

# For My Loved Ones

## I Have a Stress-Related Illness

**What is that?** Stress-Related Illness has been labeled with many different terms but, as the name implies, it is a real physical condition causing pain and/or other symptoms that is linked to stress.

**Is this considered a mental health problem?** It is more complicated than that. Research has shown constant communication between the brain and the body. The brain can create real, physical symptoms that can be felt anywhere in the body. In addition, the body can signal the brain that it is not doing well. This 2-way communication occurs through nerve pathways and helps us understand if we are safe or take action if we are not.

Many factors can trigger these nerve “danger pathways,” including past or present stressors, traumatic memories, and even our own emotions when we worry or have negative thoughts. Fortunately, these pathways can also communicate positive messages that we are safe, thereby turning off the danger signals and relieving the physical symptoms.

This process is a universal human response to stress overload. It is how our bodies work and everyone has experienced it. For example, if you have ever blushed when embarrassed or had “butterflies” when nervous about a performance or test, then you know the effects of this danger signal being activated.

**What kinds of stress are you talking about?** All kinds of stress can lead to physical symptoms in the body - job stress, relationship stress, not taking time for self-care, traumas and stressors from the past, and even stress from your childhood.

**Are you going to get better?** I believe so. I am working to identify and treat all the stressors that are contributing to my condition. Most people steadily improve though there can be ups and downs along the way.

**How can I help?** You have already, by reading this paper. Also, don't be afraid to ask me how I'm doing. I'll let you know if I want to talk about it or not. In the meantime, please understand if I'm not at my best and need time for myself.

**How can I learn more?** Thanks for being interested in what I'm going through. There is more good information at [PPDAssociation.org](http://PPDAssociation.org).