 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 wellbeing.

**What is Stress?**
Although we tend to think of stress as caused by external events or stimuli, the way in which we interpret and react creates the actual stress. People differ dramatically in the type of events and stimuli they interpret as stressful. For example, speaking to a large group of people can be overwhelming 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 and stimuli 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 RRCC Behavioral Health Counseling services

 **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 family, 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 for the day
* 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 paper 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 - Have a forgiving view of events and people
* 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.
* Take note - appointments, special events, when library books are due, etc.
* Take stretch breaks or a quick walk
* Befriend 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
* Watch your amount of screen time – phone, tv, computer, video conferencing, etc.
* 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 – lavender may be a soothing choice
* Give a hug, get a hug when appropriate
* 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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