

Frustration – more harm than you think?

You get stressed out by other drivers on your morning commute. Then your DVR fails to record the finale of *The Bachelor*. And, as usual, you can't seem to dig out of your email inbox.

You're likely aware these small stress factors play a negative role in your health and well-being. But research suggests they may cause more harm than you think.

The research, published in *Psychological Science*, suggests that even small stressors can be damaging to our health if we let them linger – that is, they may carry the potential to lead to chronic conditions and worse functional limitations in the long run.

Researchers examined data from a longitudinal study about participants' daily emotional states across eight consecutive days. During the study, participants documented how much time in each 24-hour day they felt nervous, worthless, hopeless, lonely, fearful, jittery, irritable, shameful, upset, angry, frustrated, restless or as though everything took effort. The participants were also asked what caused the feeling(s).

A decade later, researchers followed back up with the study participants to find out if they had developed any chronic illnesses. They found that those who had reported experiencing difficulty letting go of the negative feelings associated with small daily stressors were more likely to be suffering from chronic illness.

The effects remained the same after factoring in gender, education level, health at baseline and adjusting to reflect recent stress factors.

Researchers believe these lingering negative emotions can weaken the body and cause an individual's health to deteriorate, and that these negative moods can lead to poor decision making and an ultimate deterioration in health as a result of those choices.

"It's important to have a tool box of coping behaviors for even the small daily stressors that occur," says Dr. Tabatha Greene, psychologist at Advocate Medical Group. Dr. Greene offers the following suggestions:

- Acknowledge the emotions you are feeling
- Talk with a friend or family member
- Release stress through exercise, meditation or yoga
- Regularly list the things in life for which you are grateful

Holly Brenza, Advocate Health Enews, December 3, 2018

Wishing you joy and good health,
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