Why Do We Have Stress?
By Paige Mercer

Stress is a word we hear daily. We hear of remedies for stress, causes of stress, stories from people who are stressed, and we probably experience stress ourselves. But stress is more than a mere word; it is physical and emotional response to danger, anxiety, and difficult situations. Stress is more than just a word; it’s a cause for concern.

Stress can create all kinds of chaos in our lives. Stress can cause many different physical and emotional health problems. We may just exhibit our stress by getting angry or being sour one or two days. But quite possibly stress can cause a major breakdown of our mental or physical health. Most of the time it isn’t one specific event that causes stress related health issues, it is caused by a build-up of stress over time. But how can we stop allowing stress to rule our lives? If we have a better understanding of why we experience stress we can learn how to deal with it more productively.

Physical Stressors

Our bodies are made to respond to physical danger, which is one cause of stress. Facing a wild animal, the threat of an intruder, being in an accident; all of these things are stressful situations. Our bodies are made to respond to these threats by increasing adrenaline to prepare us for fight or flight.

These threats can even cause stress when we aren’t experiencing them. If someone has a fear of a danger it can cause emotional stress. Someone who is afraid of dogs may have a fear of walking by a neighbours’ house where there is a dog, even going so far as to change their route to avoid it. Many people become physically sick before flying on an airplane because of a fear of flying.

Environmental Stressors

Face it life in general can be a cause of stress in our lives. We don’t live in the quiet world of days gone by. In our society we are constantly subjected to noise - cell phones, traffic, televisions, etc. We are surrounded by bright lights, which help ensure our safety after dark but make it hard for the body to fully rest. After a while our bodies and minds need to have peace, quiet and darkness to rejuvenate. But many times we just can’t seem to shut out the noise and light to allow quiet time in our lives.

Emotional Stressors

Everyone at some time or another is faced with relationship trouble. It may be a romantic relationship, a friendship, or a family problem. Regardless of the type of relationship, problems between people are a major cause of stress in our lives. Major life changes, even positive ones can disrupt our body’s natural rhythm and cause stress.

For many people competition is a cause of stress. Some people have a very competitive nature, even if it isn’t a sporting event. They feel the need to prove themselves to others so they push to be the best in everything they do. This can be a constant source of stress in their lives.

There are many causes of stress in our lives, it is important to identify the stressors we face and learn to overcome it. By practicing stress management techniques we can find an inner calmness that will translate into better emotional and physical health.