

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Some Causes of Stress

- lack of stimulation or challenge (underload)
- too much demand or stimulation (overload)
- environmental influences-too much noise, excessive heat or cold, air pollution, crowding, etc.
- death of a family member or friend
- unsatisfactory personal relationship
- loss of a job (fired or laid off)
- unemployment (unable to find job)
- underemployment (not challenged)
- illness or injury
- negative emotions
- change of any kind (positive or negative)
- irrational thinking
- any threatening situation

Some Symptoms of Stress

- difficulty falling asleep, restlessness
- perspire more than usual
- upset stomach or stomach pain
- feeling confused; unable to concentrate
- muscle tension-stiff neck, clenched jaw, aching back or shoulders
- feeling depressed
- lack of energy; lethargic
- headaches
- relationship problems
- weight gain or loss; change in appetite
- boredom
- feeling frustrated; easily annoyed
- cold hands
- rapid heartbeat
- general anxious feeling
- dilated pupils
- increased susceptibility to colds and other minor infections

The AAAbc's of Stress Management

Stress Management is a decision-making process

Alter it

Avoid it or

Accept it by

Building your resistance or changing you perceptions

All three of these techniques can be effective coping strategies.

ALTER - implies removing the source of stress by changing something. (e.g., problem solving, direct communication, organizing, planning, and time management.)

AVOID - implies removing oneself from the stressful situation or figuring out how not to get there in the first place. (e.g., say "no", delegate, let go, withdraw, and recognize own limitations.)

ACCEPT - involves equipping oneself physically and mentally for stress by---

BUILDING - resistance, increase your tolerance to stress: physically through proper diet, regular exercise, systematic relaxation; mentally through positive affirmation, taking time for mental health, getting clear about goals/values/priorities; socially through support systems, investing in relationships, clear communication, intimacy; spiritually through meditation, prayer, worship.

CHANGING - perceptions. Change unrealistic expectations and irrational beliefs (like "I should succeed at everything I try."). Build self esteem and cultivate a positive attitude.

Quick Tips-Instant Stress Relievers

1. Take six deep breaths-inhale, hold for 5 counts and exhale through your mouth.
2. Visit Hawaii-or any other pleasant scene from your past. Visualize the scene in detail by stimulating all your senses. In just a few minutes you can recapture the pleasure of actually being there.
3. Hug someone-four hugs everyday will do a lot to calm you down. Hug the kids. Hug the dog. Hug your significant other.
4. Take an exercise break-take a brisk walk at lunch. Climb the stairs instead of riding the elevator. When your mind is cluttered, move your body.
5. Have a good laugh. Your spirits will rise immediately.
6. Find a friend. Choose a patient soul, one who won't butt in or give advice, to listen to your concerns.
7. Change your focus. Put your job concerns away for 5 minutes and concentrate on your life away from work. As your mind gets busy with these kinds of thoughts, you'll find your stress will begin to fade away and you can get back to work with new vitality.
8. Finish something-give yourself a quick sense of accomplishment.