

Stress Disorders

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This lesson will look at anxiety disorders caused by stressors in a person's environment by examining:

1. Stress Disorders
 - a. Stressors
2. Types of Stress Disorders

1. Stress Disorders

Anxiety disorders are disorders where a person feels anxious in a pervasive, strong, or unnecessary kind of way. Typically this impairs a person's life in some way through the increased anxiety or stress they might feel.

Stress disorders are a type of anxiety disorder caused by something specific within a person's environment. Other anxiety disorders have no real apparent cause or are caused by something that isn't rational.

➦ **EXAMPLE** A generalized anxiety disorder is a general feeling of anxiety that a person has with no actual cause within the environment, and a phobia is an irrational fear of something that isn't a problem or a real danger.

1a. Stressors

Stress disorders have a recognizable stressor, either an event or object within the environment, that threatens a person and causes some degree of stress or anxiety to them. Often, these stressors can be significant events and major changes within a person's life; stressors can even be other people in a person's life.

The following are two types of stress:

- **Traumatic stress:** Refers to major events that cause a person psychological or emotional harm or damage. Events like natural disasters, or being raped or tortured can cause huge amounts of stress or anxiety.
- **Acculturative stress:** Caused by moving to a foreign country and the requirements needed to adapt to a new and strange place. This is especially common for immigrants coming over to the United States.

Stressors such as these can lead to stress disorders. Symptoms that can disrupt a person's life may include

insomnia or nightmares, jumpiness and irritability, and poor concentration. A person might have a short temper, they may practice avoidance or they may emotionally withdraw from others. A person who has experienced traumatic stress may have flashbacks in which they relive the traumatic events, like it is happening to them in real time.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** To a child, a school bully might be an undue stressor in their life.



TERMS TO KNOW

Traumatic Stress

Major events that cause a person psychological or emotional harm

Acculturative Stress

Stress caused by moving to a foreign culture and all the requirements to adapt to a new and strange place

2. Types of Stress Disorders

There are two different types of stress disorders. The only difference between these two is the amount of time that the person displays the symptoms.

- **Acute stress disorder** is characterized by symptoms lasting for less than a month.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder** is characterized by symptoms lasting for a month or longer; this is also known as PTSD.

PTSD is very common for soldiers that are returning from the military duty, and the majority of PTSD cases come from this source. The terrible sights and sounds of war, as well as the constant stress of being in danger or of being attacked can lead to stress disorders. In addition, stress disorders can lead to the development of unhealthy coping strategies.

🔗 **EXAMPLE** People that have acute stress disorder or PTSD might develop problems with drugs or alcohol, or resort to self harm as a way coping with the stress and anxiety.

Therapies like psychodynamic therapy treat stress disorders and can help a person to recognize unhealthy coping strategies and develop alternative healthy ones.



TERMS TO KNOW

Acute Stress Disorder

A stress disorder where symptoms (like trouble sleeping, irritability, poor concentration, avoidance and emotional withdrawal) last for less than a month

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

A stress disorder where symptoms (like trouble sleeping, irritability, poor concentration, avoidance and emotional withdrawal) last for more than a month



SUMMARY

Stress disorders are a type of anxiety disorder caused by a recognizable stressor. This stressor can

be an event or something in an environment which threatens a person; it can even be another person or people. Traumatic stress refers to major events that cause a person psychological or emotional harm, whereas acculturative stress is caused by moving to a foreign country. Symptoms of a stress disorder can negatively impact a person's life. There are two **types of stress disorders**. The symptoms of acute stress disorder last less than a month, while the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, last longer than a month.

Good luck!

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia Author Erick Taggart.



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