YOU ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH!
You are holding a guide that will provide you with the answers to your questions

How can I help myself?

I am afraid!
Why am I afraid?

I experienced trauma!
What should I do?

Am I stressed?
What is stress?

The stress is frequently described as a feeling of being overburdened, tense or worried. The condition of stress is each condition in which, in any way (physically, psychologically or socially) we feel jeopardized or assess that the closest ones to us are in jeopardy. Further, we see as stress the condition in which an individual cannot meet excess demands of his environment.

SIGNS OF STRESS

Although there are significant differences between the individuals, if you are under stress you are probably experiencing one or several of the following symptoms:

- Excess or insufficient consumption of food
- Other physical symptoms (digestion problems, headaches)
- Problems sleeping
- Problems breathing (shortness of breath, chest pain)
- Excess consumption of alcohol, smoking and misuse of drugs
- Sexual dysfunction
- Feeling of being overburdened and helpless
- Difficulties in concentrating and decision making
- Feeling of being rushed or under pressure
- Concern, anxiety or panic attacks
- Sadness or depression
- Seclusion, shrewishness, agitation
TYPES OF STRESS

THE STRESSES MAY BE ACUTE AND CHRONIC:

**acute stresses** are caused by sudden changes in the environment that lead to equally sudden changes in the organism.
- sudden and unexpected situation
- strong blast
- traffic accident
- sudden danger

**chronic stresses** are caused by permanent uncomfortable situation in which an individual is over the longer period without the possibility
- long-lasting life in difficult conditions
- work under pressure and difficult
- sudden difficult
- unemployment and

STRESSORS

The stress represents physical, psychological and social reaction to external and internal stress stimulants. Stress stimulants or STRESSORS are physical, psychological and social incentives that lead an individual to the condition of stress. Those are the events that we estimate as ones jeopardizing our life or life or people who are important to us, material goods, self-respect etc. i.e. the events we believe that can disrupt (change) usual, everyday course of our life.

WE SHARE STRESSORS ON PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL:

**PHYSICAL**
- hunger and
- strong
- heavy
- excess heat or cold
- excess physical
- sensory deprivation
- natural disasters and
REATIONS TO STRESS

The reactions to stress are all those physiological, psychological and social changes in the behavior of an individual, which occur under the influence of stressor. The reactions to the stress may be:

PSYCHOLOGICAL (BODILY) REACTIONS
- increased work of heart and lungs, elevated blood pressure, elevated level of sugar in blood, dilated pupils, increased muscle tension

PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS
- we distinguish the EMOTIONAL (fear, tension, despondency) and COGNITIVE (change in attention, concentration and judgment)

SOCIAL CHANGES
- changes in behavior are manifested through fighting the cause of stress or running from the cause of stress

INTERESTING

PHYSICAL REACTIONS TO STRESS GIVE THE BODY ADDITIONAL ENERGY WHICH SERVES BETTER RESISTANCE TO STRESS THROUGH THE REACTION OF “FIGHT OR RUN”

01 Enhanced work of lungs 01 Better oxygen supply
02 Dilated pupils 02 Better visual perception
03 Higher level of sugar in blood 03 Increased energy
04 Capillary narrowing 04 Decreased danger of bleeding
05 Increased heart beat 05 Better blood supply
06 Higher blood pressure 06 Better blood supply
HOW TO COPE WITH STRESS?

DISCOVER WARNING SIGNS
It is highly beneficial to discover early warning signs in our body, which show us that we are under stress. Those signs vary from one person to another and they can include behaviors such as tension, indisposition, nervous, impatience, headache, problems with sleeping and appetite, shortness of breath etc.

IDENTIFY TRIGGERS
Certain triggers elevate stress level and make it difficult for us to keep the level of stress under control. If we know what triggers this pertains to, we can predict them and rehearse in advance how to calm down or even find the manners to eliminate those triggers. The triggers can include different deadlines, being in touch with certain people, overstrain etc.

