



Stress Mapper ^{Shadowmatch®}

TAKE CONTROL

UNDERSTANDING STRESS

NOT AT ALL COMPLEX

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1. An introduction to the mechanics of frustrations and stress

The topic of stress is currently one of the burning challenges in well-being, fulfillment, and general health. Slowly, scientists are moving to a point where psychological realities and physical conditions are seen as interconnected functions of holistic well-being. It is like the colors of the same piece of artwork. Think of an individual's life as artwork painted on a canvas, the colors being the composition of the picture. If the individual is the canvas, the well-being, happiness, and general health are the picture painted with many colors that are overlaid, mixed, and merged as a single life reality. It's like the picture of the individual's portrait of their life. The picture is painted with (amongst many others) emotional colors, psychological colors, physical colors, relationship colors, and so on. The point is that these colors can't be separated; they merge to form an integrated picture. When life (as the reality of our environment) starts painting the picture of our lives, the brush of life paints with stacking frustrations and stress, moments of happiness, successes, failures, good times, and hard times. The entire picture is reformed, reshaped, influenced, and changed as we live our lives. With this analogy in mind, it is important to note that stress is a psychological state with a physical space where it originates in the neurons of the brain. These neuron patterns of stress are in reaction to whatever frustrations, discomfort, or sometimes even chemical imbalances in the individual's biological system determine how the thought patterns in the brain function. Even this can't be seen in isolation.

It is important to know that the brain is the physical center of who we are and what we are. Scientifically speaking, the brain is where it all happens. In this paper, it is not necessary to entertain the argument that people are more than just a biomechanical machine that thinks and acts. This perspective is not challenged by the statement that it all happens physically in the brain. The problem is that we are not yet scientifically in a strong enough position to understand the spiritual completeness of our existence to make scientifically sound statements about our spirituality. We are still struggling to understand the physical workings of the brain, and we do not downplay the spiritual side of our existence. We know that stress compromises the optimal functioning of the brain and, in doing so, compromises everything we do. But even this statement doesn't stand without problems. In a healthy environment, stress can bring out the best in people. Some people function optimally when there is a certain level of stress in their lives. But that is also not so simple to explain. Sports professionals could play their game at their very best when they are in a very stressful situation trying to win a match against a strong competitor; however, the same sports professional might collapse when one of their serious and important relationships collapses.

For the purpose of this paper, the most simple, obvious, and unquestionable facts of stress will be presented. The first question to answer is: what is stress? According to the World Health Organization: *'Stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being.'* (<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/stress>).



2. The Shadowmatch team defines stress as an experience of discomfort when an individual is outpowered by the challenges they face.

Health experts agree that chronic stress can profoundly impact our overall well-being. Despite all the details, the impact of stress seems to be mainly visible in three areas of our lives: health, productivity, and relationships.

3. Language Clarification

Many people use the word stress as a generic term for frustrations, being agitated, fed up, irritated, or just tired. In this report, stress is used to describe a situation where the individual is convinced that the challenges they face are beyond their inner strength to deal with in a winning manner. It is an experience of losing the battle against the build-up of frustrations, being fed up, and all the other words mentioned above. Stress manifests with symptoms like sleeplessness, headaches, anxiety attacks, and many more. Frustrations and being fed up don't influence our everyday functional capabilities. If it does, it becomes stress. On a lighter note, there is a saying that stress kills the stressed individual, whilst frustration brings the individual to kill the frustrator.

4. The Primary Challenge

"I'm OK." This is the biggest stumbling block holding people back. It is not to say that they are not OK. The question is: can you be more OK? There is no reason not to believe someone who says, "I'm OK." The question is whether the individual has imaginative space for a better life. Does the individual see the possibility of a more fulfilling, more energetic, and more successful life? The problem is the way habits are formed. We learn habits very quickly and very easily, especially if we do not actively plan the learning process. People have learned the habit of being OK with unhappiness, and that state then becomes their accepted state of happiness. They learn the habit of living with stress, and that state then becomes their normal state. If someone says, "I'm OK," there is the risk that they are really OK because they live in the habitual state of their OK. The question is the problem, and we need to change that. The new question should be any of the following:

- Can you imagine a life that is better than your current one?
- Do you think your life is a true picture of the best you possible?
- Do you think there is room for you to be more in terms of success, happiness and fulfillment?
- Have you ever thought of the possibility that your life could actually be better?

The aim of these new questions is to help someone decide to build a better life. We must stop telling people that they are not OK. It is humiliating and not necessary. What we must do is invite people to envisage the possibility of a better life and then invite them to a process of building that possibility. The process of building that better life is the key. The process itself is a better life.



5. Stress and Physical Health

All studies indicate a high correlation between physical health and stress. Successful stress management is therefore seen as not only a mental health issue but also a physical health issue. The following are general conditions resulting from stress:

- Anxiety and depression: Stress can contribute to the development of anxiety disorders and depression.
- Digestive issues: Stress can cause stomach problems, irritable bowel syndrome, acid reflux, and vague stomach pain.
- Weakened immune system: Chronic stress can suppress the immune system, making us more vulnerable to illnesses. This is one of the more serious side effects of stress. Once the immune system is compromised, the health of the individual breaks at the weakest link.
- Sleep disturbances: Stress can lead to insomnia, sleep deprivation, and fatigue.
- Cardiovascular disease: Chronic stress can increase the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke.

6. Productivity

People at work who experience high levels of stress are not nearly as productive as those with low and especially positive levels of stress. These are some of the workplace-related side effects of stress:

- Decreased focus: Stress can impair concentration, leading to mistakes and missed deadlines.
- Reduced creativity: Stress can stifle innovation and problem-solving skills.
- Poor time management: Stress can lead to procrastination and poor prioritization.
- Burnout: Chronic stress can cause physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion.
- Absenteeism: Stress can lead to increased absenteeism and turnover.
- Slow work pace and low efficiency with loss of accuracy and attention to detail.

