



**Michael Dawson MA, LPC**  
1001 Cross Timbers Rd. #2350 Flower Mound Tx. 75028  
9741 Preston Rd. #208 Frisco Tx. 75034  
972.310.4484

---

## Understanding.....Stress

Conflict. Demands. Fear. Assumptions. Expectations. Time pressures. Pain. Rejection. These are only a few of the components linked to our stress. It seems like everyone has stress, and when it gets out of balance it becomes anxiety, depression, a physical breakdown, a lack of productivity and a loss of enjoyment in life. When our life's events and circumstances tax us beyond what we are readily able to cope with, *stress* is the result. "Psychological stress is defined as the mismatch between an individual's coping skills and the demands of the environment."<sup>1</sup>

### **The Body and Stress**

Stress can be physical, chemical, or even an emotional influence that causes bodily or mental tension and anxious feelings. It certainly causes a sense of conflict and a buildup of physical and mental strain. Our bodies actually have a survival mechanism called a *stress response* or *startle response* controlled by part of our brain which introduces chemicals to prepare us for action, especially in threatening circumstances. Many of the body's systems are impacted: digestive, cardiovascular, respiratory, muscular and immunological. Our minds also go to work in order to help us cope with all types of issues including loss, conflict, failure, rejection, abuse and even our human limitations. So you can see our bodies are well suited and adapted for handling stress.

Most would agree that stress can be both *productive and non productive*. Dan McGee says productive stress is what we experience as we go through the daily demands of our lives, as we reach and attempt to achieve our goals and even what we feel as we look forward to success. But non productive stress happens when our emotions are overly burdened, our bodies are strained beyond limits, our actions or behaviors are defeating and when our relationships are highly conflicted and at risk.

### **Coping with Stress**

*Change is the key word!* Consider changing your situation- put yourself in some other place, such as a new job, or out of a damaging relationship. Or, change the current place or situation you are in; use your influence, skills and inspiration to affect change right where you are. Maybe most importantly, change *you!* Improve your abilities to deal with conflict, fears, demands or other components of stress using more *healthy thinking* (cognition). Most nonproductive stress comes from irrational beliefs or thoughts that are not useful for us, regarding our self, others and sometimes even God. When we are overwhelmed emotionally, worried, our physical bodies drained, or our relationships strained, we give in to assumptions, misguided expectations and clouded perceptions of reality.

Examine how you are reacting or responding to stressful situations in your daily life. What is it that activates the strong emotions producing physical manifestations of stress or prompting behaviors which are detrimental to your relationships and satisfaction in life? Try coping in healthy ways such as lifestyle changes, regular exercise, relaxation techniques, cognitive/behavioral counseling, or even medicine that might be needed. Consider making the thinking and physical changes necessary to feel better, be more productive and enjoy your relationships at home, work and at play. I hope you will!

Blessings,

**Mike**

---

<sup>1</sup> Dan McGee