ESTABLISH ROUTINES
Predictable rhythm and daily or weekly routine can be very calming and encouraging and they can help us manage our stress. The routines may include:
- regular time to relax and exercise
- regular time of meals, waking up and sleeping
- planning in advance for certain activities in the week

SPEND TIME WITH PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT
Spending time with the people who we care about and people who care about us is an important part of stress management.
- spend the time with the family and friends
- share your thoughts and feelings with the others when you have the opportunity
- do not deposit your feelings Do not deposit your feelings

CARE FOR YOUR HEALTH
- Make sure you eat regularly and exercise regularly
- Find time to engage in the activities that are calming and relaxing, such as listening to the music or walking
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco and other opiates consumption
PAY ATTENTION TO SELF-TALK

When we are under stress, sometimes we repeat certain thoughts in our head over and over again and that only increases the level of stress. That “conversation with one-self” includes thoughts such as: “I can’t handle this” or “I am too busy” or “I am so tired” or “it’s not fair”. While we may think that those are true descriptions of what is going on, it is not always helpful to repeat those, and it can even feel that we feel worse.

- Pay attention to it when using useless self-talk, and instead of that, try to repeat to yourself soothing things in order to reduce level of stress. Try with useful self-talk such as “calm down” or “take deep breaths”
- When we are under stress, it is easy to see the things worse than they really are. Try self-talking such as “it is not the end of the World” and “in the overall set up of things this is not so important”

RELAX YOURSELF

Find the time to relax. This will help your body and nervous system to calm down. Try some of the following things:
- learn some of formal techniques such as muscle relaxation or yoga
- find the time to engage yourself in some relaxing activity such as gardening or listening to music
- plan daily the activities you would like to do and which give you pleasure, such as reading the books

KEY OF SUCCESSFUL COPING WITH STRESS

01 Psychological stability
02 Physical preparedness
03 Self-control
04 Courage
05 Self-limitations
06 Self-respect
07 Self-confidence
What is trauma?

It is the traumatic event that is outside the lines of usual human experience and which is extremely unpleasant to all people. Unlike stressful events, which occur on everyday basis and to all people, traumatic events are rare and do not happen to everyone. These events can strongly throw the person out of his/her “life balance” that it is very difficult to him/her to regain it.

This pertains to the events which are:

01 Directly experienced  - which include heavy traffic accidents, diagnosing life threatening conditions, violence (sexual violence, bodily assault, robbery), natural disasters, military combat, abduction, terrorist attack, torture, captivity
02 Seen  - include observing violent injury or violent death of other person, due to the violent attack, accident, natural disaster, war
03 Related to close persons  - that the individual learns about and those may be heavy injury or illness of a family member or close friend

REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

Reaction to traumatic events can be observed in two different manners: with regards to when they occur and with regards to the area of human reactions they occur in.

1. WITH REGARDS TO THE TIME WHEN THEY OCCUR
   - acute stress reactions that are direct, and can be identified as a set of emotions, thoughts and procedures that occur even during the horror is still lasting or immediately after it and which are pointed towards the elimination and mitigation of the influence of traumatic event
   - post-traumatic stress reactions, which are defined as a set of emotions, thoughts and procedures related to traumatic events and its immediate consequences
2. WITH REGARDS TO THE AREA THEY OCCUR IN
- **physical reactions** can be: fatigue, cold sweat, rapid heartbeat, elevation of blood pressure, tremor, and nausea
- **psychological reactions** can be expressed as: tension, indisposition, fear, sadness, agitation, anger disorientation, impeded assessment of the situation, painful memories of the event, difficult dreams, interruption of concentration, excess sensitivity
- **social reactions** can be expressed as behavioural disorder, such as: light-headedness, anger outbursts, physical conflicts, seclusion, avoidance of feelings and conversations related to trauma, lowered interest in usual activities

THE REACTIONS TO TRAUMATIC EVENTS ARE NOT THE CONSEQUENCE OF DISORDER, MADNESS OR “CRAZINESS”.

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**ACUTE REACTION TO STRESS**

As a consequence of the influence of the stress events, the acute stress reaction may occur. The acute stress reaction represents normal human reaction to abnormal situations the person is exposed to and that is, most frequently, without the consequence.

