

# 7 Leading Causes of Stress

In 1967, Thomas H. Holmes and Richard H. Rahe, from the University of Washington, did a study on the connection between significant life events and illness. As part of that study, they compiled a chart of the major causes of stress. That chart, which contained 43 causes of stress in 1967, was updated to 55 causes in 2006. Apparently, society is finding more causes to feel stressed.

If you knew the leading causes of stress in your life, would you take action to eradicate them? Can you eradicate stress - or is it an inoperable condition that will be with you all of your life, possibly causing your eventual death?

## Which Is Your Leading Cause of Stress?

### 1. Finances

Most studies agree that finances are a leading cause of stress. In an online poll conducted in 2005 by LifeCare, Inc., 23 percent of respondents named finances as the leading cause of stress in their lives. Financial stress has led the list in many modern polls.

Some who name finances as the leading cause of stress cite major purchases they have to make, such as a home or car. Others are stressed by a loss of income, or mounting credit card debt. For some, financial stress will eventuate in bankruptcy. While college students stress over paying for an education, Baby Boomers and older senior citizens find that retirement income can be a major cause of stress.

### 2. Work

Closely tied to finances as a cause of stress is work. Our jobs or careers seem to cause constant stress. In the LifeCare poll, 21 percent of those responding listed this as the leading cause of stress in life.

How is the workplace a cause of stress? We worry about getting and keeping adequate employment. We worry about new types of work or new responsibilities. We struggle to climb a career ladder, overwhelmed by the demands. Work conditions may change, or we may have interpersonal trouble at work. Students, especially teenagers and college age students, cite school work as a cause of stress. Sometimes, work stress is brought on by others. Sometimes, we bring it on ourselves.

### 3. Family

Family, wonderful though each member may be, is also a leading cause of stress. Arguments erupt with a spouse or other family member. Parents divorce. Children marry. The ebb and flow of family life is filled with stress. A child moves out - an aging parent moves in.

Family health is also a leading cause of stress. A sick family member, a serious injury, pregnancy, miscarriage, or abortion all cause stress. Family changes of other kinds bring stress, too. Adoption, relocation, and job changes for just one family member can cause stress for all.

### 4. Personal Concerns

Personal concerns that are only indirectly created by others are another top cause of stress. Lack of control tops the list of personal concerns. Every human has a deep-seated desire for control over his or her own life. When control is weak or missing in a given area, we experience stress. To many people, a lack of control over their

own time is a leading cause of stress. We want to determine when we do tasks around the home, or at work. Holding a job, participating in the children's carpool to school, driving family to soccer practices, shopping, and scout meetings while trying to keep the household running can create major stress. You would like to control your time, rather than let others' demands control it, but that is not always possible.

We may be involved in legal proceedings that cause stress. We may be wrestling with a bad habit. We may be going through changes. Personal change of any kind can be a cause of stress.

## **5. Personal Health and Safety**

Most people find that personal health is a leading cause of stress. For some, the stress is linked to obesity, and a desire to lose weight. For others, the stress is a personal bad habit that affects health and must be changed. For example, smoking, abuse of alcohol or other drugs. Illness or injury, whether less or more serious, can be a leading cause of stress for many people. Incontinence can be an ongoing concern. Personal health is more or less stressful according to the degree of seriousness and our personal outlook on health.

Personal safety is also a leading cause of stress. Women, more than men, tend to stress about their own and others' safety. Adults tend to stress more than young people, who may act invincible. Crime is a factor, as is

## **6. Personal Relationships**

Whether it is a friendship, dating, separation, marriage, divorce, or re-marriage, a relationship can be a leading cause of stress for many. We all want love, and that is potentially available in relationships, but getting from A to B can be very stressful. Some resort to online relationships that are easier to handle. Others withdraw and become recluses. Either way, the demands on time, finances, and emotions can cause ongoing stress.

## **7. Death**

Probably the most wrenching cause of stress is the death of a loved one or close friend. Even the death of a pet can be stressful. Children are always a source of stress for parents, but when a child dies, the stress is overwhelming. The same is true when a lifetime spouse passes on.

## **Win or Lose**

Causes of stress change as we age. The stressed child who threw tantrums becomes a young student, stressed by the school bully. The young student becomes a teenager, stressed by acne, hormones, and dating. The teenager becomes a young adult trying to handle the stresses of leaving home, adjusting to college life, and managing finances. Life progresses to first jobs, marriage, children, and so on. Even if you move to a secluded cabin in the woods, stress will follow you.

Gaining knowledge of the leading causes of stress is important. Using that knowledge to win over unhealthy stress is vital.

©2007, Anna Hart. Anna brings to her writing her professional training and expertise as an educator. When she writes at <http://www.stressmanagementblog.com> about a leading cause of stress, she does so from well-conducted research. Anna invites you to read more on her blog about the causes of family stress.

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