

## Let's look at stress

### What happens when our bodies become stressed?

Within the brain, **neurotransmitters** are responsible for sending and receiving messages between cells. There are two types of **neurotransmitters**. One group are the "**happy**" messengers and the other group are called the "**sad**" messengers. The "happy" transmitters are made up of a group **Serotonin, Noradrenalin** and **Dopamine**.


**Serotonin** regulates the **body clock**. It is usually the first messenger that begins to fail under distress and this often causes *sleeplessness*.

**Noradrenaline** is responsible for **energy levels**. It is a messenger that makes us feel energised. When this messenger fails you will begin to feel a *lack of energy*.

**Dopamine** is the neurotransmitter that runs the **pleasure** centre of the brain. When this messenger fails you will find it hard to take pleasure in the things that you usually enjoy. You will become *sad and unhappy*.

### So what causes stress?

Put a tick next to anything that you feel that you are being affected by.

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- Changing schools
  - Exams
  - Arguments
  - Homework
  - Being harassed, teased or bullied
  - The death of a family member or close friend
  - Going on a first date
  - High expectations placed on you by others
  - Parents / Teachers / Coaches
  - Participating in extra curricular activities
  - Trying to fit everything in my life that I want to do
  - Not fitting in socially / feeling like nobody likes me
  - Being ahead or behind in physical development
  - Family problems such as abuse, fighting, alcoholism in the home

## What does stress look like?

There are many signs that tell us we are over-stressed. That's the time to deal with it. Don't ignore it or think it will go away. If we don't try and reduce stress our bodies will start to get sick. This may be in the form of:

Physical exhaustion

Indigestion

Inability to sleep (insomnia)

Lack of concentration

Depression

Heart beats faster

Loss of self-confidence

Nervousness

Skin rashes

Anxiety

Colds /flu

Aggression and anger

Headaches

Tiredness

Sore muscles

Tension

Diarrhea

Constipation

Stomach pains

### IMPORTANT

If you have a number of these symptoms or one that persists for a period of time you may be suffering from stress and you should talk to a parent, doctor, teacher or close family friend.

Stress won't go away on it's own. You need to **ACT** to release it. Why not look at the ***Stress busters worksheet*** for some actions you can take or visit some of the websites in the **Weblinks** section of this Module.