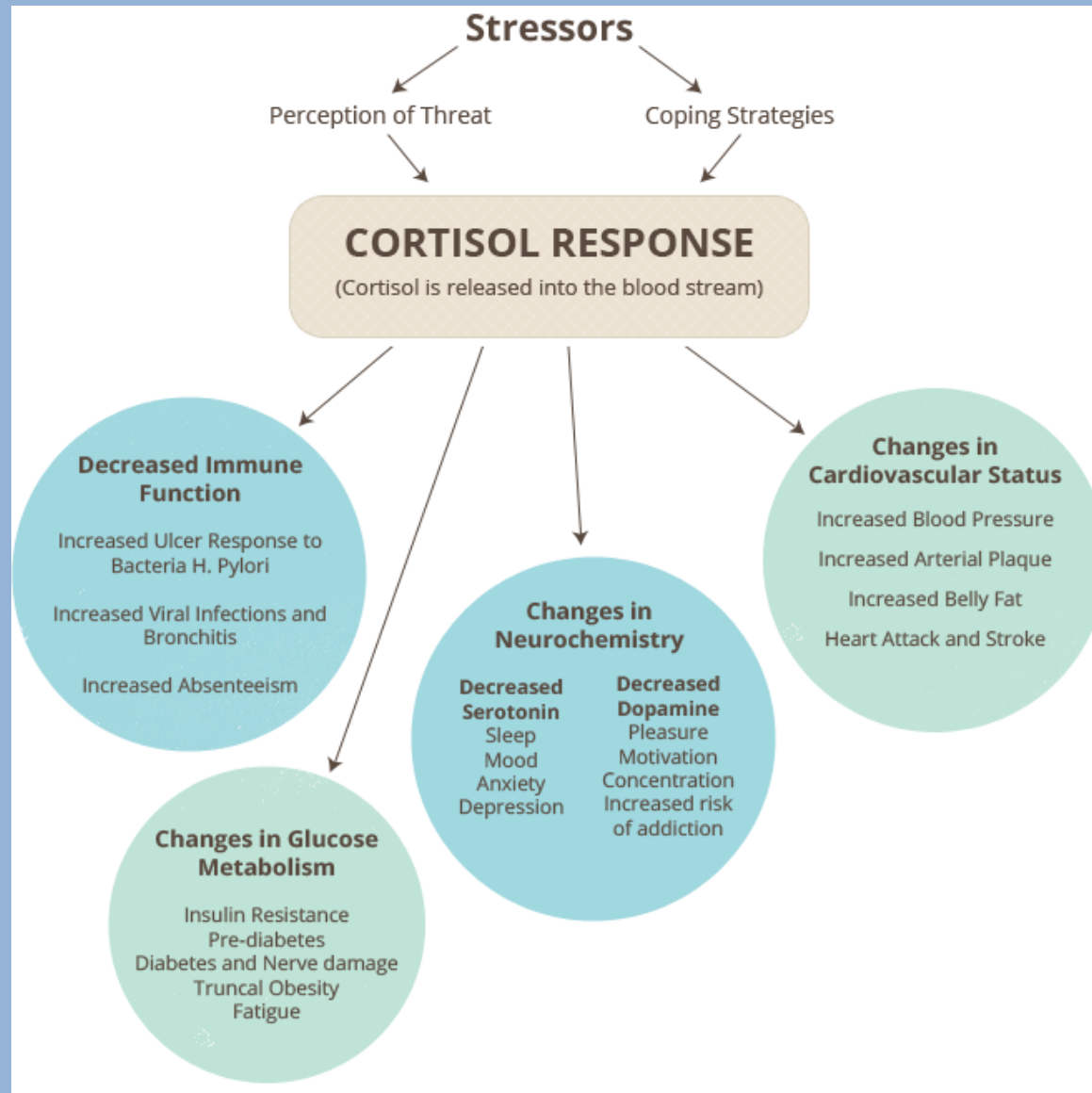


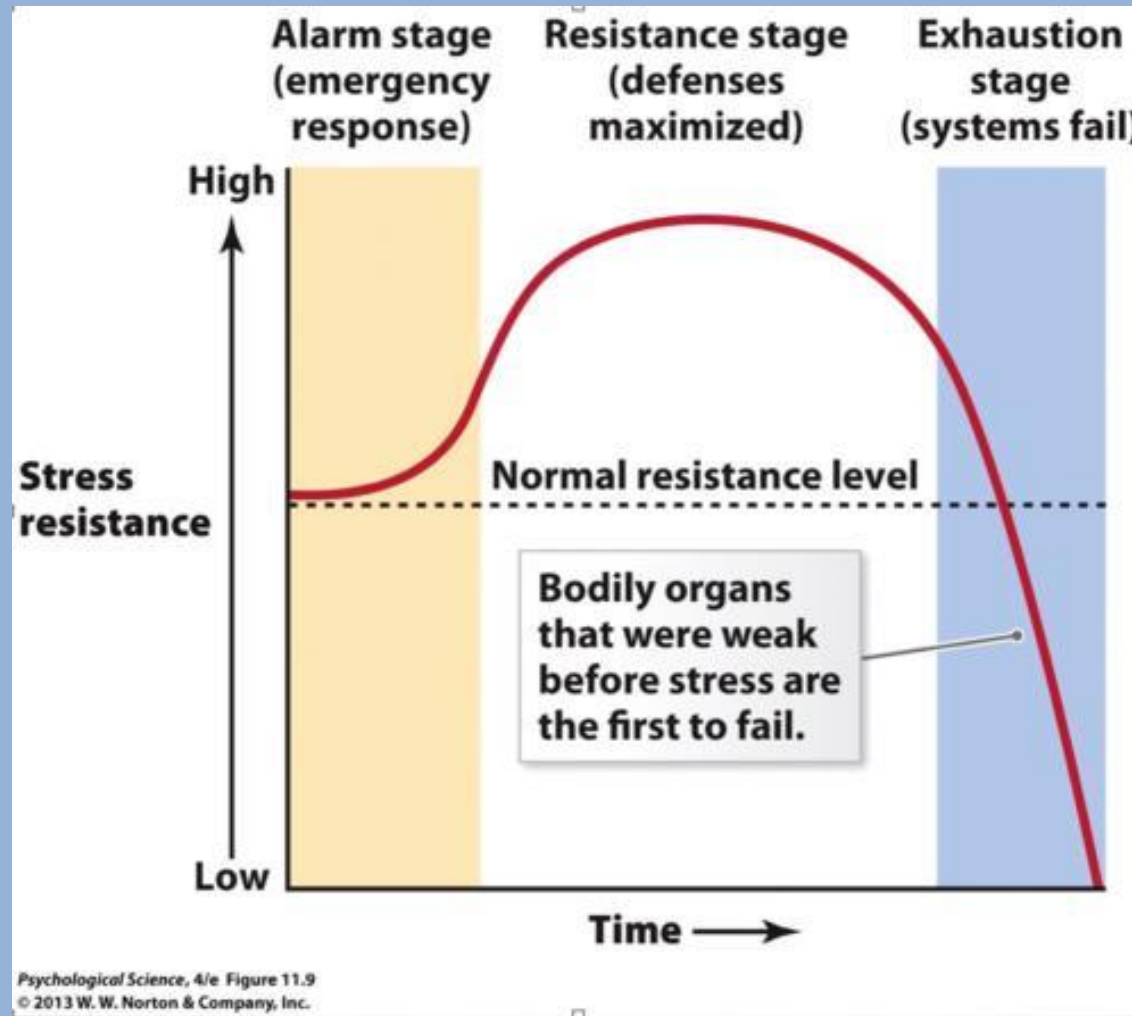
What is stress?

Why do people work? The most common answer is, "In order to be able to satisfy their needs? However, many people think that they live to work. These two, though so different philosophies of life, share a common feature. It is stress. Stress is the body's reaction to a difficult situation, pushing it out of balance (homeostasis). A difficult situation can be both the willingness or need to raise money, as well as a strong internal need for self-fulfilment and self-improvement.

Often stress is very useful because it stimulates action. But at the same time, when it lasts too long, it has adverse health consequences. In the 1940s, physiologist **Hans Selye** discovered that most people who have been subjected to stress factors for long enough, suffer from the same physiological disorders, even if they work under different conditions and are very different from each other. This stereotypical syndrome consists mainly of gastric and duodenal ulceration and adrenal cortex enlargement and hyperfunctionality.



General Adaptation System [GAS]



Definition of stress

Stress - subjective human reactions to difficult situations. Stress lasts longer than a difficult situation. It is expressed by the state of emotional tension, assessment of one's own behaviour, analysis of the causes of the uprising.

Stress is a difficult situation that throws a person out of balance (stress - a state of increased tension, stressor - a situation that caused him/her).

The state of stress can be considered in categories:

- **physiological** - changes occurring in the body in response to stimuli appearing in the environment,
- **psychological** - changes occurring in psychological regulatory mechanisms and activities under the influence of various types of situations. According to psychology, the main sources of stress are threats and deprivation.

Definition of stress (cont.)

Stress is not always harmful - every activity, not only performed, but already during planning and decision making causes stress.

In the case of stress that is conducive to the task - stress that does not exceed our ability to adapt - it is proposed to refer to it as a state of positive stress - "**eustres**". The prefix "eu" means good, positive, beautiful.

In the case of disorganising stress - one that cannot be met by physiological and psychological mechanisms - it is proposed to call it harmful stress - "**distress**". The prefix "dis" means the opposite of "eu".

The same factors, with the same intensity in some people will cause eustress, while in others they may cause distress. It all depends on the state of health, adaptability of the body, but also on the mental attitude - a positive attitude is more often conducive to performing the task than a negative attitude.

