

Stress Management

Stress is the individual's generalized response to the varied demands of life. In a biological sense, a certain degree of stress is helpful and enhances survival, while too much stress can be harmful and impair survival. Humans experience stress mentally, emotionally and physically from internal and external causes. Our bodies react to stress in much the same general way regardless of what's causing the stress. Intense or prolonged stress produces changes in the nervous system, which causes the endocrine glands to release hormones that affect different tissues throughout the body.

Stress is usually not limited to one part of the body or one part of our life. Therefore, it is important to address our whole selves when we talk about stress management. How we react to stressful events can impact all facets of our lives. Emotional stress can induce physical problems just as physical stress can lead to mental or emotional changes. Stress is responsible for an overall decrease in immune system function. Stress can cause decreased overall energy and cause fatigue, impaired resistance to illness, and inflammation in the body. Everyone has different weaknesses in their body, whether physical or emotional. Stress can aggravate or induce health problems by affecting those weaknesses.

Stress Reduction Techniques

- ☐ Get adequate sleep. Your body does a lot of repair work while sleeping.
- ☐ Aerobic exercise. This is one of the most powerful tools to combat stress, provided one does not overdo exercising and become weakened. Any exercise that increases the pulse rate can be called "aerobic".
- ☐ Deep breathing. Taking 3 deep, slow breaths causes the body to relax. Regular repetition has a cumulative helpful effect.
- ☐ Say something positive or uplifting at least once daily, especially when you are under stress. Say it out loud to yourself or to someone else.
- ☐ Eat in a relaxed frame of mind. Chew thoroughly.
- ☐ Eat foods high in B vitamins. B vitamins are called the stress vitamins because they are used as coenzymes in reactions throughout the body, especially the nervous system, and they are needed to metabolize food. Examples include whole grains, meats, eggs, nuts, beans, fish, poultry and green leafy vegetables.
- ☐ Limit sugar intake to keep the immune system healthy.
- ☐ Hot baths, showers, sauna, steam bath, and Jacuzzi promote relaxation, as do moist hot packs to tight or sore muscles.
- ☐ Massage is effective at reducing stress in the body and can stimulate the body's immune response.
- ☐ Visualization. Find a scene in your mind, somewhere you have been that was a particularly peaceful and safe place to be, or somewhere you would like to be. Focus your attention on breathing, on mental repetition of uplifting words, or on the scenery of your peaceful place. Go there whenever you need a break from a stressful situation.

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