

Men's Health

THE MAGAZINE MEN LIVE BY

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Stress

If it's good news... Why are you so stressed?

By Chris Ballard

Print



You're stressed if her 'good news' makes you jump out of your skin

Taking a holiday or being promoted can be as stressful as being in a car crash or calling your doctor. Here's how to handle life's most surprising tension-triggers

You've met a gorgeous woman who laughs at your Devdas impression Why you're feeling stressed

The butterflies associated with sleeping with a woman for the first time simply mean you're worried about being at your best. Your body reduces testosterone, diverts blood to major muscle groups, and retracts the testicles—great if you're about to fight a tiger, not so good for tackling the kitten in the tight black dress. "This leads to decreased libido, premature ejaculation, and an increased chance of impotence," Dr Peter Hanson, author of the book *The Joy of Stress*.

Your anti-stress tactics

Once you're home, don't do anything that makes the seduction look contrived. Too much planning implies high expectations for the perfect tryst. So lose the chilled wine, scattered rose petals and crooning Norah Jones. And once you're in bed, take things slowly, spend lots of time on foreplay and relax. The more you worry about impotence, the more likely your blood won't arrive at its destination. To make sure bloodflow is tiptop, avoid alcohol and drink

lots of blood-thinning water instead.

The lump you discovered last month is benign

Why you're feeling stressed

You never really thought about death before but now it's practically your best friend. You have trouble concentrating and shy away from risks. "It's natural to obsess about your mortality after a health scare," says Diana Cherian, consultant clinical psychologist, Fortis, New Delhi.

Your anti-stress tactics

Write down the whirlwind of emotions you're feeling for several days after the doc gives you the word. "It's very therapeutic and calming to write down your thoughts when you have some heightened sense of mortality," adds Cherian. Next, celebrate your all-clear with an exploding cigar. Research suggests that laughter increases the body's level of endorphins, which makes you feel relaxed.

Your team won at last!

Why you're feeling stressed

More excitement means more possible disappointment. "It's like a swinging pendulum," says psychologist Scott Wallace. "The further you pull it to one side, the further it will swing to the other when you let it go." In other words, if Mahender Singh Dhoni and the cricket boys let you down after their astonishing victory last series, you'll be even more angry and irrational.

Your anti-stress tactics

Go to the gym before a game. "When you're stressed, your body elevates your blood-sugar level, heart rate and blood pressure to prepare for a physical threat," says Dr Hanson. "Exercising burns off the excess chemicals and calms you down."

You got a promotion

Why you're feeling stressed

You're worried about the new duties, workload and pressures that come with climbing a rung higher. You're also worried that your old workmates will now think you're a bum. "Men who've just been promoted often have the same complaints as people who suffer mild depression or anxiety," says psychologist Jim Dowding. Deadlines can make you miss meals and lose sleep, thus making you ill.

Your anti-stress tactics

Don't try to manage the longer hours with endless cups of coffee—the caffeine will only increase the adrenaline in your bloodstream at a time when your body is already producing more than enough. Your concentration will suffer. The best strategy is to review your accomplishments and remind yourself that you earned the promotion, says Wallace. "That way you'll be less likely to doubt your ability, reducing the pressure you feel to perform."

You've won Rs 25,00,000

Why you're feeling stressed

You know it's great news, your friends know it's great news. Heck, even your credit card people know it's great news. Unfortunately, your body doesn't. "Confronting any new situation, even if it's a positive one, causes stress," says Dr Hanson. So even though your mind experiences exhilaration, your body experiences headaches and fatigue.

Your anti-stress tactics

Avoid over-indulgence. On receiving good news, it's all too easy to overdo the celebratory drinking and partying. Too much alcohol and a lack of sleep will only compromise your immune system as your body deals with the stress. Of course, what makes things worse with this kind of stress is that nobody sympathises with you. You won truck-loads of money, buddy!

Take things slowly in bed, spend lots of time on foreplay. The more you worry about impotence, the more likely your blood won't arrive at its destination.

You've won the holiday of a lifetime

Why you're feeling stressed

Travel invariably means delays at airports, mix-ups and frayed nerves. All of these will put your body under stress and make you irritable. "The danger on a holiday is that you may react irrationally to the little irritations," says Cherian. "You're so intent on having a good time that all you do is worry about it."

Your anti-stress tactics

"Make a packing list and organise yourself like booking tickets on time," recommends Jeff Davidson, author of *The Joy of Simple Living*. If you are prone to irritability, then munch on peanuts or a bread roll—complex carbohydrates boost your energy levels more than sugary foods.