

Health Tips

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Health Tip: Stress Management Strategies



Stress is the body's response to any demand or pressure. These demands are called stressors. Stressors include major life events, such as a divorce or the birth of a child. They also include chronic strains that last over a period of time, such as living on unemployment. And stressors include daily or occasional strains, like taking care of a sick child. Surprising as it seems, some stress has positive outcomes. "Good stress" can give an athlete the energy to excel in physical

competition. It can stimulate a scientist's thinking or a composer's creative energy. It can give many people the energy to solve problems and to finish hard work.

Often, however, our lives are filled with many demands that continue over a long period of time. Demands such as work overload may result in negative stress, which is called distress. Unrelieved stress can take an emotional as well as physical toll, in the form of anxiety or depression, or high blood pressure and heart disease. If unattended, stress can seriously damage physical health; psychological well-being; and relationships with friends, family, and coworkers.

Major problems can be avoided if symptoms of stress are identified early. Some of the signs of serious problems with stress are: persistent, intense depression; chronic sleeping and eating; inability to concentrate; outbursts of violence; persistent family conflict; and excessive drinking or drug use.

Tips for reducing or controlling stress

Be realistic. If you feel overwhelmed by some activities (yours and/or your family's), learn to say NO! Eliminate an activity that is not absolutely necessary. You may be taking on more responsibility than you can or should handle. If you meet resistance, give reasons why you're making the changes. Be willing to listen to other's suggestions and be ready to compromise.

Shed the "superman/superwoman" urge. No one is perfect, so don't expect perfection from yourself or others. Ask yourself, "What really needs to be done?" How much can I do? Is the deadline realistic? What adjustments can I make?" Don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it.

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Meditate. Just ten to twenty minutes of quiet reflection may bring relief from chronic stress as well as increase your tolerance to it. Use the time to listen to music, relax and try to think of pleasant things or nothing.

Visualize. Use your imagination and picture how you can manage a stressful situation more successfully. Whether it's a business presentation or moving to a new place, many people feel visual rehearsals boost self-confidence and enable them to take a more positive approach to a difficult task.

Take one thing at a time. For people under tension or stress, an ordinary workload can sometimes seem unbearable. The best way to cope with this feeling of being overwhelmed is to take one task at a time. Pick one urgent task and work on it. Once you accomplish that task, choose the next one. The positive feeling of "checking off" tasks is very satisfying. It will motivate you to keep going.

Exercise. Regular exercise is a popular way to relieve stress. Twenty to thirty minutes of physical activity benefits both the body and the mind.

Hobbies. Take a break from your worries by doing something you enjoy. Whether it's gardening or painting, schedule time to indulge your interest.



Healthy life style. Good nutrition makes a difference. Limit intake of caffeine and alcohol (alcohol actually disturbs regular sleep patterns), get adequate rest, exercise, and balance work and play.

Share your feelings. A conversation with a friend lets you know that you are not the only one having a bad day, caring for a sick child or working in a busy office. Stay in touch with friends and family. Let them provide love, support and guidance. Don't try to cope alone.

Give in occasionally. Be flexible! If you find you're meeting constant opposition in either your personal or professional life, rethink your position or strategy. Arguing only intensifies stressful feelings. If you know you are right, stand your ground, but do so calmly and rationally. Make allowances for other's opinions and be prepared to compromise. If you are willing to give in, others may meet you halfway. Not only will you reduce your stress, you may find better solutions to your problems.

Go easy with criticism. You may expect too much of yourself and others. Try not to feel frustrated, let down, disappointed or even "trapped" when another person does not measure up. The "other person" may be a wife, a husband, or child whom you are trying to change to suit yourself. Remember, everyone is unique, and has his or her own virtues, shortcomings, and right to develop as an individual.

Seeking Help. Stress may manifest itself in a variety of medical and psychological conditions. A number of diseases including hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome and chronic headaches may have stress as an underlying cause. Anxiety disorders and depression if not caused by are certainly worsened by stress. If you would like to learn more about the connections between stress and illness, please contact us at eDocAmerica. Remember also that eDocAmerica offers psychological assistance through ePsych.

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