7. Relationships

All relationships can become problematic as a result of stress. In some instances, important relationships can come to an end, not because the relationship doesn't work but because stress compromises one or more individuals in the relationship, making them unable to manage the relationship content successfully.

- Communication breakdown: Stress can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and strained relationships.



- Emotional withdrawal: Stress can cause individuals to become distant, detached, or isolated.
- Irritability: Stress can lead to mood swings, short tempers, and emotional reactivity.
- Lack of empathy: Stress can reduce our ability to understand and support others.
- Conflict escalation: Stress can intensify conflicts, making resolution more challenging.

8. Coping with Stress

Here is the normal structure of advice. These high-level stress management and coping instructions/advice sound very good on paper. The fact is that very few (maybe 5%) individuals can take this advice and make it work. Here is the list of normal advice:

- Exercise: Regular physical activity reduces stress and anxiety.
- Mindfulness: Practices like meditation, yoga, and deep breathing calm the mind.
- Social support: Connecting with friends, family, or a therapist provides emotional support.
- Time management: Prioritizing tasks, setting boundaries, and taking breaks reduces stress.
- Self-care: Engaging in activities that bring joy and relaxation, like hobbies or reading, helps mitigate stress.

The Shadowmatch principle for any difficult situation is very easy to understand and execute. Herewith the Shadowmatch approach:

- Don't live in the problem. Get out and move on. Don't talk about it because it accentuates the negative content. Remove every aspect of it from your life, if possible.
- Talking doesn't work. Act and take control. It is easier than most people envisage. In short, do something.
- Your actions must be small and easy to do. But you must repeat them every day, and you must keep doing them relentlessly. The principle is well-known: small actions of success that repeat deliver massive results.
- The best way to take control is to sign up with a Shadowmatch Coach. Taking control with someone who guides you is much easier than doing it alone. Coaching is for individuals who want to improve their success and quality of life.
- If the symptoms of stress result in an inability to continue with a normal day, the individual must see a general medical practitioner. A normal day is a day of taking action to do all the things the individual has to do to live a meaningful life: getting up in the morning, doing the early morning stuff, getting on with all the activities and work responsibilities of the day, and going to bed with a sense of achievement.



9. Critical Symptoms of Stress

1. Headaches or migraines
2. Fatigue or exhaustion
3. Muscle tension or pain (e.g., neck, back, or shoulders)
4. Sleep disturbances (insomnia or oversleeping)
5. Digestive issues (e.g., irritable bowel syndrome, nausea, or stomach cramps)
6. Rapid heartbeat or palpitations
7. Sweating or tremors
8. Weight changes (gain or loss)
9. Anxiety or feeling overwhelmed
10. Irritability or mood swings
11. Restlessness or agitation
12. Feeling hopeless or helpless
13. Loss of interest in activities or hobbies
14. Increased emotional reactivity (e.g., tearfulness or anger)
15. Procrastination or avoidance
16. Increased use of substances (e.g., alcohol, tobacco, or caffeine)
17. Changes in appetite or eating habits
18. Social withdrawal or isolation
19. Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
20. Increased absenteeism or tardiness
21. Memory lapses or forgetfulness
22. Difficulty with problem-solving or thinking clearly
23. Rumination: to be stuck repeatedly thinking about the same thought, worry, or problem and cannot seem to let it go
24. Negative self-talk or self-doubt
25. Fear or worry about the future
26. Not wanting to travel to places
27. Irritated with loved ones
28. Drinking 'feel better' or 'be better' medication
29. Drinking alcohol more than once a week to the point of feeling better/happier
30. Nail-biting and over-scratching of own skin
31. A strong drive to just leave. A job, studies, living space, close relationships, etc.



10. Stressmapper

Stress is the result of a pattern of frustrations that accumulate. Why did the Shadowmatch Team research and develop Stressmapper? These are the reasons:

- Our research indicates that most people don't want to talk about their frustrations. It is private and personal. This must be respected.
- As stated above, talking about frustrations is not a solution. We must do something about it.
- A discussion can easily pollute the content of our frustrations. Asking and answering questions from a perspective of selective understanding makes it difficult to be clear on the frustrations we experience.
- Reading through the questions and possible answers presented by Stressmapper gives the individual time to think and decide undisturbed and uninterrupted. The process of answering the questions is the first act of taking control.
- Once the individual has a visual picture of their frustrations and the report with recommendations, the process of taking control is already in action mode.
- It is a practical and self-managed process. Stressmapper has nothing to do with any psychological model or construct that plots stress as a complex theoretical philosophy. It is just a clever computer system that helps an individual put their frustrations into specific buckets that are visually easy to read and provides a report that explains everything in easy-to-understand language.
- Knowing where you stand is critical. If the symptoms of stress result in an inability to continue with a normal day, the individual must see a general medical practitioner. A normal day is a day of taking action to do all the things the individual has to do to live a meaningful life, getting up in the morning, doing the early morning stuff, getting on with all the activities and work responsibilities of the day, and going to bed in the evening with a sense of achievement. Stressmapper provides every person who takes the time to do it a very reliable framework of how intense their frustrations and stress manifest in their lives.
- Shadowmatch has many well-trained coaches to assist any person who wants to live a better, more fulfilling, and productive life. Stressmapper is one of the many tools we have developed to do this. To contact a Shadowmatch Coach, go to www.shadowmatchcoaches.com

This is the future way of doing things. Do it and take control.

Go to www.stressmapper.com



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