

4 SIGNS STRESS IS NEGATIVELY AFFECTING YOUR WELL-BEING

Stress is a normal part of everyday life. Our minds and bodies go through a great deal of it just to execute daily tasks, but this kind of stress doesn't usually negatively impact our mental or physical health.

There are different kinds of stress, some good, some bad. In fact, there are at least three different types: eustress, acute and chronic:

1. Eustress is our body's response to excitement and euphoria. It's normally referred to as "good stress." Think of your first kiss or getting invited to have dinner with the president.
2. Acute stress is our body's response to an immediate trigger (positive or negative) and subsides after we address it. Think of walking through a dark alley and hearing fast-paced footsteps behind you.
3. Finally, chronic stress is constant and intense, which makes us feel trapped and overwhelmed. Think of a strained marriage or workplace bullying.

Being able to identify the symptoms of negative stress is critical to your overall well-being. Have you ever experienced the following scenarios?

1. Your stress does not subside.

If you're constantly feeling stressed over long periods,

that's a red flag. While stress is a natural part of our lives and some types are unavoidable (acute, for example), if you're consistently bombarded by feelings of doom, overwhelm and anxiety, your health could be in serious jeopardy.

Tips: Take a break from your normal routine. Prioritize self-care and talk to someone about what you are experiencing. Some simple shifts are probably in order and can help to manage your sensory overload.

2. Stress is negatively affecting your livelihood and relationships.

When stress becomes toxic, it can affect your ability to effectively function at work or in your relationships. Because it impacts your work ethic and your interaction with others, you'll likely get some unsolicited feedback based on your behavior.

Tips: Watch for signs of decreased or poor performance, and notice if you seem negative or irritable when dealing with others—don't be defensive if you receive feedback (because you probably will). Increase self-awareness by paying closer attention to triggers during your interpersonal interactions and notice any impact on your verbal and non-verbal communication. Finally, take a moment to view your behavior objectively and be open to positive ways that can help you address it.

3. You're not sleeping well.

Sleep is an important part of overall mental health. If you're not getting enough, your body is probably not producing enough neurochemicals (progesterone, estrogen, serotonin and melatonin, for example) to get you into a healthy sleep zone. This means that your sleep cycles are irregular—you're likely waking up throughout the night and feeling unusually tired when awake. Without restorative sleep, you're not prepared to effectively engage the day.

Tips: Create a wind-down routine that helps your mind and body unplug from the outside world. This may include a hot bath or shower, getting into bed earlier, and turning off your cell phone, electronics and other menacing distractions.

4. You've stopped engaging in self-care.

When you're feeling overwhelmed, it can be easy to ignore the daily routines that help you feel good about yourself. This may include hitting the gym, preparing a healthy lunch, getting up early or even engaging in standard hygiene practices. If you discover that these routines have been placed on the back burner because of stress, acknowledge and address it immediately before their absence begins to reverberate into other areas of your life.

Tips: Get yourself back on track, one routine at a time.

Since you're already overwhelmed, trying to reincorporate all the bells and whistles of your daily routine would end in disaster. Start with the easiest one and build from there, and then reward yourself for reincorporating each one. You'll feel better immediately, and you'll also be well on your way to increasing your overall health and wellness.

Hopefully you're not feeling negative stress. But if it is, don't be discouraged. Use these tips to help you identify and navigate the symptoms so that you can position yourself for greater success.

As the founder and CEO of WordSmithRapport™, Karima Mariama-Arthur brings more than two decades of comprehensive, blue chip experience in law, business, and academia to the field of professional development. A leading authority in cutting-edge adult education, Karima is distinguished by her commitment to excellence and extraordinary talent for elevating executive brands. As an expert facilitator, executive communications consultant, and strategic leadership advisor, she trains, coaches, and consults individuals and organizations on the dynamics of complex communication and high performance leadership competence.