STRESS & YOU

**Introduction**
Stress is a part of day-to-day living. You may experience it while diving into challenging environments, social pressures, managing time, financial worries, and changes in eating or sleeping habits, to name a few. The stress you experience isn’t necessarily harmful. Mild forms of stress can actually act as a motivator. However, managing high stress is important to good body/brain health and overall sanity!

**What is Stress?**
Although we tend to think of stress as caused by external events, events in themselves are not stressful. **The way in which we interpret and react to events creates the actual stress.** People differ dramatically in the type of events they interpret as stressful. For example, speaking to a large group of people can be stressful for some and invigorating for others.

**Symptoms of Stress**
There are numerous signs and symptoms that you may notice when you experience stress.

* **Emotional/Mental**

Low self-esteem - Fear of failure - Inability to concentrate - Embarrassing easily - Worrying - Preoccupation - Forgetfulness - Anxious - Depressed - Irritable - Impatient

* **Behavioral**

Stuttering - Crying for no apparent reason - Acting impulsively - Grinding teeth - Increased smoking, drinking or drugging - Accident prone - Withdrawal from others

* **Physical**

Increased sweating - Increased heart rate - Trembling - Dryness of throat and mouth - Tiring easily - Urinating frequently - Sleeping problems - Vomiting - Headaches - Pain in the neck and or lower back - Loss of appetite or overeating - Susceptibility to illness

**Causes of Stress**

Both positive and negative situations can create stress (a wedding and a funeral). Major life changes are the greatest contributors because they place the greatest demands on our body’s resources for coping.

**Evaluate your Stressors**

* Things that are important & controllable -- **Take charge of these ASAP**
* Things that are important & uncontrollable -- **Practice positive coping strategies**
* Things that are unimportant & controllable -- **Prioritize and complete these**
* Things that are unimportant & uncontrollable -- **Develop serenity and acceptance**

**Students** – Check out the free mental health counseling services offered at RRCC!

**(OVER FOR STRESS BUSTERS!)**

**Find Your Peace: 4o Stress Busters**

* Become aware of your own reactions to stress
* Recognize and accept your limits
* Focus on positive self-statements and attitude
* Exercise regularly – at least 3 times a week for 30 minutes
* Eat a balanced diet and take a vitamin supplement
* Watch your intake of caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, and sugar – especially at bedtime
* Talk with friends or someone you can trust about your worries
* Make a daily “to do” list and/or plan ahead with a weekly master schedule
* Schedule “realistic” days - avoid back to back appointments if possible
* Set SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-oriented)
* Determine priorities (urgent and important activities take priority)
* Practice relaxation techniques - deep breathing using the diaphragm
* Let go of the control and delegate tasks to capable others
* Organize your living and work spaces AND don’t let paperwork pile up
* Say “no” to extra commitments and obligations – they will understand
* Read an uplifting article or listen to a relaxing piece of music
* Schedule in time to de-stress - hot bath, lunch with a friend, etc.
* Relax your standards when appropriate
* Use your peak energy time for the tough-to-tackle issues
* Remind yourself of your strengths, talents, and accomplishments
* Avoid unnecessary competition with others
* Try a new hobby for relaxation and fun
* Don’t hit the snooze button and/or get up 15 minutes earlier
* Prepare for the morning the evening prior - lunch made, workout bag packed, etc.
* Write things down - appointments, special events, when library books are due, etc.
* Take stretch breaks or a quick walk
* Make friends with non-worriers for a balanced perspective
* Journal your thoughts and feelings as a release – keep a notepad by your bed
* Do something for someone else/volunteer - walking a dog is great
* Find joy in at least one activity each day
* Take a lunch break, if even for just 15 minutes
* Have a forgiving view of events and people
* Visualize success when approaching a stressful activity or event
* Try to get 15 minutes of sun exposure at least several days a week
* Take a mini-vacation in your mind
* Try aromatherapy/light a scented candle - especially lavender
* Give a hug, get a hug
* Tense then relax the major muscle groups one set at a time
* Break it up - complete daily mini tasks for a large and looming project
* Shake it up - avoid doing the same activity for more than 2 consecutive hours

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