Sources of stress at work

Sources of stress at work are:

- **work-related factors** (workload or underload, complexity of work, monotony, poor physical working conditions, time pressure, decision making, occupational risk, shift work),
- **role in the organisation** (responsibility for subordinates, ambiguity of role in the organisation, conflict of roles),
- **professional development** (too fast or too slow promotion, insecure employment, unsatisfied ambitions),
- **structure of the organization and organizational climate** (no useful consultation, limited activity, full-time policy),

Sources of stress at work (cont.)

Sources of stress at work are:

- **interpersonal relations in the organisation** (bad relations with the boss, co-workers, subordinates, problems with the distribution of responsibilities, discrimination),
- **the sphere of contacts between the organisation and its surroundings** (duties towards the organisation and duties towards the family, interests of the organisation and own interests).

Influence of stressors on psyche and behaviour

The influence of stressors on the psyche and behaviour can be as follows:

- increase emotional tension,
- disorganize the action (anxiety, anger, regression - application of primitive techniques to solve the problem, fixation - repetition of one action),
- internal insulation,
- displacement,
- compensation,
- projection.

One of the most important causes of stress is the hurry in which we achieve planned or constantly changing goals.

Causes of stress

A permanent lack of free time is an inherent feature of the life of technological societies - "**time is money**".

We have become a society dependent on time - it is enough to look at how few people do not wear a watch. The workaholism associated with it clearly shows that for people burdened with this condition "free time is time lost".

At the same time, they are aware of the fact that a large part of people want to have free time and that this is associated with a high risk of stressogenic diseases does not disturb them at all. The risk of illness is included in the price of benefits.

Practically always prolonged stress results in a state of clinical fatigue, which results not only in prolonged absence from work, but also in all negative situations in the work environment, immediate surroundings and family. Thus, by having a direct impact on people subjected to certain factors, stress also has an indirect impact on their entire environment.

Stress situations

Scientists **Holmes and Rahe** have developed a **ranking of stressful situations** and assigned a certain number of points to each of them. According to them, 80% of people who score more than 300 points in two years fall into depression or serious illnesses. The list is opened by events such as:

- death of a spouse - 100 points,
- divorce - 73,
- separation - 65,
- imprisonment - 63,
- death of a close family member - 63.

The hierarchy and value of the listed events should be agreed with, however, in the case of many points from the list, their value is characteristic for the American society and should not be directly translated into Polish society, which often has a different emotional relation to certain events and situations in human life.

List of stressful situations

Stress factors according to Holmes and Rahe

Stressful life event	Point value
Death of spouse	100
Divorce	73
Separation	65
Imprisonment	63
Death of a close family member	63
Injury or self-inflicted illness	53
Marriage	50
Job losses	47
Reconciliation with spouse	45
Retirement	45
Family illness	44
Pregnancy	40
Sexual problems	39

List of stressful situations (cont.)

Stress factors according to Holmes and Rahe

Appearance of a new family member	39
Reorganisation at work	39
Change in financial situation	38
Death of a close friend	37
Change in the scope of professional duties	36
Change in the frequency of conflicts with the spouse	35
Taking out a large loan	31
Termination of a mortgage or loan	30
Change in the scope of responsibility at work	29
Leaving the family home by children	29
Misunderstandings with the spouse's family	29
Special personal achievements	28
Taking up or interruption of a spouse's professional activities	26
Start or end of school	26
Change in living conditions	25

List of stressful situations (cont.)

Stress factors according to Holmes and Rahe

Change of personal habits	24
Problems with superiors	23
Change in working time or working conditions	20
Change of dwelling	20
Change of school	20
Changing the way of spending free time	19
Change of behaviour in the religious sphere	19
Behaviour change in the social sphere	18
Taking out a loan	17
Change of sleeping habits	16
Change in the frequency of family meetings	15
Change in dietary habits	15
Leave	13
Christmas	12
Minor offences against the law	11

Personality and stress

A person's personality determines to some extent his or her susceptibility to stress and ability to work in stressful situations. The most frequently shown type of personality in the context of resistance to stress is the so-called individual type A.

Type A - an individual who reacts excitably to the state of non-compliance with the requirements of work; a stressed person living in a constant hurry.

Type B - a stress-resistant person who has produced reactions that are not affected by this stress.

Type C - suffocates emotional states in itself, does not react, kills problems inside the nervous system (loss of immunity).

Effects of stress

The effect of stressors depends on many factors. Among other things, **individual work-related differences** stemming from genetic differences are very important:

- **genetic differences** - such as gender, physical structure, state of physical health,
- **acquired properties** - age, education, belonging to a given social class, skills,
- **disposable properties** - coping styles, preferences, behavioural patterns.

The problem of stress, although its importance is constantly emphasized, seems to be underestimated. In the EU Member States, expenditure on stress management accounts for about 10% of gross national product.

Less serious treatment of stress in the workplace causes an increase in undesirable physiological symptoms, and subjective symptoms of their impact are still not treated as factors lowering the quality of work, directly translating into the economy of actions at the level of both individuals, organisations and the state.