

LESSON 23

The Human Costs of Stress



THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION had (pre-COVID) deemed stress as the “#1 health epidemic of the 21st Century.” Stress is pervasive and ubiquitous. It affects us all. In fact, stress (or, more appropriately, “distress” but referred to herein as just “stress”) is estimated to cost the U.S. economy between \$200-\$300 billion per year. These economic costs due to stress are further appreciated by the following facts:

Economic Costs of Stress

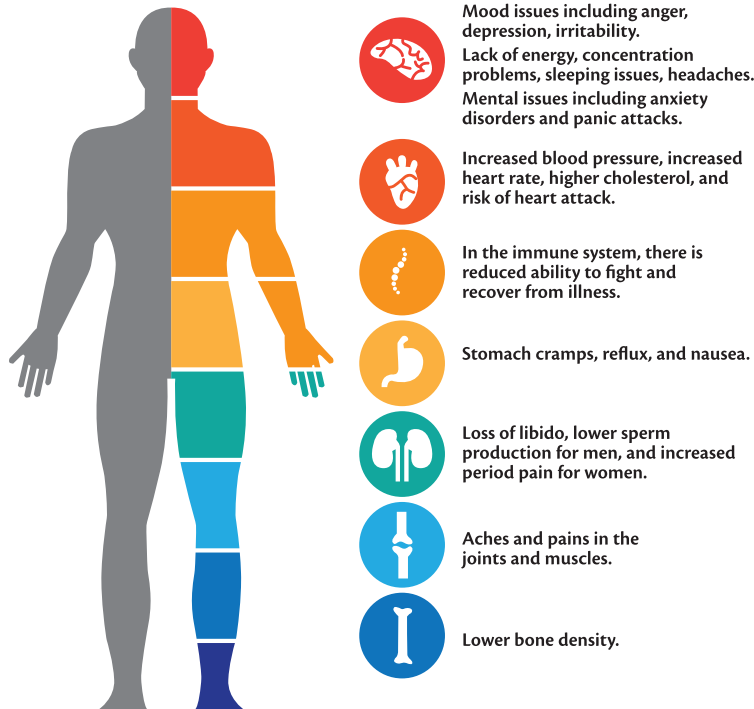
- For every 10 employees on any given day, estimates are that one is absent and three are present but less productive because of stress (40% of the workforce)
- **75-90% of physician visits are stress-related**
- 60-80% of workplace accidents are related to stress
- 60% of employees report **diminished productivity** from stress
- **Healthcare costs are 46% higher** than less-stressed employees (OSHA)

The Personal Costs of Stress

The personal cost of stress may be even more important, as stress leads to unhealthy behavior according to the American Psychological Association.

- 30% are less likely to eat healthy
- 25% are less likely to exercise
- 200% are less likely to succeed in a weight-loss program
- Stressed people get **half as much sleep** as low-stressed individuals
- Stress is the **#1 migraine trigger** associated with >80% of migraines
- Stressed individuals are at risk of a **multitude of chronic diseases**, as stress has been implicated in:
 - Immune system disorders, including autoimmune diseases and reduced ability to fight off and recover from illnesses
 - Cardiovascular diseases
 - Stroke
 - Alzheimer's Disease
 - Some cancers
 - Depression and Anxiety Disorders

The Effects of Stress on the Body



■ Most body systems are affected by stress including:

- **Mood issues** including anger, irritability, and depression
- Lack of energy and concentration, insomnia, **headaches**
- High blood pressure, increased heart rate, higher cholesterol levels, increased heart attack risk
- Loss of libido and **increased menstrual irregularities** and pain, infertility
- Aches and pains in joints and muscles
- **Poor physical appearance**
- **Inability to perform competently** or optimally, whether as a parent, pro athlete, or breadwinner

■ Stress tends to affect **women more than men**

- Stress severely affects college students, with 86% feeling overwhelmed, with > 20% experiencing suicidal ideation, and 1.4% attempting suicide

The **causes of stress/distress** are numerous, and it has been demonstrated that the presence of one stressor will accentuate the stress caused by a separate event or situation. There is in essence a stress multiplier effect.

Most Common Causes of Stress

- Money—71%
- Work—69%
- Family—55%

■ Relationships—51%

- Media overload of TV, texts, emails, 24/7 internet access, social networks (Facebook, etc.)—most people
- Political climate in US presently—80%-95%

The Bottom Line

Everyone is stressed. *Most people have three or more of these issue.* Hence, we all have a need for stress reduction strategies.

The *MyRelaxer Method* (Lessons + *MyRelaxers*) is a viable strategy to combat the effects of stress. Simply, the Be Better and Feel Better Lessons provide education, strategies, and practical tips for dealing with stress. The *MyRelaxers* provide needed relaxation breaks during the day and during stressful times.



JOY'S PEARL

The human costs of stress are staggering. I'm glad we are on the path to controlling the stress in our lives with the *MyRelaxer Method*.