

Stress Management

Fifty-four percent of Americans are concerned about the level of stress in their everyday lives, according to the American Psychological Association.

Stress is defined as events that upset your usual balance. It can be positive stress like a new baby, a vacation, a job promotion or the purchase of a new home. It may be also be negative, such as the flu, death of a loved one, a child leaving home or a conflict with co-workers or neighbors. When we find ourselves under constant stress over a long period of time, the stress will likely begin to affect both our physical and emotional states.

Short term stress may cause sweating, cold extremities, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle tension, dry mouth, nervousness, anxiety, and/or frustration. Long term stress may lead to depression, forgetfulness, loss or increase of appetite with weight changes, frequent minor illnesses, increased aches and pains, sexual problems, fatigue, loss of interest in social activities, skin problems and/or increased addictive behaviors.

Learn to recognize your personal ‘stress triggers’—all the things that cause you stress. Are they financial problems, quarreling with someone, being late for work or appointments or a cluttered environment? How do you react when you are stressed? When under stress, some people may compulsively shop; others may worry, overeat, yell and scream, cry, slam doors or remain silent. Stress will never be completely removed from your life, but you can learn to manage it:

- It may be helpful to write down your feelings and what has or hasn’t worked to make you more comfortable when under pressure.

- Find ways to take care of your body by exercising daily, eating a balanced diet, drinking enough water and sleeping at least eight hours every night.
- Treat yourself to doing something you really want to do for at least 15 minutes every day.
- Get rid of bad habits like smoking, drinking and overeating, which may lead to guilt and added stress.
- Learn to let go of things you can’t change. Try not to worry about things that haven’t happened yet.
- Breathe deeply—learn some relaxation techniques to use when stress occurs.
- Spend quality time with family or friends.
- Learn to manage your finances and live within your means.
- Manage your time by allowing yourself enough time to get ready for work and appointments.
- De-clutter your life and get rid of things you don’t use or need.
- Prayer and/or meditation may help to relieve stress—find somewhere quiet and relax.

If stress continues to be a problem for more than two weeks and you find that your self-help techniques are not adequate, seek help. Stress can be managed and you can be on your way to being back in control.

Source:

The Everything Stress Management Book. Adamson, Eve. 2001
<http://www.cdc.gov/nasd/docs/d001201-d001300/d001245/d001245.html>
<http://216.185.112.5/presenter.jhtml?identifier=360>

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