

# The Impact of Stress & What to Watch For

**Stress is NORMAL. Too much stress of any kind, can have significant impacts on our functioning. Stress typically affects us in several domains:**

## **Common PHYSICAL Symptoms:**

Fatigue ■ Nausea/diarrhea (GI issues) ■ Muscle tension ■ Elevated heart rate ■ Grinding teeth ■ Headaches  
*Symptoms requiring medical evaluation – chest pain, difficulty breathing, sweating, chills, shock-like symptoms.*

## **Common COGNITIVE Symptoms:**

Confusion ■ Difficulty making decisions ■ Trouble concentrating ■ Hyper-vigilance ■ Memory problems ■ Nightmares/intrusive images ■ Heightened or lowered alertness ■ Inability to focus

## **Common EMOTIONAL Symptoms:**

Anxiety ■ Guilt ■ Grief ■ Denial ■ Fears ■ Depression ■ Irritability ■ Frustration/Anger ■ Loss of emotional control ■ Agitation ■ Feeling overwhelmed

## **Common BEHAVIORAL Symptoms:**

Withdrawal ■ Isolation ■ Restlessness ■ Startle reflex ■ Emotional outbursts ■ Loss or increase in appetite ■ Insomnia or excessive sleep ■ Suspiciousness ■ Alcohol usage ■ Somatic complaints ■ Hyper alertness

## **What You Can Do About It:**

**Everybody responds differently to stress depending on many factors, including pre-existing stressors, coping strategies, support system, etc. There ARE some things you can do to reduce the impact:**

- ❑ **First and foremost:** Pay attention to these symptoms! As healthcare professionals, we are not likely to do this but need to.
- ❑ **Take a break if you can.** Even 5-10 minutes might help you recharge and refocus.
- ❑ **Get regular exercise** or some type of physical activity.
- ❑ **Practice or learn relaxation techniques**, e.g. deep breathing, yoga, mindfulness, tai chi, massage, read, etc.
- ❑ **Structure your time/maintain your routine.**
- ❑ **Eat a healthy, balanced diet, get plenty of rest** even if you don't feel like it.
- ❑ **Avoid alcohol, tobacco use, drugs** – they simply numb what you are feeling and delay recovery.
- ❑ **Don't make big decisions.**
- ❑ **Share your stress**, reach out to others, get involved in things you enjoy.
- ❑ **If isolated at home**, reach out to others via social media, email, text, phone.
- ❑ **Learn a new hobby**, listen to music, clean your house, complete projects on your to-do list, etc.
- ❑ **Give yourself permission to feel rotten** (for a while).
- ❑ **Make as many daily decisions as you can** that give you a feeling of control.
- ❑ **Recognize that dreams, flashbacks, recurring thoughts are normal.** They'll decrease over time and be less intrusive.
- ❑ **Tell your family, friends and co-workers what would be helpful to you.**
- ❑ **Check in with your primary care providers**, especially if you have pre-existing medical conditions.

**Consider using Allen Hospital's Employee Assistance Program (319-235-3550), Black Hawk-Grundy Mental Health Center (319-234-2893) or UnityPoint Clinic Psychiatry (319-277-0992). These services are FREE and CONFIDENTIAL.**



UnityPoint Health