

# Stress and Addiction – The Overlooked Connection

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Stress is the mental and/or emotional strain we experience under conditions of physical or emotional challenge, demand, threat, or adversity. The impacts of extreme stress can go beyond causing you to feel unhappy, upset, or fatigued. Brief stress caused by exciting challenges can be generally beneficial for people. But, chronic stress due to continuously negative circumstances or severe stress from a traumatic experience can cause damage to your mental, emotional, and physical health. One serious effect of excessive stress is increased vulnerability to substance addiction.

Topics covered on this page:

**Are you or a loved one struggling with stress & addiction? Renaissance Ranch Ogden is here to help. We have the best treatment options available, and we're ready to get started today.**

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## Kinds of Stress

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Stress is a normal physical response to external events and conditions. In fact, stress is an essential physiological safeguard that activates necessary self-protective responses to external threats. The National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) categorizes various types of stress this way:

Type of Stress	Cause of Stress
Normal stress	Normal stress related, for example, to your job, family, and other obligations.
Sudden stress	Acute stress is caused by unexpected changes that trigger stress, such as a job loss, a financial loss, etc.
Stress due to trauma	Extreme stress from, for example, witnessing a traumatic incident or being exposed to <u>the perceived danger</u> to your physical safety, such as in a natural disaster or being under threat of an attack.

Further, stress is classified as either chronic or acute:

- *Chronic stress*: Continuing stress due to ongoing causes of stress hormone production. For example, a stressful job, relationship, financial situation, etc., can cause chronic stress.
- *Acute stress*: Stress experienced due to a specific event that is emotionally or physically challenging or threatening. For example, a stressful interview, accident, or physical confrontation. Acute stress can help you successfully process the situation.

## Health Effects of Stress

Moderate temporary stress generally is not found to have significant long-term health effects. However, chronic stress or trauma-induced stress that persists over time can seriously impact some or all aspects of your life and your health. A stressful experience triggers stress hormones, like cortisol, to increase, and the body goes into flight-or-fight mode. Staying in that mode for prolonged periods (chronic stress) can lead to serious health consequences, such as:

- High cholesterol
- Hypertension
- Heart disease
- Decreased immune responses
- Type II diabetes
- Anxiety
- Depression

## How are Stress and Addiction Related?

The connection between stress and widespread substance abuse cannot be overestimated. The American Psychological Association (APA) has identified stress relief as one of the most common reasons why people use drugs. Drug or alcohol use can initially make people feel less stressed, but continuing use leads to *more* stress. For instance, substance abuse frequently leads to:

- Exposing yourself to dangerous, illegal, or other high-risk situations.
- Increased numbers or intensity of arguments with loved ones.
- You are no longer engaging in favorite activities that you enjoy and that relieve stress.
- Diminished performance at school or work is leading to failing grades, job loss, debt, family conflicts, etc.
- Worsening emotional and mental health symptoms caused by substance abuse can lead to more extreme stress, anxiety, or depression, triggering more drug or alcohol abuse.

*Stress and Addiction Relapse:* In what too often becomes a vicious circle, these ill-effects of substance abuse frequently lead to *more* substance abuse, which leads to increases in the unhealthy effects! Using drugs or alcohol as a way to cope with stress often leads to addiction. For people in addiction recovery, this can lead to relapse. For much safer and more effective ways to manage stress, see helpful alternative ideas and great resources for stress management and addiction recovery.

## Staying Sober with Stress

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The ways you choose to manage life's normal stresses can set your course for a future of happiness and peace of mind, or for addiction, increased stress, anxiety, and potential depression. It can be a choice between preserving your physical and mental health or forfeiting those long-term benefits for immediate and brief stress relief. Choosing healthy ways to cope with stress is fundamental for lasting recovery for people already in recovery from addiction.

Some very effective ways to help yourself feel better when experiencing overwhelming stress include the ideas on the list below. These are recommended for you by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Renaissance Ranch addiction recovery center, Ogden, Utah, and others:

- Practice deep breathing
- Write in a journal
- Practice self-care
- Exercise
- Meditate
- Spend time with friends
- Spend time with loved ones
- Get counseling, as needed
- Volunteer
- Practice gratitude
- Get sufficient sleep
- Meet your obligations

## Stress and Addiction Treatment at Renaissance Ranch Ogden, Utah

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We provide comprehensive substance addiction treatment in the comfortable environment of our state-of-the-art Addiction Recovery Center in Ogden, UT. Renaissance Ranch offers assessments, interventions, recovery programs, and outpatient addiction therapy. We help our clients learn the science behind substance abuse and the connection between stress management and addiction recovery. Our professional addiction treatment team helps you develop the tools to manage stress, find peace of mind, and achieve and maintain a life free from substance abuse.

**Call Renaissance Ranch Ogden, UT, anytime (24/7) at (385) 222-3737, or contact us online to schedule your free assessment with our team and start your recovery from addiction!**

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*We provide affordable treatment that helps families heal and restore hope.*