

# THE FIVE LEVELS OF STRESS

Adapted from material by Karl Menninger, PhD Psychologist  
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- LEVEL 1**      Slips of the tongue, Itching, Sleeping, Eating, Hyperactivity, Jerky movements, Increase in smoking, drinking.
- LEVEL 2**      Rationalization, Denial, Suppression - nervous activity increases with emphasis on avoidance of dealing with the problem or reality that must be dealt with sooner or later. (personal maneuvering to avoid stressful inputs is visible but usually not socially intrusive or upsetting).
- LEVEL 3**      Aggressive Outbursts, Attacks on Others, Social Offenses, The persons ego is in jeopardy. (Maneuvering to avoid stress escalates into others boundaries, with social involvement with blaming and projection).
- LEVEL 4**      Gross Confusion, Flight from Reality, Unable to perform simple Everyday acts with safety and accuracy. Sometimes distortions or hallucinations may occur.
- LEVEL 5**      Failure to perform life-sustaining acts; Suicide attempts (abandonment of will to live )

1. The first step in stress management is recognition and awareness.
2. The second step in stress management is having a plan for options.
3. The third step in stress management is **DOING** the plan with support.

Differentiating between LEVEL 1 and LEVEL 2 is the hardest to do. People generally have no trouble with the dramatic or obvious nature of LEVEL 3. Because we are busy, and often distracted, with our daily activities, we often do not pay critical attention to de-escalating when we are at LEVEL 1.

Snow-balling occurs when LEVEL 1 does not work and people find themselves in LEVEL 2 and starting to get desperate. Without a plan, people often have a tendency to blame others, while they are in a desperate state (either quietly or with visible agitation), and unable to think and plan clearly.

## PLAN EARLY AND ACT EARLY

### THREE STEPS

in stress management

1. Be aware of the stressors.
2. Make a plan with multiple options.
3. Use your plan, **EARLY** into stress.

**THE EARLIER THE INTERVENTION THE EASIER IT IS  
THE EARLIER THE INTERVENTION, THE SAFER IT IS**

**EARLIER IS EASIER  
EARLIER IS SAFER**



**OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING  
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.**