Warning Signs of Stress

- General irritability, hyperexcitement or depression.
- Pounding of the heart, an indicator of high blood pressure (often due to stress).
- Dryness of the throat and mouth.
- Impulsive behavior, emotional instability.
- The overpowering urge to cry or run and hide.
- Inability to concentrate, flight of thoughts and general disorientation.
- Accident proneness. Under great stress (eustress or distress), we are more likely to have accidents at work or while driving a car. This is also a very important reason why pilots and air traffic controllers must be carefully checked for their stress status.
- Feelings of unreality, weakness or dizziness.
- Fatigue and loss of "joie de vivre."
- "Floating anxiety," that is to say, we are afraid although we do not know exactly what we are afraid of.
- Emotional tension and alertness, a feeling of being "keyed up."
- Trembling, nervous tics.
- Tendency to be easily startled by small sounds, etc.
- High-pitched, nervous laughter.
- Stuttering and other speech difficulties which are frequently stress-induced.
- Bruxism or grinding of the teeth.
- Insomnia, which is usually a consequence of being "keyed up."
- Hypomotility, technically called hyperkinesia, an increased tendency to move about without any reason, an inability to just take a physically relaxed attitude, sitting quietly in a chair or lying on a sofa.
- Sweating.
- The frequent need to urinate.
- Diarrhea, indigestion, nausea in the stomach and sometimes even vomiting, all signs of disturbed gastrointestinal function which eventually lead to such severe diseases of adaptation as peptic ulcers, ulcerative colitis, etc.
- Pain in the neck or lower back. In conversational English, the expression "this business is an awful headache," or "he gives me a pain in the neck" not merely colorful verbalizations but are based on actual experience. For example, pain in the neck or back is usually due to increases in muscular tension that can be objectively measured by physicians with the electromyogram (EMG).
- Premenstrual tension or missed menstrual cycles.
- Migraine headaches.
- Loss of or excessive appetite shows itself soon in alterations of body weight, namely, excessive leaness or obesity. Some people lose their appetite during stress because of gastrointestinal malfunction, whereas others eat excessively as a kind of diversion, to divert their attention from stressor situation. Besides, a well-filled stomach and intestine shif it a great deal of blood to the abdomen, resulting in a relative decrease in brain circulation which tranquillizes by decreasing mental alertness.
- Increased smoking.
- Increased use of various medicines, such as tranquilizers or amphetamines.
- Alcohol or drug addiction. Like the phenomenon of overeating, these are "flight" reactions which help us to forget the cause of our distress and temporarily replace it by the eustress of psychic elation or at least tranquilization.
- Nightmares.
- Neurotic behavior or even severe mental illness.