In such cases, the person is overwhelmed by traumatic situation. The emotions related to the trauma are very painful, the person is in fear, feels increased need to move, cry, yell, vomit and sometimes passes out.

The acute stress reaction is usually time-limited, from several hours to several days.

In most persons, the symptoms of stress reaction pass with time. It is important to explain to the traumatized person that the changes in their psych are only temporary.
POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Large traumatic event or a number of smaller traumatic events can be so intense that the personal coping mechanisms are not sufficiently strong and functional to overcome it. The certain relation of internal and external conditions in that case can cause long-lasting serious consequences in the area of physical and mental health. The consequences do not disappear spontaneously, but represent a source of suffering to the person and lead to serious difficulties in psycho-social functioning. The set of reactions and personality changes, which can occur as consequences of more difficult psychological traumatization, is called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The persons suffering from PTSD with good support of the family and social environment certainly require professional assistance.

PTSD SYMPTOMS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Re-living traumatic event:</th>
<th>Behavior or experiencing as if the traumatic event is being re-experienced</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>repeated disturbing dreams of event</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repeated physiological reaction when exposed whether to internal or external signs that remind of or symbolize some form of traumatic event</td>
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**Avoidance of stimulus** related to trauma and **numbness** of general ability to react (which did not exist prior to trauma):

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The effort to avoid thinking, emotions and conversation related to trauma</th>
<th>The effort to avoid the activities, locations or people who could remind of trauma</th>
<th>Inability to remember the significant aspects of trauma</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited emotion span (for example lack of ability to feel love)</td>
<td>Significant reduction of interest or participation in vital activity</td>
<td>Feeling of distance and detachment from others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Feeling of narrowed future (for example does not expect career, marriage, children or normal course of life)</td>
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**Symptoms of increased tension** (which did not exist prior to trauma):

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<tr>
<th>Concentration interference</th>
<th>Excess caution</th>
<th>Reaction of excess fear</th>
<th>Irritation or anger outbursts</th>
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WITH PERSONS WHO HAD NO EARLIER PERSONALITY DISORDERS, AFTER THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE THE PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOR DISORDERS CAN OCCUR. THE MOST FREQUENT CHARACTERISTICS IN BEHAVIOR THAT DID NOT EXIST PRIOR TO THE EXPERIENCE ARE THE FOLLOWING:

- Hostile attitude towards the environment
- Aggression towards persons from family circle
- Social withdrawal
- Feeling of void and helplessness
- Chronic experiencing of threatening break down and permanent jeopardy
- Alienation

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

01 Give yourself time – a certain time, weeks and even months are required to accept what happened and learn to live with it.
02 Learn what happened – better cope with reality of what happened then think of what could have happened.
03 Connect with others who experienced the same event – spending time with others who experienced the same experience as you can be helpful.
04 Seek support – talking about what happened can be very mitigating. Ask your family and friends to discuss with you.
05 Take some time for yourself – sometimes you will wish to be alone or only with those close to you.
06 Talk – one step at the time, allow your-self to think about the trauma and discuss it with others. DO not worry if you cry while talking, that is natural and, usually, helps. Do the things with the pace you feel comfortable with.
07 Enter the routine – even if you do not feel like eating, try having regular meals, it is important to have stable sleeping habit and exercising can help.
08 Do usual and “normal” things with other people / you will sometimes wish to be with other people but not to talk about what happened. This can also be a part of healing process.
09 Be careful – trauma, people are more prone to accidents.

THE MOST INTENSE CONSEQUENCES IN PEOPLE ARE CAUSED BY THE TRAUMATIC EVENTS CAUSED BY INTENTIONAL HUMAN ACTION. THE WAR IS AMONGST THE MOST SIGNIFICANT TRAUMATIC EVENTS CAUSED BY HUMAN ACTION, LEADING TO THE LOSS, SEPARATION, FAMILY BREAK DOWNS, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL SUFFERING AND GREAT SOCIAL CHANGES.
WHAT NOT TO DO?

