



## Let's Think About This

Think of a situation in your life where there is a balance between a demand for you to do something and your ability to respond to that demand. Did you experience stress?

Think of another situation where there is no balance between a demand and your ability to respond to that demand. Did you experience stress?

You can't avoid stress. It is a part of our lives. We must accept it as a reality of life. In fact, to be completely without stress is to be dead! Not all stress is unpleasant. Stress, according to Selye, can be classified into two: *pleasant stress (or eustress)* and *unpleasant stress, (or distress)*.

*Examples:*

Pleasant Stress	Unpleasant Stress
1. passing the board exam	1. failing the board exam twice in a row
2. graduating from college with honors	2. failure to graduate due to take-two subjects
3. getting a good job after graduation	3. being unemployed for a year after graduation from college
4. re-uniting with old friends in college	4. conflict with old friends in college
5. receiving awards for outstanding behavior	5. not having any award for outstanding behavior because his name was not submitted to the committee

Today stress is equated with distress, but we all experience pleasant situations or events that cause stress. As such, stress can either be a challenge (pleasant stress) or a crisis (unpleasant stress) that disturbs your equilibrium or balance.

Anything that causes strain or stress is a stressor. It may come from outside or within you. Some of the more common stressors are as follows:

- ◆ Tight deadlines for submitting reports, term papers, book reviews, etc.
- ◆ Loss of something or someone we care or love (e.g., close friend)
- ◆ A fight or conflict with a classmate, friend or co-worker
- ◆ An important life event such as graduation from college
- ◆ Threats to our self-image (e.g., scolding from your teacher, insults from your boss, etc.)
- ◆ Physical threats

Like stress itself, stressors are of two kinds: *distressors* and *eustressors*. An opportunity to stand up at a meeting and share a point of view may be threatening or scary for one student. A second student, however, may see it as an opportunity to show others what he or she knows about the topic being discussed. The first student sees the situation as a *distressor*, the second as a *eustressor*, or positive challenge.

## How To Cope With Stress

In Lesson 2 you have learned the different ways of doing away with or reducing stressors and action planning. Lesson 3 will teach you ways of handling problems and crises to avoid stress. These can prevent illnesses related to stress. As a college student, you need to manage your emotions and reactions to stressful situations to ensure success in your studies. You have to adopt effective ways of handling problems you meet and other stressors.



### Let's Review

Do you ever resort to any of the following undesirable ways of dealing with stress in your life. Put a check [✓] in any of the 3 columns that best describes how often you resort to each.

Ways of Avoiding Stress	Never	Sometimes	Often
<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol			
<input type="checkbox"/> Narcotics (e.g., shabu, marijuana, etc.)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Other prescription drugs			
<input type="checkbox"/> Caffeine (coffee, colas, chocolate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sweet and fatty foods			
<input type="checkbox"/> Refusing to communicate about the stressor (to spouse, if you're married; child; boss, if you're working, etc.)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Frequent changes of job			
<input type="checkbox"/> Frequent changes of wife (if you're married), girlfriend or boyfriend (if you're single)			

If you marked with a check [✓] even only one of these strategies in the "often" column, or several of them in the "sometimes" column, *I encourage you to consider replacing this behavior with healthier ways of reducing stressors or doing away with them.*

The ways of avoiding stress listed above don't eliminate the stressor. When carried too far, use of narcotics and other prescription drugs can be dangerous not only to yourself but also to your family, community and society.



### Let's Study And Analyze

What are coping mechanisms?

As individuals, you have your own coping mechanisms that become active automatically when you need them. Here are some examples:

- ◆ You drink more liquids when it's hot.
- ◆ You listen to music when you're tired studying.
- ◆ You wear earplugs to bed so as not to be disturbed by the neighbor's barking dog.
- ◆ You play the guitar and sing to relax your mind.
- ◆ You consecrate yourselves to God and pray for guidance.
- ◆ You watch TV comedy programs and laugh to your heart's content to focus your attention away from day-to-day problems.
- ◆ You go home to the province or spend the Christmas vacation with a relative in Manila, Cebu or Davao.

These are healthy behaviors that help you deal with stressful situations. However, you have to acknowledge that there are some very popular coping mechanisms that are not so healthy. Most of these are referred to as *avoidance* strategies. Probably the most common of these is alcohol. Admittedly, alcohol has properties that help you relax and sometimes forget your present troubles for a short period of time. But, like other avoidance strategies such as 'shabu', marijuana, and other prescription drugs, it offers only temporary help. In the long run, it makes things worse.

These coping strategies are part of the classification of *unhealthy* coping mechanisms. They don't really help you cope. They create more problems than solve. Avoidance strategies do only one thing: postpone stress.



## Let's Think About This

- ◆ Why do you think some people resort to drinking alcohol or using drugs like 'shabu'?
- ◆ What do they get from it?
- ◆ Drinking alcohol and using drugs as coping strategies are unhealthy. A friend of yours has been using these coping mechanisms. Now he wants to put a stop to these. What healthy strategies would you recommend to him or her to let him calm his body and mind that are under stress?

## Let's Learn



Other healthy coping mechanisms.

## Relaxation Techniques

There are a number of relaxation techniques that provide life-long control over your bodily functions. These can be learned and don't require any special equipment. Relaxation aims to *calm the body and relieve your mind*. Examples of these are as follows:

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