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In This Issue

The link between stress and physical and emotional health is well documented. People in the helping professions are especially vulnerable to burnout. This issue examines the “good news” about stress and is taken from “Sixty Ways to Make Stress Work for You” by Andrew Slaby, M.D.

What Does Stress Look Like?

Symptoms of stress include:

- Absenteeism
- Alcohol abuse or dependence
- Anger (chronic)
- Argumentative behavior
- Boredom
- Car Accidents (or near misses)
- Compulsions
- Dietary problems
- Dread getting out of bed
- Drug use and dependence
- Fatigue
- Headaches (tension & migraine)
- Inability to concentrate
- Impulsiveness
- Inefficiency
- Infections (frequent)
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Low self-esteem
- Malaise
- Muscle and backaches
- Pain without physical cause
- Palpitations

- Poor judgment
- Rigidity
- Sexual dysfunction
- Stomach upset
- Tardiness
- Teeth grinding

Who among us hasn't experience one or more of these symptoms? While many of our stressors are not within our control, there are strategies to help us better handle the daily stresses of life.

General Strategies for Reducing Stress

1. **Organize.** Disorganization begets chaos and stress. Organization leads to predictability which leads to control. **Delegate** when you can.
2. **Seek Opportunity from Crisis.** Reduce stress by approaching it as a learning experience. How can you use this situation to your advantage?
3. **Create Environments that Reduce Stress.** Your surroundings influence how you feel. Soothing colors, style and personal affects can all reduce stress at home and at work.
4. **Take Control of Your Life.** Only you are responsible for getting what you want out of life. Set goals and determine reasonable actions to achieve them.
5. **Leave Time for the Unexpected.** Coping with life's unexpected events take time and resources. Give yourself time to adjust to major life crises.

6. **Don't Procrastinate.** Delaying anything adds stress and limits your ability to cope with an unexpected situation.
 7. **Forget the Past.** You cannot change the past. Let go of past wrongs and seize today.
 8. **Minimize Surprise.** Plan ahead and find out as much as you can about new situations ahead of time. Be prepared for worst case scenarios (e.g. when you travel, host an event, take the kids to the store) and have a back up plan.
 9. **Choose Friends Carefully.** Surround yourself with people who increase your strengths, support you when you take risks and energize you.
4. **Reduce noise/Increase solitude.** Turn off the cell phone and unplug from your Palm Pilot on a regular basis to reconnect to your self.
 5. **Establish routines.** Routines decrease stress by reducing the time spent on deciding what to do and how to do it.

Social Strategies to Reduce Stress

Much stress comes from interactions with others. Reduce stress by walking in another's shoes—try to understand the **other person's perspective** and experience. Maintain a **sense of humor**, especially the ability to laugh at yourself. **Common courtesy** and good manners also can diffuse potentially stressful situations. **Dress up**, not down—when you look good you feel good! Be **flexible**—there is more than one way to accomplish a task. **Don't gossip**—it creates enemies and distrust. It is also a good way to lose friends. If you gossip with someone, they may wonder if you gossip about them too.

Learn to Relax!

The simplest way to reduce stress can be summed up easily: Stop, sit down, take a moment, take a deep breath and relax. Here's how:

1. Practice progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, deep breathing or some other **calming technique**.
2. **Pray** or meditate.
3. Get a **massage**.
4. Seek **spiritual** renewal and growth.
5. Build in **relaxation time**, doing something you enjoy and that helps you unwind...not another "to do".
6. **Slow down.** Schedule time to catch up. Schedule time to get away. Take a moment to notice the world unfolding around you. Watch kids playing in the park. Take the dog for

Physical Strategies for Reducing Stress

These common sense suggestions are well known, but bear repeating:

1. Recognize early physical signs of stress and get treatment.
2. Reduce intake of caffeine and other stimulants.
3. Avoid vitamin depletion.
4. Monitor salt intake
5. Don't skip meals (especially breakfast).
6. Exercise, Exercise, Exercise!
7. Get rest...to prepare for and recover from a stressful or "big" event or busy week.

Self-Awareness and Stress

Knowing yourself, your strengths and weaknesses, your values and where you are going in life will help you choose options and set attainable goals. Other ways to further reduce stress:

1. **Don't say "yes"** to everything.
2. **Release anger** appropriately.
3. **Face the reality** that there are some things you cannot change.

a long walk. Eat an ice cream cone.
Watch a sunset or the geese flying
overhead.

*Have a Happy and Healthy New Year!
Enclosed is an updated agency resource
list for 2007 and information about area
“cutting edge” programs.*