



STRESS MANAGEMENT



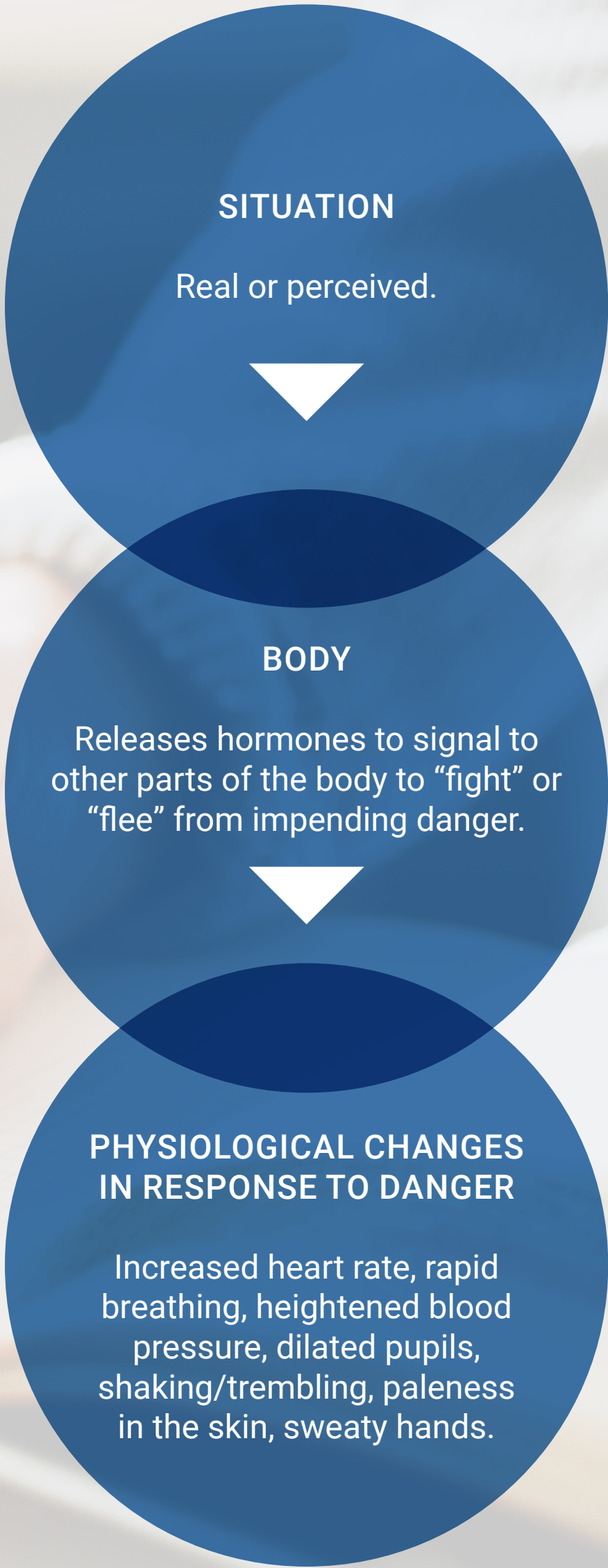
Stress is a normal part of our everyday lives – but what does it mean and how can I navigate through it?

What should I know about stress?

Stress is our body’s physical and mental response to changes in the environment or to an event. These changes can be perceived as good (eustress) or bad (distress). Stress can be triggered by any threatening situation - real or perceived. It can be short-term (i.e., lasting for a short period of time and dissipating on its own or with a certain level of self-care efforts), or long-term (i.e., causing prolonged and chronic distress that may negatively impact overall functioning and well-being).

How is stress triggered?

Our body’s “alarm system” responds to stress by activating and releasing hormones to stimulate other parts of the body to prepare us to deal with stressors. This physiological stimulation causes symptoms such as increased heart rate, rapid breathing, heightened blood pressure, dilated pupils, shaking and trembling, paleness in the skin and sweaty hands.



What are the symptoms of stress?

Stress can impact the entirety of our well-being and functioning. These facets include our cognitive, emotional, physiological and behavioural well-being:

COGNITIVE

- ✓ Difficulty concentrating
- ✓ Difficulty making decisions
- ✓ Memory problems
- ✓ Lack of self-confidence
- ✓ Constant worrying
- ✓ Thoughts of impending doom
- ✓ Speeding/slowing down of thoughts

EMOTIONAL

- ✓ Moodiness
- ✓ Irritability or agitation
- ✓ Low morale
- ✓ Loneliness
- ✓ Hopelessness/helplessness
- ✓ Feeling of apprehension
- ✓ Anxiousness or nervousness
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Unhappiness
- ✓ Unable to relax
- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Fear
- ✓ Anger

PHYSIOLOGICAL

- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Muscle tension or other forms of physical pain/discomfort
- ✓ Stomach problems or nausea
- ✓ Diarrhea or vomiting
- ✓ Loss of sexual drive
- ✓ Rapid heart rate or palpitations
- ✓ High blood pressure
- ✓ Difficulty sleeping (insomnia/hypersomnia)
- ✓ Fatigue

BEHAVIOURAL

- ✓ Changes in eating or sleeping
- ✓ Social withdrawal
- ✓ Nervous habits (e.g., biting nails, grinding teeth)
- ✓ Increased use of caffeine, cigarettes or other drugs
- ✓ Neglecting family or work responsibilities
- ✓ Decline in performance/productivity
- ✓ Reduced attention

What can I do to manage my stress?

Different strategies and self-care tips work for different people. It is important to develop and recognize that some strategies may work better than others, depending on the situation.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES: Deep-breathing (meditative) exercises can be a great way to manage your stress. Such exercises work by creating a state of relaxation for your mind and body.

PRACTICING POSITIVE THINKING: It is a common practice to engage in negative thinking during times of stress. Accept that you cannot control everything. Viewing the problem in a more positive light can help reframe your perspective. Try challenging your negative thoughts by replacing them with more positive ones.

SELF-CARE: Schedule time for self-care. Ensure that you are prioritizing sleep and nutrition, as these play a vital role in improving mental and physical well-being. Physical exercise is a great way to practice self-care. This does not necessarily need to be a strenuous or demanding activity, but rather a more enjoyable one. Try creating sleep routines, healthy eating habits and a more physical lifestyle to combat stress.

JOURNALING: Stress impacts everyone differently. Journaling is a great way to understand and keep track of how, as well as when, stress impacts you. Consequently, through journaling, you can prepare yourself to be more equipped to handle such stressors.

SCHEDULING: Once you understand what your stressors are, it can be helpful to create a schedule to plan for deadlines, events and responsibilities to prepare yourself for reduced stress and greater success.

COMING TO TERMS WITH YOUR STRESS: Stress is an inevitable part of our lives, but it is important to try and reframe the problem to look at the bigger picture. Ask yourself how important this will be in the long run. Setting more realistic goals and standards, as well as respecting our limits, supports us in better managing our stress.

MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF: Set aside some leisure time every day for activities that you enjoy. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge.