

# What is Stress?

Perhaps the first thing to say is that, unlike pressure, stress is *never good for you* and *never a positive thing*. Stress creates unhealthy biological reactions, and prolonged stress can lead to both physical and mental health breakdown.

Stress in itself is not an illness. It is a response/reaction to excessive or prolonged pressure/challenges and this can cause mental and/or physical ill health.

## **Law relating to Stress which employers must comply with**

There are currently no laws; however, there are Acts and Regulations with which you must comply. For example:

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 says that organisations with more than 5 people are required to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities and under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 organisations are required to take measures to control that risk.

## **Mark O. Mathews' Top Five Stress Busting Tips:**

### **1. Learn to manage your time more effectively**

We waste a lot of time doing unimportant tasks, especially when stressed, so prioritise your day and do the important jobs first. The unimportant ones can wait, and often they will disappear completely leaving you time to do other things. Also, don't put off the unpleasant tasks – avoidance causes a great deal of stress. Give unpleasant tasks a high priority and do them first.

### **2. Adopt a healthy lifestyle**

If we eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly and ensure we get adequate sleep & rest our body is better able to cope with stress should it occur.

### **3. Find out what causes you stress**

Take time to discover what is worrying you and try to change your thoughts & behaviour to reduce it. A stress assessment can help you to fully understand the causes, implications to your health & how to manage, cope & make those necessary changes.

### **4. Take time out to relax and recharge your batteries**

Alongside holidays, with at least one break of 10-14 continuous days recommended, you will perform more effectively during work after even a short 10/15minute break, easily making up the time you used relaxing.

### **5. Find time to meet friends**

Friends can ease work troubles & help us see things in a different way. The activities we engage in with friends help us relax and we will often have a good laugh. It boosts the immune system that is often depleted during stress. If you do become stressed, engage in some form of physical activity. It works off the biochemical and physical changes that occur within your body due to stress. Relaxation also helps your body return to its normal healthy state. Good relaxation techniques include breathing exercises, massage and a variety of complimentary therapies.

## **Signs of stress:**

These are some of the symptoms that are indicators of too much pressure

### **Psychological signs**

- Inability to concentrate or make simple decisions
- Memory lapses
- Becoming rather vague
- Easily distracted
- Less intuitive & creative
- Worrying
- Negative thinking
- Depression & anxiety

### **Emotional signs**

- Tearful
- Irritable
- Mood swings

- Extra sensitive to criticism
- Defensive
- Feeling out of control
- Lack of motivation
- Angry
- Frustrated
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of self-esteem

### Physical signs

- Aches/pains & muscle tension/grinding teeth
- Frequent colds/infections
- Allergies/rashes/skin irritations
- Constipation/diarrhoea/ IBS
- Weight loss or gain
- Indigestion/heartburn/ulcers
- Hyperventilating/lump in the throat/pins & needles
- Dizziness/palpitations
- Panic attacks/nausea
- Physical tiredness
- Menstrual changes/loss of libido/sexual problems
- Heart problems/high blood pressure

### Behavioural signs

- No time for relaxation or pleasurable activities
- Prone to accidents, forgetfulness
- Increased reliance on alcohol, smoking, caffeine, recreational or illegal drugs
- Becoming a workaholic
- Poor time management and/or poor standards of work
- Absenteeism
- Self neglect/change in appearance
- Social withdrawal
- Relationship problems
- Insomnia or waking tired
- Reckless
- Aggressive/anger outbursts
- Nervous
- Uncharacteristically lying

### MARK MATHEWS BSc (Hons), DO, MRO



Mark graduated in Ecology from Edinburgh University in 1969 and was subsequently responsible for managing the set-up of the National Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales.

Mark qualified as an Osteopath in 1979 and then completed his first course in Applied Kinesiology in 1984. Mark continues to study with the world's most knowledgeable teachers of Applied Kinesiology and has himself published widely on the subject. He has also trained in Neuro-Linguistic Programming over many years and graduated from the Robbins Research International Mastery University.

In 1988, Mark established **The Rêve Pavilion Natural Health Clinic** ([www.revepavilion.net](http://www.revepavilion.net)), providing an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach to the treatment of all kinds of health problems. **You can contact The Rêve Pavilion on 01483 579500.**

Being dyslexic himself, Mark has always had a special interest in helping children with learning difficulties. In 1995, he set up the **Sunflower Trust**. This is a registered charity with a key aim of making available the Sunflower Programme, a pioneering method developed by Mark at The Rêve Pavilion, to help treat children with learning difficulties. You can find out more about the Sunflower Trust by visiting [www.sunflowertrust.com](http://www.sunflowertrust.com).