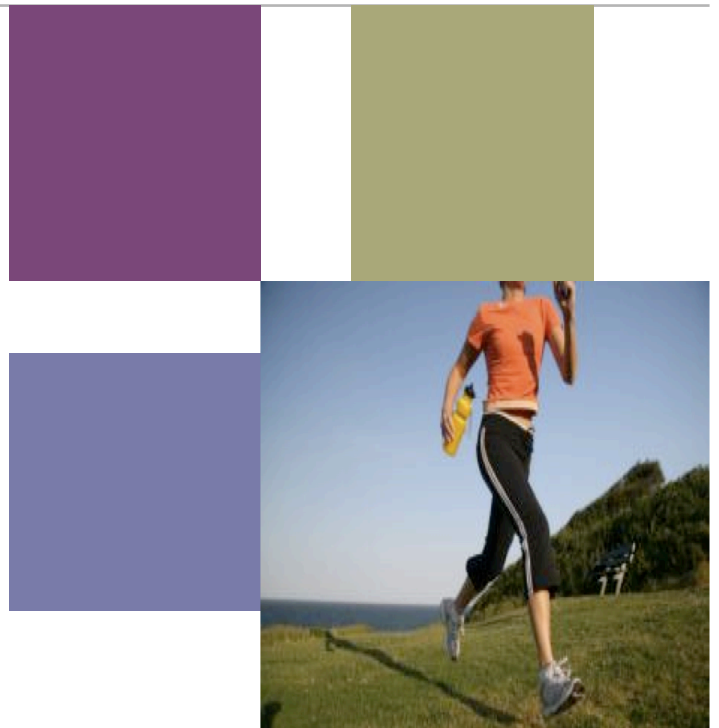


“I’m so
stressed!” +



I’ve been known to say that “stress” is a politically correct way to identify anxiety. It’s so much more acceptable to complain to friends or coworkers about being *stressed* than to admit to struggling with something that might relate to *<gasp>* mental health.

The body diagram from The American Institute of Stress shows symptoms that are experienced as “stress.” Most of these are also associated with, and some actually used to diagnose anxiety disorders like Panic Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, and Acute Stress Disorder, the precursor for PTSD.

In treating anxiety, or if you’d rather: STRESS, Professor Patrick O’Connor, co-director of Univ. of Georgia at Athens’ Exercise Psychology Laboratory commented on the effects of exercise. In this study, sedentary patients with chronic illness were tested to measure how physical activity affected their anxiety symptoms. Dr. O’Connor stated “Exercise even helps people who are not very anxious to begin with to become more calm.”

In a study done at Arizona State University, physical activity was found to contribute to:

Reduced anxiety

- *Best results with “aerobic exercise”
- *Best after weeks of regular exercise
- *Best benefits to those who are low fit to begin with
- *Best benefits for those high in anxiety to begin with

With that said, Professor O’Connor contended that, based on the results of his lab’s research, “We found that exercise seems to work with just about everybody under most situations.”

Research shows that worrying, raised heart rate, and other physical manifestations of stress will be reduced by activities as simple as an after-dinner walk.

For more information on the integration of mental and physical health, pay attention to the challenges in your life and how they coincide with physical illness.

Physical or mental stresses may cause physical illness as well as mental or emotional problems. Here are the parts of the body most affected by stress:

The Effects of Stress

Hair:
High stress levels may cause excessive hair loss and some forms of baldness.

Muscles:
Spasmodic pains in the neck and shoulders, musculoskeletal aches, lower back pain, and various minor muscular twitches and nervous tics are more noticeable under stress.

Digestive tract:
Stress can cause or aggravate diseases of the digestive tract including gastritis, stomach and duodenal ulcers, ulcerative colitis, and irritable colon.

Skin:
Some individuals react to stress with outbreaks of skin problems such as eczema and psoriasis.

Brain:
Stress triggers mental and emotional problems such as insomnia, headaches, personality changes, irritability, anxiety, and depression.

Mouth:
Mouth ulcers and excessive dryness are often symptoms of stress.

Heart:
Cardiovascular disease and hypertension are linked to accumulated stress.

Lungs:
High levels of mental or emotional stress adversely affect individuals with asthmatic conditions.

Reproductive organs:
Stress affects the reproductive system causing menstrual disorders and recurrent vaginal infections in women and impotence and premature ejaculation in men.

