Don't take everything so seriously. Remember, play rejuvenates us. Let yourself try new things and learn to laugh again.

### Stop "Awfulizing"

Don't be the a terminal pessimist. Remember, we often find what we are looking for. Look for the positive in situations and for the opportunities around you and you just might find it.

### New Dimensions Can Help If You or Someone You Know Is:

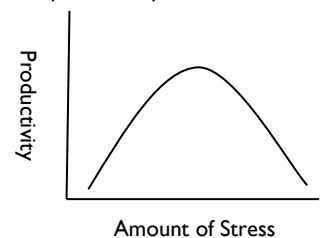
- Depressed or Suicidal
- Stuck and having difficulty making changes
- Dealing with trauma
- Struggling with Panic Attacks
- Having difficulty working or going to school
- Struggling with addictions or substance abuse
- Cutting or doing other self-destructive behaviors
- Struggling with anger issues
- Struggling to get medications stabilized

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### Some Stress Can Actually Improve Productivity

Some stress may actually be necessary to keep us productive. Research studies tend to confirm that our productivity actually rises with some stress. The figure below demonstrates this relationship between productivity and stress. Without challenges, our productivity tends to drop. Too many challenges, however, can overwhelm us and undermine our productivity.



## Understanding the Nature of Stress on the Body

Whenever the body perceives a threatening situation or experiences stress, it moves into a fight or flight state. During this time, the body prepares for action. The eyes become more focused and the adrenaline begins to flow. The blood vessels constrict and the heart rate increases. The body prepares us to survive the danger by getting us ready to either fight the danger or to run from it. In some instances, we might freeze or revert to old behaviors that

were learned as a result of past traumatic experiences.

Fortunately, for most of us in today's world, life and death situations are a rare experience. As a result, the need to be in the fight or flight stage is also rare. In those instances where there is real danger we are generally able to resolve the crisis quickly and then return to a normal state of relaxation.

However, because the body often perceives stress as a warn-

ing sign that danger is near, we tend to respond to life stressors with the same physiological response that occurs when our life is threatened. As a result, learning to relax the body is an important strategy in managing stress. If we do not learn to return the body to its natural state of rest and relaxation, significant physical and emotional problems can occur. To prevent burnout, learn to manage stress by relaxing the body.

**Clear Lake Location:**  
1345 Space Park Dr., Ste. C  
Houston, TX 77058

**The Woodlands Location:**  
25511 Budde Rd., Ste. 2401  
The Woodlands, TX 77380

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## Physiological Symptoms Associated With Stress

1. Rapid Heart Beat
2. Hypertension
3. Headaches
4. Digestive Disorders
5. Backaches
6. Fatigue
7. Insomnia or hypersomnia
8. Poor concentration
9. Rashes
10. Loss of appetite
11. Binge eating
12. Increase in irritability
13. Fainting spells
14. Dizziness
15. Trembling or nervous tics
16. Stuttering
17. Grinding of Teeth
18. Sweating
19. Muscle Aches
20. Increase in infections and illnesses
21. Difficulty in overcoming illnesses

## The 4 “D’s” of Managing Time and Stress At Work

In today’s world of doing more with less, stress is often a part of the job. In order to manage stress effectively, it is useful to keep in mind four strategies that can help you manage the demands at work.

### **Depend on Others**

An important strategy to manage time and stress at work is to depend on others. Sometimes people are reluctant to depend on others because they can do it better and faster alone. While this may be true, it can also lead to feelings of being overwhelmed and resentful. Eventually, this could lead to burnout. If you find yourself saying “I’m the only one around here that gets anything done,” and then dreading going to work,

then maybe it’s time to share the work load and depend on others for help.

### **Delegate the Work**

Whenever you are in a supervisory position, it is important to be able to delegate some of the work load. A fair and adequate distribution of the work load can keep burnout from setting in.

### **Delay the Work**

For many of us, there is more work than we can get done in any given day. As a result, something will always be unfinished at the end of the work day. This can be frustrating and overwhelming if we do not manage

the demands successfully. A useful question to ask is “What is it that I can not do?” This question can help us put our energy into those tasks that add the greatest value.

### **Just Do It**

If you find that you can’t depend on others for help, you can’t delegate the work, and can’t delay the work, then the best strategy is simply to do the work. Don’t spend a lot of time and energy worrying about tasks that have to be completed. The worry only increases the feelings of stress. Immerse yourself in the tasks at hand and use the natural physiological responses of stress to help you complete the tasks rather than worrying about the tasks.



### **Schedule Stressful Tasks During Peak Energy Times**

To decrease stress and increase your productivity, take on tasks that are difficult and stressful during your peak energy times. While it might feel natural to put off the stressful tasks until the end of the day, you will find that by resolving difficult issues first, you will experience less stress and be more productive.