01 **Do not “deposit” your emotions** – strong emotions are natural do not be ashamed of them. “Depositing” emotions can make you feel worse and it can deteriorate your health. Allow yourself to discuss what happened and how you feel.

02 **Give yourself some time prior to returning to your old routine** – levels of activity can divert your thoughts from the things that happened. A certain time is required to think about what has happened. Do not take too many obligations.

03 **Do not drink alcohol and do not use opiates** – they can numb the painful memories for some time, simultaneously they will prevent you to accept what happened. Also, they can cause the depression and other health problems.

04 **Postpone large life decisions and changes** – your reasoning in that situation perhaps would not be the best one and you could make wrong decisions. Ask advice from people you trust.

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**Traumatic events occur unexpectedly, suddenly and cause intense fear and feeling of helplessness in people**

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**WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE?**

Many people see that the emotions they have after the traumatic event gradually diminish after approximately one month. However, it may be required to see the professional if your emotions are too much for you or last too long.

- You should seek professional assistance if:
  - You have no one to share your feelings with
  - You cannot cope with your feelings; you are tense, nervous, sad
  - You feel that you are not returning to “normal” after six weeks
  - You have nightmares and cannot sleep
  - You behave badly towards close persons
  - You avoid other people more and more
  - Your job suffers
  - People around you suggest you seek assistance
  - Accidents happen to you
  - Excessively drink or smoke or use opiates in order to cope with your emotions
What is fear?

The fear is one of emotions with a very strong influence over our body and mind. The fear, as emotional reaction, is a natural answer to the situations that the person experiences as dangerous and jeopardizing. The fear “tells” us what to do in dangerous situations, such as, for example, fires or physical assaults, but we can also be afraid when faced with harmless situations such as exams, public speaking and even going to some party.

The feeling of fear can last some shorter period and then pass. However, the feeling of fear can last much longer as well. In some cases, the fear can assume control over our life, acting on our ability to eat, sleep, concentrate, travel, enjoy life and even leave house in order to go to work or school. That can stop you in doing things you wish or have to do. Long-lasting and intense fear has bad influence on your health.

The fear is short-lasting and strong emotion of great emotional tension caused by certain situation. The fear is followed by strong physiological changes in the organism, whose function is to prepare the organism to the forthcoming danger.

PHASES OF FEAR:
- Phase of shock
- Phase of learning of danger and reaction of organism to danger
- Adaptation phase

TYPES OF FEAR
- According to intensity and duration (those are anxiety, acute fear, very intense fear – horror and postponed fear)
- According to the origin (realistic and perceived)
- According to the environment showing it (individual and collective)
WHY ARE WE AFRAID?

However it can be negative, the fear also has its positive side – to protect the survival of species. Although the fear is unpleasant and painful feeling, essentially, it is useful, since it has a power to mobilize the entire body and prepare it for possible combat or escape from danger. The fear does not occur only due to the terrifying situation the person finds him/her-self in but also from current inner mood, but also from the way in which someone interprets the aforementioned situation i.e. how the person reacts to it. Except real event or occurrence causing fear, what is determining is the manner in which person things. Although the object or source of fear is sometimes the same, due to different interpretation of frightening situation, the effects are completely different.

WHAT ARE WE AFRAID OF?

Many things make us feel afraid. Fear of some things – such as fire – can keep us safe. The fear of failure can make you be successful. If the feeling of fear is too strong, it can block you. What you are afraid of and how you act when you are afraid depends on the manner you grew up by or manner you were brought up in, what happened in your life, manner in which you learn and overcome things etc. It is sufficient to learn what you are afraid and why. That can be the first step in solving your problems with fear.

WHAT HAPPENES TO US WHEN WE ARE AFRAID?

