

10 Reasons for Personal Stress and Depression

Read Time: 3 Minutes, 40 Seconds

Many people are entering a new year with anxiety because of general societal uncertainty, financial instability, relational instability, and challenges with their physical and emotional health.

According to The American Institute of Stress: “About 33 percent of people report feeling extreme stress. 77 percent of people experience stress that affects their physical health. 73 percent of people have stress that impacts their mental health” (Sep 5, 2022). “Major depressive disorder affects approximately 17.3 million American adults, or about 7.1% of the U.S. population age 18 and older, in a given year (National Institute of Mental Health, “Major Depression,” 2017).

The following are five primary reasons for the increase in personal stress and depression. Five more will follow next week.

1. No boundaries for family and self – Every individual must create personal boundaries to protect their personal and family space. These boundaries should include carving out specific work hours, Sabbath keeping, and allotting personal private time with spouse and children. When set boundaries are not in place, many situations or people will invade your privacy, not granting you enough alone time to emotionally process important issues or spend adequate quality time with your family. These continual interruptions to one’s personal and family life can eventually cause stress and even depression.

2. Ambiguity regarding goals and purpose – When people have no

clear sense of calling or purpose, they are open to doing anything with their time. Since a sense of purpose provides a sustainable anchor for the soul, a lack of purpose and goals cause ambiguity and incoherence in one's cognitive self, causing a person to emotionally unravel. To compensate emotionally for this feeling of "lostness of soul," many continually attempt to medicate themselves with drugs, porn, excessive entertainment, and so on, to obtain a fleeting sense of happiness.

3. Transference – Most people have unresolved issues with some significant people (their parents, siblings, coworkers, or former lovers and friends). The result of this is a spillover effect in which other people become objects of their pain and wrath to cope with their emotions continually boiling up. Some people describe this as transference. Transference describes a situation where one person's feelings, desires, and expectations are redirected and applied to another person. This happens when a person views another person in their life, either as a parent figure, sibling, or another significant person who wounded them. They transfer these feelings regarding past hurts onto this person as a proxy. As a result, people transferring blame to others experience broken relationships since "hurt people, hurt people."

This inability to sustain deep relational connections can result in severe depression, loneliness, and isolation.

4. Activity overload – Many people are constantly involved in one activity after another from morning till night without taking a reasonable break. They equate activity with productivity. However, sometimes less is more. Prolonged activity leaves less time to reflect and plan one's day to objectively make the best decisions in life. Furthermore, many people don't understand our divinely designed circadian rhythms on a 24-hour day. The human body is meant to shut down, rest and relax in the evening, so that it can be properly energized for the next day.

Circadian rhythms are the natural cycle of physical, mental, and behavioral changes the body goes through in a 24-hour cycle. Circadian rhythms are mostly affected by light and darkness and are controlled by a small area in the middle of the brain. When we violate these divinely ordained circadian rhythms, it negatively impacts our emotions, causing undue stress, and depression.

5. Poor physical health – God designed humans to functionally integrate with their spirit, soul, and body (1 Thessalonians 5:13). Hence, when a person violates this by neglecting one of these areas, it negatively impacts everything else, including their spiritual and emotional health. For example, if a person has poor nutritional habits, it can cause anxiety and depression and hurt one's ability to think clearly and focus. However, when one sticks to a diet of nutrient-rich foods, one can set oneself up for fewer mood swings and improved overall quality of life. Studies have even found that clean diets consisting of whole, unprocessed foods can help with symptoms of depression and anxiety.

One reason is that adopting a diet of nutritionally dense food promotes the growth of “good” bacteria, which positively affects the production of dopamine and serotonin, which send positive messages to the brain. Conversely, eating a diet mostly of processed foods and soda negatively impacts the brain and causes inflammation and possibly even disease in the body.

Stay tuned to next week for part two of this article from Bishop Mattera. {eoa}

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Dr. Joseph Mattera is an internationally-known author, consultant and theologian whose mission is to influence leaders who influence culture. He is the founding pastor of Resurrection Church, and leads several organizations,

including The U.S. Coalition of Apostolic Leaders and Christ Covenant Coalition. Dr. Mattera is the author of 13 bestselling books, including his latest "The Purpose, Power and Process of Prophetic Ministry," and is renowned for applying Scripture to contemporary culture.