

REDUCING STRESS IN YOUR LIFE

What is Stress?

Stress is the way that we respond to change in our lives. It is the way our bodies react physically, emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally to any change in the status quo. These changes do not have to be only negative things; positive change can also be stressful. Even imagined change can cause stress.



Stress is highly individual. A situation that one person may find stressful may not bother another person. Stress occurs when something happens that we feel imposes a demand on us. When we perceive that we cannot cope or feel inadequate to meet the demand we begin to feel stress.



Stress is not all bad. We need a certain amount of stress in our lives because it is stimulating and motivating. It gives us the energy to try harder and keeps us alert. When we find ourselves in situations that challenge us too much we react with the “fight or flight” stress response. Stress actually begins in our brains and it is expressed in our body. Once we perceive a stress our body sends our chemical messengers in the form of stress hormones to help our bodies handle the stress.

Chronic Stress

Stress hormones are important to help us meet the demands of stress occasionally but if they are repeatedly triggered disease will occur. Our body does signal us when we are we are experiencing the effects of chronic stress.

Physical Symptoms:

Tension, fatigue, insomnia, muscle aches, digestive upset, appetite change, headaches, restlessness



Mental Symptoms:

Forgetfulness, low productivity, confusion, poor concentration, lethargy, negativity, busy mind



Emotional Symptoms:

Anxiety, mood swings, irritability, depression, resentment, anger, impatience, worrying, feeling pressured



Social Symptoms:

Lashing out, decreased sex drive, lack of intimacy, isolation, intolerance, loneliness, avoiding social situations, alcohol, tobacco, and/or drug use



Spiritual Symptoms:

Apathy, loss of direction, emptiness, loss of life's meaning, unforgiving, no sense of purpose



Managing Stress

Being able to manage stress is important in order to live healthy, happy and productive lives.



Negative Coping:

Ignoring the problem, withdrawal, procrastination, alcohol / drug use, smoking, overeating, inactivity, being over-committed, buying things you don't need.



Positive Coping:

Become aware of your reactions, maintain a healthy balanced diet, exercise regularly, balance work and play, practice relaxation techniques, meditate, develop a support system, pace yourself, simplify your life.



Self-Care Techniques:

Daily choices to care for oneself helps one's feelings of worth, and increases a sense of well-being.

Deep slow diaphragmatic breathing

Listen to relaxation tapes

Avoid caffeine

Use positive affirmations

Do something you love

Allow extra time for projects

Leave work at the office

Do not ruminate over the past

Try to live in the present

Take a brisk walk

Listen to your body's signals

Finish what you start



Do less, enjoy more!

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