

How Does Stress Affect Mental Health and Well-Being

Stress affects everyone. We all understand what it is to feel stressed – that feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope. It affects people differently and some are more affected than others.

Have you ever considered that stress may be harming your well-being?

Being under pressure is (unfortunately) a part of modern life. Physiologically, a little stress can be good for us. It motivates us to manage high-pressure situations, such as speaking in public.

However, when stress becomes unmanageable, it starts to affect your daily life and other problems can begin to arise.

In this article we will be looking at how stress affects mental health.

What Is Stress?

Many things can make a person feel stressed. Whether that is buying a new house, going for a job interview or being pushed in a queue. Stress is caused by something unexpected, threatening or an experience which is out of your control.



Stress is our body's response to pressure from these experiences. The 'fight or flight' response is triggered, producing stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. These increase your heart rate and you breathe faster so more oxygen can get to your muscles. This is your body getting ready to deal with a possible threat.

Low levels of stress can actually be beneficial to you. It can help you feel energised and act in high-pressure situations. The feeling of being pressured can help push us through nerve-wracking situations.

However, if stress becomes long-term (also known as chronic), it can cause serious problems. When the stress response is activated repeatedly, your body will be in a constant state of 'fight or flight' and may struggle to return to its normal state. This can lead to feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to cope.

How Does Stress Affect Mental Health?

Chronic stress can increase the risk of developing depression and anxiety. Research has shown that when stress occurs, neurotransmitters (chemicals which send signals between nerve cells) are released.

From this, stress hormones are released, which affect areas of the brain for regulating emotions. Repetition of this process affects how well these systems can cope.

Being unable to cope with the feeling of overwhelm may cause mental health problems or make existing problems worse. You may find that coping with your day-to-day symptoms of a mental health problem is exacerbated by stress, which only adds more stress!

Some emotional and behavioural symptoms of stress overlap with symptoms of depression and anxiety. So, it can be difficult to distinguish between the two and know which came first.



Mental and Emotional Effects of Stress

Everyone reacts to stress differently and it affects us in different ways. Here are some of the mental and emotional effects caused by stress:

- feeling overwhelmed
- being irritable or easily angered
- lacking self-esteem
- feeling constantly worried or scared
- finding it difficult to concentrate
- feeling more sensitive and emotional
- lacking an appetite
- experiencing mood swings
- avoiding certain people or situations

Please note that these effects may be caused by mental health problems rather than stress.

Identifying Stress

Acknowledging that stress may be a contributing factor can help you to improve your mental well-being. Think about what is triggering you to feel stressed and begin to manage it better.



It is common for people to feel reluctant to ask for help when it comes to stress as it is a common problem. But if stress is affecting your daily life and your mental health, it is important that you do something to act.

Osteopathy has many non-intrusive and natural techniques to help relieve stress. We will help you to identify whether stress is a contributing factor to your problem and work towards helping you feel better.

At Osteopathy For All, we offer consultations and continue to support our clients and the wider community with osteopathic services.

Visit our appointments page, call us on 01825 840582 or email hello@osteopathyforall.co.uk to speak to one of our team.

If you are seeking urgent mental health support, there are support channels available to help you. See www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/urgent-support for urgent support.