

Understanding And Dealing With Everyday Stress

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WHAT STRESS IS...

Stress is an abnormal condition that disrupts the normal functions of the body or mind. No two people are affected in exactly the same way, or to the same degree, but most people living in our highly industrialized society suffer from its effects at one or more times during their lives. Symptoms range from mild headaches, occasional bouts of insomnia, overall restlessness, digestive problems, irritable bowel syndrome, constipation and diarrhea, and abdominal pain.

SELECTED LIFE EVENTS THAT CAN BRING ON STRESS:

Death of Spouse.
Death of a close family member.
Death of a close friend.
Major personal injury, illness or pregnancy.
Sexual molestation, drug abuse.
Major change in the health or behavior of a family member.
Gaining or losing a new family member.
Sexual difficulties.
Marital separation from mate.
Marriage, marital reconciliation, divorce.
Arguments with spouse, family members, friends, co-workers.
Changes in sleeping habits or change in part of day when asleep.
Vacations, Major holidays. In-law troubles.
Financing major purchases.
Beginning or ceasing formal schooling.
Change in usual type and or amount of recreation.
Change in outside social activities, religions, etc.
Major change in eating habits, living conditions, moving.
Spouse beginning or ceasing work outside the home.
Changing to a different line of work.
Major change in responsibilities at work.
Changes in working hours or conditions.
Troubles with the boss.
Being fired at work.
Starting a new job or career.
Retirement from work.
Business readjustment, changes in financial condition.
Minor violations of the law (e.g., traffic tickets, disturbing the peace, etc.)
Detention in jail or other institution.

Dealing With Work Related Stress

Examples that can cause work related stress are trying to get

too much work done in too little time, cutting corners or otherwise taking chances that may put you, or someone else at risk, and trying to get along with superiors and co-workers.

Everybody has days when there simply seems there's too much work to get done. Trying to get everything done by yourself can bring on stress. Some people try and deal with the pressure by delegating certain jobs to others. If you can unburden yourself and not worry about when and how the work gets done, if you can put full faith and trust in co-workers or subordinates it can be an effective escape valve. Trouble is, most people can't let go. If you have the type of personality that demands to know how things are going, chances are you're only increasing the pressure and stress on yourself by constantly worrying if the work is getting done or not.

To lessen stress you must either learn to trust others to get the job done, or prioritize jobs to get rid of "what must be done" first. Many people tend to "put off" the difficult jobs they hate to do until the last possible minute. Of course, this only makes it all the more difficult and stressful when you finally get around to doing what you should have done earlier.

When you feel the "walls closing in on you" if possible, take a break. Many people in trying to relax actually kick their bodies into overdrive by using their break time to either get a nicotine or caffeine fix. Instead of calming you down, both substances being stimulants speed up your body processes. You may think you're relaxing, but your blood pressure and heart are working harder.

Instead of coffee or cigarettes try a brief chat with friends, a short leisurely walk, even just looking out the window for a few minutes. Never take breaks, or eat lunch at your work station. The point of a break is to get away from whatever work you're doing. You can't get your mind off your work if you're chained to your work area.

Getting along with your co-workers and the boss can be more than a sore point. It can be something you learn to put up with, or it can turn into a festering wound that only gets worse with time. If you're having problems, get them out in the open. Most managers today at least have some training in dealing with personal problems. If you can't clear the air or have tried using all the company procedures to resolve a grievance, and you no longer enjoy your job, hate to go to work in the morning, or feel that the pressure is getting to be too much, it may be time to seriously consider a change.

STRESS AWAY FROM WORK

Anyone who's ever been stuck in a major traffic jam probably has seen the darker side of many people's personalities. It seems everyone is always in a hurry to either get, or go somewhere, and never seem to allow enough time for the everyday problems that are bound to crop up from time to time.

Banging on the steering wheel, laying on the horn, giving someone the "finger," or shooting a string of obscenities is only reacting to something that has already happened. You can't make the guy in front of you go any faster, or prevent someone from cutting you off. Accidents, road repairs, and just plain heavy traffic happens. Learn to deal with it or don't drive. If you must, at least change your route from time to time. Always allow plenty of time, and try and make all trips as pleasant as possible. You may not realize it, but how you act on your way to work, or on your way home will have either a positive or negative impact. Accept the fact that it's something you just have to get through so you may as well try and make the best of it.

Most people are smart enough to know that they should set some time aside to take it easy. If you participate in some sports activity, remember you're doing it to relax! While many people naturally have their competitive nature come to the surface when engaging athletics, don't lose sight of the fact you're participating to have fun. Don't get bent out of shape if you don't always win or otherwise play up to par. The whole point is to enjoy yourself and forget your everyday worries. Treat it as a night out with the "boys," or gals and relax!

Families can be as source of support, an oasis away from the everyday pressures or sometimes it's only a place to grab a few hours sleep and get back in the rat race. Your children, spouse, family members, in-laws can be a source of irritation at times. If someone is constantly doing something that really "bugs you," tell the offending person or persons and see if things can be straightened out before things get out of control.

A man's home (a woman's too) should indeed be a place to rest and relax. Many people find it helpful unwind by sharing the day's events with their loved ones. It should not develop into a daily routine, nor should you give a detailed blow by blow recap of the day's events, but when things go wrong, who better to talk to than your family? Holding things back, keeping it inside yourself, almost always does more harm than good and can affect not only your well-being but everyone else in your family as well. Talking things over is a great way to get rid of built up stress that many people overlook.

You should also be a good listener. Don't unload your problems and have no time for your mate's or children's problems. They may seem trivial to you, but they are real problems that need

solving just like yours.

A great way to get rid of stress is, every once in a while, do something totally different and unexpected without any prior planning. Don't fall into a trap when you must do such and such thing a certain way, or at specific time or place. If you always put on a blue suit on Thursday, or go to an Italian restaurant on Tuesday, break the habit every once in a while. Even doing things you like can become stressful if you're stuck in the same old rut week after boring week.

Stress can best be managed by realizing what you can change about your life and knowing what you can't. Learn how to recognize the difference and you'll enjoy life more and be better able to deal the ups and downs that are part of everyone's life.