

# Taekwon-Do as a stress relief, coping strategy

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Modern day society's busy lifestyle is placing continuous new pressures upon individuals as we move forward in our everyday lives. We are continuously adapting to the necessary changes that we are experiencing around us, and moving forward with change. In certain instances, we may struggle to adapt to these changes and this is placing unforeseen pressure on both our physical and psychological health and well-being, which we commonly refer to as 'Stress'. In this report I attend to provide, a brief and simplistic understanding on what is stress? How to detect stress? And how to modify your lifestyle to adapt to stress! And most importantly, how we can use Taekwon-Do as a way to alleviate and control today's pressures that society has upon us.

Stress or overstress, can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the task, event or job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the individual. Stress can lead to poor health or even injury. Stress is experienced when our bodies are continuing to adjust to our ever-changing environment. It's the physical and emotional effects that create both these negative and positive feelings. A positive influence can result in a new awareness and an exciting perspective. A negative influence, can result in feelings of anger, rejection, depression and distrust, which can in turn lead to problems such as headaches, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. In adjusting to different circumstances or events, stress will help or hinder us depending on how we react to it.

## Early warning signs of job stress

- (1) Fatigue-headaches & pains
- (2) Sleep Disturbances (insomnia)
- (3) Low Morale
- (4) Job Dissatisfaction
- (5) Upset stomach
- (6) Difficulty concentrating
- (7) Short temper

People can experience either internal or external stressors: -

Internal Stressors can also be physical (sickness & weakness) or psychological. An example of an internal psychological stressor is intense worry about an event or circumstance that may or may not occur (black belt grading, study, work and social & family commitments all rolled into one).

External Stressors, can be either physical conditions (physically exhausted after an intense Taekwon-Do warm-up) or psychological (such as abusive relationships or saying 'no way' I cant break 5 boards with a side kick).

### How can I eliminate Stress from my life?

Our goal is not necessarily eliminate stress, but learn how to manage it and how to use it help us. Positive stress such as adrenalin adds excitement and anticipation to life, we all thrive under a certain amount of duress. Competitions, tournaments, deadlines all add enjoyment and enrichment to our lives. Negative stress acts as a depressant and leaves us physically and emotionally exhausted.

Reduce your Stress Load:

Reduce the pace of change in your life

Reduce the social obligations\

Reduce work or school obligations/commitments

Postpone changes in your living situation

Say 'No' more often

Eliminate possible food or environmental allergens

Reduce environmental toxins

Be mindful of what you are taking on at any particular time. Take a close look at your commitments. For example, my current commitments are ranked in priority, obviously social commitments to family & friends, my work career, education & continual study, my new house and my preparation leading up to my 3rd Degree black belt. I will not take on any further commitments, until I have completed or satisfied that I can manage another commitment as I personally feel I am at my optimum level. Taking on more commitments (Goal setting) will increase my workload and create greater anxiety that will place strain upon all other commitments.

### How can I manage stress?

We are all different individuals, with our own unique requirements and different lifestyles. Differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping style are important in predicting whether certain conditions will result in stress (worker characteristics versus working conditions). Emphasis on working conditions as the key source of job stress, and for job redesign as a primary prevention strategy. Excessive workloads and conflicting expectations apply to all people.

What is distressing to you may not necessarily be a problem for someone else. Illness is related to unrelieved stress. If you are experiencing stress symptoms, you have gone beyond your optimal stress level; you need to improve the stress in your life and/or improve your ability to manage it. There are many sources of stress and many possibilities of management techniques that can change the source of stress and/or changing your reaction to it. Coping strategies can alleviate stress levels and promote a greater quality of life.

The following three principles will help in the reduction of stressful working conditions: -

- (1) Balance between work and personal life (family)
- (2) A support network of friends & colleagues
- (3) A relaxed and positive outlook to life

For most of us, stress is synonymous with worry. If it is something that makes you worry, then it is stress. To your body, stress is synonymous with change. Both positive and negative, if it is a change in your life, it is stress as far as your body is concerned

Let us look at several ways of reducing stress: -

Pushing your body too hard- a major source of stress is overloading yourself. If you are working/partying long hours, you will reduce your available time for rest.

Reduce your work hours- reduce the energy strain you are placing on your body.

Rest & relaxation- Take some time off, go on holiday, and maintain a consistent sleep schedule

Diet- Eat nutritious meals and maintain a well balanced diet. Eat plenty of vegetables

Reduce Pick-Me-Ups- people who are overstressed almost always use sugar as a Pick-Me-Up. Reduce your sugar, caffeine, tobacco or alcohol consumption.

Exercise- Take up a sport (Taekwon-Do) something that you enjoy, preferably, do something that brings you into contact with other people.

Time management – be organised, goal setting, disorganisation is the theft of time.

Many people cram their lives so full that they forget how to stop and relax. Identify what is important to you both at work and at home. Planning, prioritisation and action are required- otherwise nothing will change.

A number of common stressors at work

- (1) Job insecurity
- (2) Long hours
- (3) Travel, time spent away from the family
- (4) Conflicts with colleagues
- (5) Remuneration
- (6) Management decisions
- (7) Performance demands
- (8) Lack of Communication

Stress can have varying effects, on eating problems and weight. The natural tendency is for people to let their stresses pile up rather than exchanging them. In this fashion stress gradually occurs. With the development of stress, the person starts using more & more Pick-Me-Ups. People under chronic stress frequently seek relief through drug or alcohol abuse, abnormal eating habits and passive activities, such as watching television are all self-destructive and are

compounded by the physiological effects of stress. Many people develop cravings for salt, fat, and sugar thus gaining weight. Continuous snacking on fatty foods, takeaways etc.

A healthy lifestyle is an essential companion in any stress-reduction program. General health can be enhanced by regular exercise. Exercise is an effective distraction from stressful events. They are actually resting the nerve cells in the brain that worry, giving those cells time to regenerate so they can function normally the next time they are needed. Any activity, which concentrates your attention on a subject other than life's problems, will help rest your mind. Healthy individuals who follow an active lifestyle experience greater wellbeing and self-fulfillment.

Taekwon-Do is a great form of exercise. An excellent hobby that will put your mind at ease after a hard day's work. Whether you are mentally exhausted and look for the avenue to release that physical tension i.e. kicking pads or breaking boards or vice versa a hard day's physical exhaustion you look to empower your mind through meditation and breathing exercises, all help to assist alleviate, control & manage the day's activities.

### Choosing a Strategy for Reducing Stress

When choosing specific strategies for treating stress, several factors should be considered

First, no single method is uniformly successful: a combination of approaches is generally most effective.

Second, what works for one person does not necessarily work for someone else

Third, stress can be negative or positive. A controllable stress provides interest and excitement, while a lack of stress may lead to boredom and depression

Frequently check your body for signs of stress, telltale disturbances in your sleep pattern, as this is usually the earliest sign of stress or you experience fatigue, lack of enjoyment of life and headaches. How can it be that one in every ten persons cannot physically adjust to the stress levels found on today's world? The answer lies in our society's pace of change. Gaining work-life balance in the 21st century takes discipline and deliberation. The decisions people make every day shape their lives. As individuals you can play a major part in helping individuals to regain a sense of control and achieve quality of life at work and at home. The process of learning to control stress is life-long, and will not only contribute to better health, but a greater ability to succeed in one's own life.

### References

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