When you are afraid, your body and mind function very fast. These are some of reactions that may occur:

- breathing fast
- rapid heart beat
- having dry mouth
- sweating a lot
- having hot and cold sweats
- feel weakness or tension in muscles
- cannot eat
- your stomach is upset
- you have hard time concentrating
- feel as if you were frozen in place or
- running from the danger
The physiological changes caused by the fear have purpose of maximum training of the organism to successfully face the danger observed. This is how the heart starts to beat faster in order to be able to supply as much blood to the muscles as possible. The breathing becomes fast, in order for the organism to have as much oxygen available as possible. The skin becomes pale; in order to lose as little blood as possible if the injury occurs. The muscle tension sometimes causes slight tremor. All senses enhance their alert, and the very thoughts are concentrated on danger observed. The overall organism is in alert stage in order to be able to face the danger observed as successfully as possible.

PHOBIAS

The phobia is strong, irrational fear of some specific item, location or situation. The people with phobias have great need to avoid any contact with the cause of the fear. The thought of contacting the cause of the phobia makes you feel tense or panicky.

Some of the most frequent phobic fears are:

- Acrophobia - fear of heights
- Agoraphobia - fear of open spaces
- Bacillophobia - fear of infection
- Erythrophobia - fear of blushing in society
- Claustrophobia - fear of enclosed spaces
- Xenophobia - fear of foreigners
- Nyctophobia - fear of the dark
- Patofobia - fear of disease
- Metathesiophobia - fear of change
- Gynophobia - fear of beautiful women
- Zoophobia - fear of animals
What is panic attack?

The panic attack is personal feeling of being overwhelmed by physical and psychological experiences of fear. People who have panic attacks are worried whether they could have heart attack, they have rapid heartbeat, start sweating.

What is panic?

The panic, as collective emotion of fear is defined as completely uncontrolled and unfitting behavior of the group of people, caused by very strong fear and phenomena of transfer of such effect on the environment, and it occurs in the situations of real or perceived sudden danger. The physiological basis of the panic is in fear however, panics are enhanced and conditioned by the behavior of other persons in the group. The panicky people cannot control fear, and in collective, they can cause greater fear than is objectively realistic. The state of panic causes a number of highly discomforting bodily sensations, for example, feeling of weakness, strong heartbeat, sweating and tremor. In such state, it is difficult to think and act rationally, since in such situation, our very thinking is under the great influence of the emotions experienced.

When you are very afraid, it would be good to remember these facts that can help you not to become a victim of panic behavior:

01 Physical reactions that you feel then are not dangerous
02 Tension you experience does not mean the danger is real
03 The fear will diminish if you wait for a while. There is no need to run at all costs, except in the situation when you are threatened by the real danger
04 Breathe calmly and slowly, inhale through your nose – exhale through your mouth
05 Apply your relaxation exercise
06 Present physical changes and feeling of discomfort try to suppress or neglect
07 Control your disturbing thoughts

Earlier, it was believed that the heart is a center of fear, but later, it was found that the disorders of heart rhythm are consequence and not the cause of fear and anxiety.
HOW TO HELP OURSELVES?

01 **Face your fear** – if you constantly avoid the situations that scare you, you may stop doing the things you wish to do or have to do.

02 **Meet yourself** – try learning something about your fears. Keep the records of what happened and when it happened. Try setting yourself the goals that are easier to achieve in facing your fear.

03 **Exercise** – increase the amount of physical exercises you do. It can start the chemicals in the brain that elevate your mood. Exercising requires the concentration, and that can turn your thoughts away from the fear.

04 **Relax yourself** – learning relaxation techniques can help you. It can help you, for example, to use shoulder relaxation and deep breathing. Or if you imagine yourself in some relaxing place, you can learn some other things as well, such as yoga, meditation etc.

05 **Healthy diets** – eat a lot of fruit and vegetables and try to avoid too much sugar or large quantities of tea or coffee.

06 **Avoid alcohol** – people have a habit to drink when feeling nervous, but the effects of alcohol consumption can make you feel even more frightened.

07 **Additional (alternative) therapies** – some people find additional therapies being of great assistance, such as massages or herbal products.

08 **Faith/spirituality** – if you are religious or spiritual, that can give you feeling of connection with something greater than you. That feeling can help you.

“Mens sana in corpore sano”
THE OLD ROMAN PROVERB IS