

LifeResources - Member Assistance Program

Managing Stress

Useful Information For Employees & Family Members

It is difficult not to feel stressed in today's current environment.
This packet offers useful tips on how to identify how stress affects us as well as ways to reduce these symptoms.

We encourage you to call
LifeResources - Member Assistance Program
at **1.800.759.8122** for further assistance in reducing stress.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Manage Your Time - Manage Your Life



Helpful Resources

Related websites

- www.mindtools.com
- www.selfgrowth.com
- www.betweenfriends.org
- www.healthresourcecorp.com

Books/Audio Tapes

- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Steven R. Covey
- Time Management from the Inside Out: The Foolproof System for Taking Control of Your Schedule and Your Life by Julie Morgenstern
- Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity by David Allen
- The Procrastinator's Handbook: Mastering the Art of Doing It Now by Rita Emmett

Note: Audio & Book versions of these resources are available at your public library or local bookstore.

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Here are some helpful things you can do to increase efficiency in the home:

- Keep a log for two weeks. Write down regular routines or frequent occurrences that “drive you nuts.”
- Think of services you can pay someone else to do such as laundry, cleaning, cooking, clothing alteration, etc. You might be able to hire a teenager or ask an adult neighbor to do some errands such as marketing or sitting in your home to wait for a delivery.
- Think with a cooperative spirit. Can you exchange babysitting with a friend or share school or activity pick-ups?
- When you delegate chores, don't re-do them.
- Consolidate your trips whenever possible.
- Use the “Swiss Cheese approach” to large tasks. We often put off certain tasks knowing we can't complete them. It's ok to do part of a large task without feeling guilty that it wasn't done completely.
- If appropriate, have members of the family do their own laundry. Let each take the consequences of no clean clothes.
- Shop only once a week. Plan meals ahead.
- Cook in quantity. Make soups, stews and casseroles that can last for a few meals.
- Freeze foods in amounts you need for one meal. Remember to label all frozen foods.

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HEALTH RESOURCES

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Types of Stress & Relaxation Techniques

Part II

If you checked odd-numbered questions in Part I, you tend to experience physical stressors; if you chose even-numbered responses, then you have emotional stressors. Some people experience both!

Here are some helpful activities that can help.

Physical - Bodily or a Somatic Stress

- Deep Muscle Relaxation
- Progressive Relaxation
- Meditation that focuses on breathing
- Hatha Yoga
- Massage
- Exercise

Mental - Cognitive Stress

- Meditation
- Hatha Yoga
- Deep Breathing with Visualization
- Active Generation of Cognitive Behavior (Playing Chess, etc.)
- Involvement of Entire Perceptual-Cognitive System (*Watching TV, Reading*)
- Activities (*Dancing, Walking, Sports*)
- Hypnosis

Combination of Physical & Mental Stress

- Vigorous Physical Exercise -
Jogging, Running, Biking, Hiking, Swimming, Tennis, Martial Art Forms, Basketball, Volleyball
- Any activity that demands one's concentrated physical and mental

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STRESS MANAGEMENT

Six Myths About Stress

1

“All people respond to stress in the same way.”

There are as many ways to handle stress as there are people . It really depends on how you view stress in general. Some people are energized by stress, others become exhausted and feel burned-out. Depending on your view of stress, you may respond by coping in any number of productive or unproductive ways.

2

“It is easy to identify the causes of excessive stress.”

Many causes of excessive stress are considered to be “good things” and therefore are not initially seen as stressful. Positive life events such as marriage, buying a new home or car, or even getting a promotion, can all cause excessive stress. It’s important to remember the variety of life events, both good and bad that create stress.

3

“I always know when I begin to suffer from excessive stress.”

People often go about their lives not paying attention to physical and emotional signs of stress. Many times people go weeks, months or even years before they begin to suspect that their reactions to life events are not productive or healthy. It often takes a crisis or tragedy to bring this awareness about.

4

“Doing a few minutes of relaxation each day will not ease my stress!”

If done regularly, it’s surprising how taking a brisk walk, using breathing exercises, meditation, practicing yoga or even reading a good book can dramatically reduce your stress level.

5

“Stress-related symptoms and psychosomatic disease are all in my head; therefore they really can’t hurt me.”

Medical research has proven that excessive stress can contribute to the acceleration of ailments such as headaches, depression, insomnia, ulcers and heart disease. When one feels “symptoms”, it is the body’s way of telling us that perhaps too much is going on and that we need to pay attention to our current life situations.

6

“I’m not responsible for the stress in my life — stress is unavoidable these days — we’re all victims.”

It’s natural to feel helpless at times when stressful events happen. Stress is unavoidable.

However, we are the only ones who can reduce the amount of stress in our own lives.

Individually, we know what’s best for ourselves and what can relieve feelings of being overwhelmed.

