

STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Meaning

Stress management involves a lot of different aspects - managing work loads and communication, ensuring employees to take frequent breaks, and 'work smart' - avoiding long hours and 'crunch times' where people are forced to work late, and under stress, for extended periods of time. It also involves providing facilities for people to relax - things for them to do during breaks, and a quiet environment, and making sure it gets used.

Stress management involves controlling and reducing the tension that occurs in stressful situations by making emotional and physical changes. The degree of stress and the desire to make the changes will determine how much change takes place.

Types of Stress

There are four main types of stress that people experience.

Eustress

Eustress is a type of short-term stress that provides immediate strength. Eustress arises at points of increased physical activity, enthusiasm, and creativity. Eustress is a positive stress that arises when motivation and inspiration are needed. A gymnast experiences eustress before a competition.

Distress

Distress is a negative stress brought about by constant readjustments or alterations in a routine. Distress creates feelings of discomfort and unfamiliarity. There are two types of distress. Acute stress is an intense stress that arrives and disappears quickly. Chronic stress is a prolonged stress that exists for weeks, months, or even years. Someone who is constantly relocating or changing jobs may experience distress.

Hyperstress

Hyperstress occurs when an individual is pushed beyond what he or she can handle. Hyperstress results from being overloaded or overworked. When someone is hyperstressed,

even little things can trigger a strong emotional response. A Wall Street trader is likely to experience hyperstress.

Hypostress

Hypostress is the opposite of hyperstress. Hypostress occurs when an individual is bored or unchallenged. People who experience hypostress are often restless and uninspired. A factory worker who performs repetitive tasks might experience hypostress.

Identifying Stress

- Identify your triggers for stress. A trigger is anything that will set off the stress reaction within your body. Triggers may not always be avoidable but can be dealt with. Examples of triggers include waiting in line at the grocery store or in traffic, listening to people argue, being hungry or tired or being late for work or an appointment.
- Write down all your triggers and keep the paper in a visible spot. Knowing your triggers will be important in developing coping skills. It may help to keep a small notebook or journal in your purse, backpack or wallet to record triggers for stress during the day.
- Think about your current coping skills for stress, then assess if those skills are positive or negative. Many people deal with or react to stress negatively. According to Mayo Clinic, some common negative reactions to stress include overeating, anger, smoking or drinking alcohol. Although these may initially relieve stress, these types of reactions make you feel worse later on.
- Write down your coping skills and label each one with a P (positive) or N (negative). You can also label your triggers with A (Avoidable) or U (Unavoidable). This will help you develop and implement an effective stress-management plan.
- **COPING WITH STRESS**
- Look at your list of triggers. Determine whether you can change the stress factor or change your reaction. For unavoidable triggers, you will need to alter the reaction; for avoidable triggers, you can alter the stress factor or situation.
- For example, if waiting in line at the grocery store is stressful for you, you can alter the stress factor by going to the grocery store at a time when it is least busy.
- Review your list of coping skills. Keep the positive coping skills and create alternatives for the negative coping skills. Your goal is to have at least 10 positive coping skills to use in times of stress.
- Write down a list of 10 realistic coping skills to help manage your stress. The coping skills need to be relevant to your interests and lifestyle. For example, if you hate basketball, shooting hoops is not a coping skill you will use. Choose activities you will

enjoy and that make you happy. Some examples of positive coping skills are meditation, deep breathing, encouraging self-talk, laughing, yoga or exercise, talking with a good friend or taking a nap.

- Write down a list of support people. No one can deal with stress alone. You should have at least one or two friends or family members who can listen to you vent or help you get through a dark situation. Provide these people with your list of triggers and coping skills to educate them on your stress-management plan.
- Implement your stress management plan by utilizing coping skills during stressful situations. Be patient and keep practicing the skills on the daily basis. It can be several weeks or months until you see significant changes in your stress level and reactions.

Tips & Warnings

- Recognize the limitations of your stress-management plan. Not all stress is controllable and you may have to compromise or accept some situations as they are.
- Develop an exercise program with the help of a physician.
- Consult medical or psychiatric advice if you feel out of control or can not manage your stress alone.

Tips to Tackle Stress

1. Talk about it. Sharing your feelings and concerns with your spouse/partner, a close friend, co-workers, a counselor or another person can help release some of the tension associated with your illness. Many women find joining a support group especially helpful.

2. Indulge yourself. Take a break from your worries by doing something you really enjoy whether it's gardening, painting, reading, shopping or listening to music.

3. Choose wisely. When you're feeling overwhelmed by the pressures of life, step back and prioritize. Eliminate or postpone activities that aren't absolutely necessary. Delegate certain tasks. Ask for help when you need it.

4. Get moving. Physical activity—walking, running, swimming, lifting weights—benefits both the body and mind. Discuss any exercise plan with your doctor before getting started.

5. Imagine that. Close your eyes, visualize a peaceful setting, and breathe deeply. This technique is called imagery and, with practice, can help you create a feeling of relaxation any time you wish.

6. Keep the faith. Many women find their faith is a great comfort and rely on prayer as well as other spiritual activities to help relieve stress.

7. Write it down. Set aside time each day to write about your thoughts, hopes, fears and dreams. Just putting your thoughts down on paper in a diary or journal can help ease your mind.

8. Learn to relax. Yoga, massage therapy, tai chi, breathing techniques, aromatherapy, meditation and imagery are all relaxation techniques that can help reduce stress and possibly even improve your immune-system response.

9. Laugh it up. Watch a funny movie, read the comic strip, tell a joke. Humor can be a powerful antidote to stress. Seeing the lighter side of things helps put suffering in perspective, fills you with hope and takes your mind of pain.

10. Tackle one thing at a time. Even the tasks of daily living can seem overwhelming when you're stressed out. The best way to cope is to concentrate on one task at a time. "Checking off" chores gives you a positive feeling and will help motivate you to keep going.