



WELLNESS CORNER

BODY SIGNALS WE LEARN TO IGNORE AT WORK

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John thought he was handling his pressure well.

- Headaches? Probably poor sleep.
- Tight shoulders? Bad posture.
- 3am wake-ups? Just thinking ahead.
- Fatigue, forgetfulness, and irritability? Part of being busy.

Like many high performers, he didn't think he was overstressed. He thought he was just dealing with a few physical aches and a demanding schedule. What John didn't realize was that his body had recognized the overload long before his mind did.

The Body Keeps Score

Many of us think of stress as something we feel emotionally. In reality, stress often appears physically first. Our nervous system does not distinguish between a difficult client conversation, a tight deadline, or an actual physical threat. It responds to all of them by activating the exact same survival system.

When stress is short-lived, this response is helpful. Your body releases adrenaline and cortisol, increases focus and energy, and prepares you to perform. The problem begins when the pressure never seems to stop. Instead of switching back into recovery mode, many people remain in a continuous state of alert. [1]



The Traps We Fall Into

When stress starts showing up physically, most people respond in one of three ways:

Endure

- "I'll deal with it later."
- The workload gets completed, but the physiological stress remains.

Escape

- More coffee to stay alert.
- More scrolling, TV, or other numbing habits to unwind.
- Temporary relief without actual recovery.

Rationalize

- "I'm just tired."
- "It's probably my age."
- "It's the chair, mattress, or my posture."



Sometimes those explanations are true. But when multiple symptoms appear together and linger, the body may be telling a larger story.





The Cost of Ignoring the Signal

When the body's stress response stays activated for too long, it can affect multiple systems [2]

Listen Before the Body Forces a Pause

Learning to recognize these early warning signs is a vital first step for our well-being. Here is how to start.

Listen and understand:

When a symptom surfaces, get curious rather than dismissive. What is your body trying to tell you? Does it need time to slow down? Is it asking for rest, movement, nourishment, or stillness?

Practice relaxation techniques:

Engage in deep breathing, mindfulness, or gentle movement – even five minutes a day makes a difference. You don't need to wait for a long holiday to reset; small, daily moments of calm are what your nervous system needs most.

Seek social support:

Reach out to trusted friends, family, or colleagues. Building a life-enhancing social network provides an emotional buffer that helps soothe stress and worry.

Have You Been Ignoring the Signals?



Take a quick self-check. How many of the following apply to you?

- ▶ Waking between 2am and 4am unable to switch off your thoughts
- ▶ Frequent headaches or migraines
- ▶ Persistent neck, shoulder, or jaw tension
- ▶ Feeling exhausted after a supposedly restful weekend
- ▶ Becoming more forgetful, distracted, or impatient than usual

If three or more sound familiar, your body may be carrying a stress load it hasn't had the chance to fully set down. By tuning into your body's early warning signs, you can shift from enduring the pressure to proactively managing your long-term well-being. Your body is already communicating, it's time to start listening.

References:

- 1 Harvard Health Publishing. (2024).**
Understanding the stress response. Harvard Medical School.
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthy-aging-and-longevity/understanding-the-stress-response>
- 2 American Psychological Association. (2024).**
Stress effects on the body.
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