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HEALTH RESOURCES

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Proven Stress Busters



Helpful Resources

Related websites

- www.mentalhelp.net/
- www.webmd.com
- www.selfgrowth.com
- www.healthresourcescorp.com

Books/Audio Tapes

- The Relaxation Response by Herbert Benson & Miriam A. Klipper
- Your Present: A Half-Hour of Peace by Susie Mantell
- The One-Minute Mediator: Relieving Stress and Finding Meaning in Everyday Life by David A. Nichol & Bill Birchard
- Life Is Not a Stress Rehearsal: Bringing Yesterday's Sane Wisdom into Today's Insane World by Loretta Laroche

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Stressed at work? Stressed at home? Did you know that stress is now the #1 reason behind sickness from work? Here are some common sense ways to reduce stress levels in your life.

- Breathe consciously. Pay attention to your breathing. If you find your focus wandering return your attention to the ebb and flow of your breath. This calms the body.
- Imagine an energy bubble, like a balloon, around you. Visualize this bubble as a stress shield. Anything stressful will bounce off of it. The unconscious mind doesn't distinguish "reality" from imagination and releases tension in the mind/body.
- Exercise, exercise, exercise. Exercise breaks insulin resistance and helps end the vicious cycles of stress-eating, over-indulging in alcohol, cigarette smoking and other unhealthy habits.
- Reduce the items on your to-do list by one third. You will accomplish more with greater ease.
- Hot bath. Hot meal. Hot cup of tea. Moist heat is calming and expansive, a healer and stress reliever.
- Massage is the message. The power of touch relieves muscular tension, eases the joints, and refreshes the skin.
- Observe the pleasure principle. Psychologists know that praise, rewards and pleasure motivate people most. If you don't get lots of validation for what you do, then build in small rewards for yourself at intervals between getting tasks done.
- Back to nature. The calming sounds of the ocean washing onto shore or the wind rushing through the trees are like the first lullabies our mothers sang us. Fresh air and beautiful scenery occur in environments incompatible with stress. They please and soothe the senses.

Are you creating pleasure and purpose in your life?

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HEALTH RESOURCES

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Mood Symptom Response Test



PART I

When you're under stress, which of these symptoms do you typically experience? Check each one that fits you.

1. ____ My heart beats faster.
2. ____ I find it difficult to concentrate because of uncontrollable thoughts.
3. ____ I feel jittery in my body.
4. ____ Some thoughts run through my mind and bother me.
5. ____ I get frequent headaches.
6. ____ I keep going over decisions I have to make or have made.
7. ____ I perspire.
8. ____ I can't keep anxiety-provoking thoughts out of my mind.
9. ____ I eat too much or lose my appetite.
10. ____ I lack motivation.
11. ____ I feel tense in my stomach.
12. ____ I have difficulty falling asleep because I worry too much.
13. ____ I nervously pace.
14. ____ I feel discouraged and don't think I can solve my problems.
15. ____ My blood pressure goes up.
16. ____ I keep thinking about the mistakes I have made.
17. ____ I want to smoke or take a drink.
18. ____ I feel irritable and angry over little things.

How did you do? Did you notice a pattern on how you answered the questions?

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HEALTH RESOURCES

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Using Humor At Work



Helpful Resources

Related websites

- www.humormatters.com
- www.larrywilde.com
- www.humorbeing.com
- www.stress.org

Books/Audio Tapes

- Lighten Up: Survival Skills for People Under Pressure
by Roma Felible & C.W. Metcalf
- Time Shifting: Creating More Time to Enjoy Your Life
by Stephan Rechtschaffen, M.D.
- Managing To Have Fun
by Matt Weinstein
- Life Is Not a Stress Rehearsal: Bringing Yesterday's Sane Wisdom into Today's Insane World
by Loretta Laroche

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Recent studies show that one in four employees have an anxiety-related illness due to job stress. American workers consume 15 tons of aspirin a day! If you suffer from Terminal Professionalism, consider using laughter instead of pain medication to cope with stress.

Did You Know...

- The average adult laughs only 15 times a day while the average child laughs about 150 times a day.
- Employers consider a sense of humor a positive quality in employees.
- Humor has been shown to enhance group problem solving.
- 100 laughs is equal to ten minutes of aerobic exercise.
- Laughter can reduce stress hormones.
- Muscle tension is significantly lowered through laughter and a real "belly" laugh can relax muscles the same way as a vigorous massage.
- People who know how to laugh are positive thinkers.

It's Been Proven That Laughter At Work:

- Improves productivity
- Reduces tensions and boredom
- Does not distract employees from their duties
- Can establish rapport
- Can neutralize emotionally charged interpersonal situations
- Is cost effective
- Reduces absenteeism
- Improves morale
- Increases creativity

It's important to take your work seriously, but also take time during the day to step back and observe or participate in humorous situations.

Adapted from www.humormatters.com

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