

Who says

# STRESS

is bad for you?

*Think stress is your enemy? Think again. To be happy and healthy, we all need a little stress in our lives!*

'Stress: the disease of our times', 'Stress-related illnesses the number one cause of doctors' visits' – it seems like you can't pick up a newspaper or magazine these days without seeing a headline about stress and how bad it is for your health. The message is loud and clear: you should do everything you can to minimise stress in your daily life.

Is stress really the monster it is made out to be by the media? Surprisingly, most experts believe nothing is wrong with occasionally experiencing a little bit of stress. As physiologist Monika Fleshner states, "Only under circumstances of chronic stress do we suffer its negative effects." This type of stress comes when we face a situation that takes a heavy toll on us – a stressful job or an unhappy home life, for example. On the other hand, experiencing mild stress, according to Fleshner, can be good for us.

When we feel stressed, hormones are produced from glands in our body. These hormones (such as adrenaline and cortisol) serve a number of functions. They make the heart beat faster and blood flow to the brain and muscles is increased, making us ready for action. If we hadn't developed this reaction, we might not have survived as a species. In this case, stress is not a problem, but a condition that humans have evolved over thousands of years to deal with problems!

Stress not only has short-term benefits. Recent research suggests that regularly experiencing short periods of mild stress can strengthen your immune system and lower the risk of neurological diseases such as Alzheimer's. In effect, stress acts like a 'workout' for the brain. Just like exercising muscles in the gym, stress exercises the brain, ensuring it stays strong and fully functional.

It's also worth thinking about the consequences of stress. Psychologists identify two main types: **distress** and **eustress**. Distress is negative stress which often makes us feel disheartened. Eustress, however, is positive stress that results in us feeling happy. Take physical exercise for example. It is stressful pushing your body to the limit, but the health benefits and feeling of accomplishment afterwards make the stress worth it.

So if some stress is beneficial, why are we continually told that stress is our enemy? According to Angela Padmore, author of *The Truth about Stress*, the answer lies with the stress management industry. According to Padmore, the vast majority of us do not feel stress to the point where we need to buy products or seek professional assistance. Yet, in Britain alone, there are over 15 million websites and 2 million stress management practitioners selling a huge variety of treatments for a condition that, to a large extent, does not need to be treated. As one experienced counsellor put it, "They've turned a normal part of living into a disease that needs to be cured."

So how does this help us in our everyday lives? Well firstly, it's important to recognise the difference between chronic stress and mild stress. If you are suffering from chronic stress, get help today; however, the next time that you feel mild stress, don't get too stressed about it - it's probably doing you some good.



## Vocabulary & Reading

1


**10.5.2** The words below appear in the text. Use them to complete the sentences.

- psychologists • produce • media
- immune system • practitioners

- 1 Stress is rarely written about in the .....
- 2 Stress causes glands in the body to ..... a number of hormones.
- 3 Regular periods of stress can strengthen the body's .....
- 4 According to ....., there are two main types of stress.
- 5 In Britain, there are over 2 million stress management .....

# Do the exercise by listening the audio № 11

## Listening

- 9 10.2.5 10.2.6  You will hear three people talking about what they do to reduce stress. Listen and match the speakers to the statements (A-E). There are two extra statements.

- A I made sure I stopped any unhealthy habits.
- B I wasn't sure where my anxiety came from.
- C I shared my worries with the people close to me.
- D I still had to face what was worrying me.
- E I talked about my problems with my school friends.

Speaker 1	
Speaker 2	
Speaker 3	