

Stress and Mental Distress

by E H Kua, S M Ko, K E K Ung, C S L Fones
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Alvin Toffler in his classic book "Future Shock" talked about a world that was changing at an ever-increasing pace. Three decades down the road, we are living in the very world he predicted. This timely book thus serves as a useful guide to coping with the stresses that accompanies our fast-paced life.

The book is organised in an easy-to-read format in which 50 common questions on stress are covered in detail. Couched in clear, simple language, topics covered include the causes of stress, the associations between stress and mental or physical illness and special types of stress. This book can be read by all in the family; students will find helpful tips of coping with examination stress, and retirees on the stress brought on by retirement.

Also interesting are the scales on stress such as the Stress Assessment Scales, Life Events Checklist and even a "Kiasu Behaviour Scale". No doubt many Singaporeans would be able to identify readily with some of the questions posed! Though partially tongue-in-cheek, it gently reminds us that "kiasuism" and one-upmanship contribute to stress in our lives.

The most empowering section, though, is on the different strategies for managing stress. Self-help techniques such as deep muscle relaxation and visual imagery are simple to grasp and easy to use as well. A list of organisations and agencies are included at the back; what would be useful as well may be a checklist on how to recognise when one needs professional help.

In all, this informative and user-friendly book should be included in every family bookshelf.

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