



Stress Awareness

Health Information

April 2024



Another month has come and gone and we are already in April. I love this time of year because of all the new life; trees, grass, and flowers. Also, I love the old tale of April showers bring May flowers.

April is stress awareness month so I thought it would be a perfect topic to talk discuss. I know many of you have a lot on your plate and it can become very overwhelming. I appreciate all the work you do and all the people you help. I believe you have one of the same goals I do and that is to get as many people to heaven as we can. That alone can be very stressful.

My information came from Mental Health America, Mayo clinic, and das.nh.gov/perceivedstresstest.

What is Stress?

Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Stress is also a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation.

Signs and symptoms of stress:

- Aches and pains
- Chest pain or a feeling like your heart is racing
- Exhaustion or trouble sleeping
- Headaches, Dizziness or shaking
- High blood pressure
- Muscle tension or jaw clenching
- Stomach or digestive problems
- Fast and heavy breathing
- Anxiety
- Emotional ups and downs
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Uncontrolled anger and irritability
- Migraines
- Weight gain

Most common reasons why we experience stress:

- Financial obligations
- Death of a loved one
- Job loss
- Traumatic events

- Problems at work
- Emotional well-being struggles
- Relationship issues

What are the three types of stress?

1. Acute stress- stress that results from your body's reaction to a new or challenging situation. Acute stress is short term.
2. Episodic acute stress- acute stresses happen on a frequent basis.
Examples: Repeatedly tight work deadlines, or frequent high-stress situations. This can feel like we are moving from one crisis to another and we don't allow our body to return to a relaxed and calm state.
3. Chronic stress- stressors that continue for a long period of time. This type of stress feels never-ending. It is difficult seeing any way to improve or change the situation.

Perceived Stress Scale:

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a classic stress assessment instrument. The tool, while originally developed in 1983, remains a popular choice for helping us understand how different situations affect our feelings and our perceived stress. The questions in this scale ask about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way; rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

For each question, choose from the following alternatives:

0 - never 1 - almost never 2 - sometimes 3 - fairly often 4 - very often

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?

6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

To determine your PSS score do the following:

First, reverse your scores for questions 4, 5, 7, and 8. On these 4 questions, change the scores like this: 0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1, and 4 = 0. Now add up your scores for each item to get a total.

My total score is _____.

Individual scores on the PSS can range from 0 to 40 with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress.

- ▶ Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress.
- ▶ Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress.
- ▶ Scores ranging from 27-40 would be considered high stress.

The Perceived Stress Scale is interesting and important because your perception of what is happening in your life is most important. Consider the idea that two individuals could have the exact same events and experiences in their lives for the past month. Depending on their perception, scoring could put one of those individuals in the low stress category and put the second person in the high stress category.

Healthy ways to Cope with Stress:

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories
- Take care of yourself
- Take care of your body
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
 - Try to eat healthy and well-balanced meals
 - Exercise regularly
 - Get plenty of sleep
 - Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use
 - Continue with routine preventive measures
- Make time to unwind



- Talk to others about your concerns and how you are feeling. Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a friend, counselor, doctor, or spiritual director.

Remember it is okay if you feel this way. Make sure you reach out for help and have a healthy way to reduce stress. Each and every one of you are very special and we need to keep you healthy in all aspects (mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually). I am here for you all if you need to talk or need assistance in getting help. May God bless every one of you. Thank you for all your dedication.

Blessings,
Danielle





Birdcage



One Easter Sunday morning, a pastor came to the Church carrying a rusty, bent, old bird cage, and set it by the pulpit. Several eyebrows were raised and, as if in response, the pastor began to speak.

"I was walking through town yesterday when I saw a young boy coming toward me, swinging this bird cage. On the bottom of the cage were three little wild birds, shivering with cold and fright. I stopped the lad and asked, "What you got there son?"

"Just some old birds," came the reply.

"What are you gonna do with them?" I asked.

"Take 'em home and have fun with 'em. I'm gonna tease 'em and pull out their feathers to make 'em fight. I'm gonna have a real good time."

"But you'll get tired of those birds sooner or later. What will you do then?"

"Oh, I got some cats. They like birds. I'll take 'em to them."

The pastor was silent for a moment. "How much do you want for those birds, son?"

"Huh??!!! Why, you don't want them birds, mister. They're just plain old field birds. They don't sing - they ain't even pretty!"

"How much?"

The boy sized up the pastor as if he were crazy and said, "\$10?".

The pastor reached in his pocket and took out a ten dollar bill. He placed it in the boy's hand. In a flash, the boy was gone.

The pastor picked up the cage and gently carried it to the end of the alley where there was a tree and a grassy spot. Setting the cage down, he opened the door, and by softly tapping the bars persuaded the birds out, setting them free.

Well, that explained the empty bird cage on the pulpit, and then the pastor began to tell this story.

One day Satan and Jesus were having a conversation. Satan had just come from the Garden of Eden, and he was gloating and boasting.

"Yes, sir, I just caught the world full of people down there. Set me a trap, used bait I knew they couldn't resist. Got 'em all!"

"What are you going to do with them?" Jesus asked.

"Oh, I'm gonna have fun! I'm gonna teach them how to marry and divorce each other. How to hate and abuse each other. How to drink and smoke and curse. How to invent guns and bombs and kill each other. I'm really gonna have fun!"

"And what will you do when you get done with them?", Jesus asked.

"Oh, I'll kill 'em."

"How much do you want for them?"

"Oh, you don't want those people. They ain't no good. Why, you take them and they'll just hate you. They'll spit on you, curse you and kill you!! You don't want those people!!"

"How much?"

Satan looked at Jesus and sneered, "All your tears, and all your blood."

Jesus paid the price.

The pastor picked up the cage he opened the door and he walked from the pulpit.