

What makes you feel stressed? How do you handle it when you feel stressed?

Although you may think that stress is negative, sometimes stress can be positive. Whether positive or negative, stress is part of daily life. The way you handle stress makes the difference between harmful stress and stimulating (good) stress.

Good stress helps you accomplish specific goals and meet deadlines. It creates the adrenaline that wins a race, brings out a dramatic performance on stage, and provides the excitement that reduces everyday boredom. Good stress, instead of producing tiredness, actually can energize.

However, bad stress wastes your energy. It can block creativity and productivity. The stress is overwhelming when there seems to be too much to do and too little time to do it. If you want to succeed, you will feel bad stress if you must take a test on assignments you have not read. When time is running out for completing that big, final project for a class, bad stress makes it hard for you to focus and finish. While some bad stress flows from things you cannot control, like illness or an accident, it can also develop from what you can control but don't. Poor preparation and poor time management create bad stress.

The key to handling stress is to determine which stress is good and which is bad and to take action to keep the bad stress manageable. A few stress management strategies can help. Keeping track of assignments and deadlines helps you plan ahead and not procrastinate. Writing due dates in a calendar or assignment notebook removes the stress of having to organize time in your head. Keeping materials organized avoids wasting time. Have you ever run late because your search for keys or a clean shirt added stress to a tight schedule? Designating a regular place to put what you need to take with you when you leave home, whether that's a backpack or a coat, will save time and stress. Placing sticky note reminders on mirrors or in other obvious places can replace the strain of remembering. Keeping a "To Do" list helps eliminate the frustration of forgetting things. Planning ahead and combining activities can shorten the "To Do" list fast.

Stress cannot be eliminated. Of course you don't want to remove positive stress. But you do desire to get rid of the negative. Changing the way you deal with bad stress by organizing your tasks and time can reduce its impact and allow you to enjoy the rewards of a job well done. As the Nike advertisements state, "Just do it!" and take these steps to eliminate bad stress.