

# Know Your Body

You face stress nearly every day. Some stress is good. It helps you get work done on time and adds variety and excitement to your life. However, there are other times when the stress is so overwhelming that your body has difficulty coping with the pressure. In such situations, it is important to find relief soon, as there is a danger that the stress will cause health problems.

To prevent stress from becoming harmful, it is important that you are aware of how your body reacts to stressful events. In doing so, you can use stress in a positive way.

## The Three Stages of Stress

When you encounter a stressful situation, there are three stages your body goes through.

### 1. Alarm

Your first reaction is naturally alarm. For example, when you approach the podium to give a speech, your heart rate increases and your body temperature rises. This is your body's reaction to the stress and pressure you are under. Hormones may also be released into your bloodstream, causing your face to flush, your stomach to have a sinking feeling, and your arms and legs to tighten up.

### 2. Resistance

After alarm, the next stage is resistance. Here the body repairs damage caused by the stressful situation. Your heart rate will begin to make its way back to normal and your muscles may relax.

### 3. Exhaustion

If you do not allow yourself to relax during a long-lasting stressful situation, your body may lessen its resistance. At this point, the stress on your body can become so great that you develop an illness. You might suffer from migraine headaches, high blood pressure, backaches or insomnia. It is crucial that you find ways to relieve the stress you are feeling. You might want to take an intermission during your speech or have a cold glass of water handy.

Although it is impossible to live completely free of stress, it doesn't have to control your life. Instead, you can prevent some stress and minimize its negative impact when it can't be avoided.