



Helping Hands



Men and Women and the effects of Long-Term Stress

By Rick Nauert PhD in Women'sHealth.gov

Emerging research contradicts the belief that stress increases the risk of depression more in women than men.

In a new study, investigators at the University of Michigan School of Public Health found that men are 50 percent more vulnerable to the effects of stress later in life than women.

"The literature has historically argued that women are more depressed because they get more of the stress. None of that literature touches on role of gender as a vulnerability factor," said psychiatrist Shervin Assari, MD, M.P.H.

Assari's research focuses on how gender and race impact issues of health. In this case, he and colleagues found no association with race and depression over time. One explanation for what happens with men and depression is that they are less likely to talk about the emotions and stressors they encounter, compared with women, he said. "In our society, as men, we learn to see this as a weakness, as suggested by gender role identity theorists," Assari said. The societal expectation of men taking a dominant social position appears to have long-term health effects. "Masculinity is a barrier to seek care and talk about emotions. This at least in part explains why men less frequently seek help, either professional or inside of their social networks. Our research suggests this may come with a price for men." In addition to how men and women cope with stress, other distinctions may be due to gender differences in resilience, risk perception, and general exposure, he said. "Exposure to stress may help women better mobilize their psychological resources, which protect them when needed," he said. It's also possible that men may underreport their stresses, and that those who do acknowledge them are the ones who are most affected by depression later, Assari said. "Men should improve the way they cope and the way they mobilize their resources when they face stressful events," he said. "They should learn from women on how to talk about emotions and use resources. "Men exposed to a lot of stress should take it seriously. They should know being a man is not all about power. It also comes with vulnerabilities.



Do women react to stress differently than men?

One recent survey found that women were more likely to experience physical symptoms of stress than men. But we don't have enough proof to say that this applies to all women. We do know that women often cope with stress in different ways than men. Women "tend and befriend," taking care of those closest to them, but also drawing support from friends and family. Men are more likely to have the "fight or flight" response. They cope by "escaping" into a relaxing activity or other distraction. antidepressants or sleep aids.

The body responds to stress by releasing stress hormones. These hormones make blood pressure, heart rate, and blood sugar levels go up. Long-term stress can help cause a variety of health problems, including:

- Mental health disorders, like depression and anxiety
- Obesity
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Abnormal heart beats
- Relationship difficulties
- Acne and other skin problems



How can I help handle my stress?

Everyone has to deal with stress. There are steps you can take to help you handle stress in a positive way and keep it from making you sick. Try these tips to keep stress in check:

- Become a problem solver. Make a list of the things that cause you stress. From your list, figure out which problems you can solve now and which are beyond your control for the moment.
- Be flexible. Sometimes, it's not worth the stress to argue. Give in once in a while or meet people halfway.
- Get organized. Think ahead about how you're going to spend your time. Write a to-do list. Figure out what's most important to do and do those things first.
- Set limits. When it comes to things like work and family, figure out what you can really do. Don't be afraid to say NO to requests for your time and energy.
- Breathe deeply. If you're feeling stressed, taking a few deep breaths makes you breathe slower and helps your muscles relax.
- Massage tense muscles. Having someone massage the muscles in the back of your neck and upper back can help you feel less tense.
- Take time to do something you want to do. Often we don't take the time to do the things that we really want to do. Doing something you like to do can reduce your stress dramatically.
- Get 7-8 hours of sleep. Being well-rested helps you think clearly and feel prepared to handle problems.
- Get moving. Getting physical activity cannot only help relax your tense muscles but improve your mood. Research shows that physical activity can help relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Share your stress. Talking about your problems with people you trust will help you feel better. They might also help you see your problems in a new way and suggest solutions that you hadn't thought of.

District 141 EAP Team Changes

The International Association of Machinists Employee Assistance Program is pleased to announce two recent changes to the team. Kathy Ferguson has been promoted to the United Airlines Employee Assistance Program Airline Coordinator. Victor Acosta will replace Kathy as the EAP Eastern Region Representative, based in EWR. Mike "Mac" McGovern was promoted to the Director of Education,

The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program are local lodge EAP peer coordinators. These dedicated volunteers use their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations. They are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a detailed evaluation. EAP coordinators follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that address the difficulty you are experiencing.

United Airlines Employee Assistance Program Airline Coordinator Kathy Ferguson

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IAM EAP Calendar

EAP III

May 22-27, 2016
William W. Winpisinger Education and
Technology Center

EAP II

July 10-15, 2016
William W. Winpisinger Education and
Technology Center

EAP IV
(tentative)

