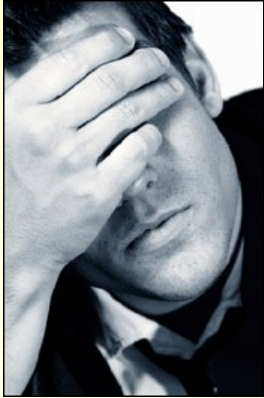


Stress Management for Adults



The good news is that stress is a normal and important part of life, and the ability to cope with stress is built into your body's functioning. The bad news is that a long-term load of unresolved stress can affect your mental and physical health, having impact on everything from your skin to your immunological system. Stress is your reaction to the stressors in your life. Stressors are the ongoing changes in events and relationships that you experience every day. A flat tire is a stressor. An argument with your wife is a stressor, and so are unexpected bills, your dog eating your new recliner, your child getting sick, holidays, family reunions, etc. Your body and mind react to stressors in a variety of ways, and it is important to know these reactions can be highly individual.

Some stressors are short-term, such as getting your sick child to a last-minute babysitter because you can't miss work today. Some are long-term, such as finding out that your child's illness is chronic and life threatening. Stressors can be happy ones like a wedding or birth of a new baby, and the resultant stress is called "eustress." Other stressors are unpleasant and cause "distress." Everyone operates under a load of accumulated stress. Some stressors are processed fairly quickly, and other situations take years of adjustment. The following are some examples of these.

Top Ten Stressful Life Events for Adults

1. Spouse's death
2. Divorce
3. Marriage separation
4. Jail term
5. Death of a close relative
6. Injury or illness
7. Marriage
8. Fired from a job
9. Marriage reconciliation
10. Retirement

Source: Holmes-Rahe Life Stress Inventory

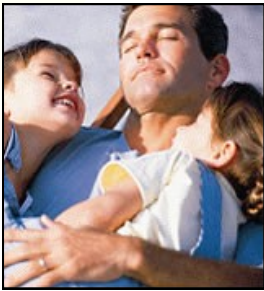
Sometimes, the only real control you have over a change in your life is your reaction to it, and that's why it is possible to "manage" stress. Understanding what happened, why it happened, and how it is affecting you is the key. Concentrating on self-care can help you adjust and adapt more quickly and get on with your life.



Stress Management for Adults, cont.

Self Care

1. Say "no" to extra responsibilities. They won't really "keep your mind off" the latest problem. Cut back on the busy schedule and add in extra hours for sleep, relaxation, and recreation.
2. Eat and drink wisely. The snacks are fun, but your body needs nourishment. Try for at least one hot, balanced meal a day. Cut back on caffeine in hot and cold drinks.
3. Get some sleep—at least seven hours out of every twenty-four.
4. Give and receive affection. You have friends and family, so spend time with those who will appreciate what you are undergoing and will help look out for you.
5. Attend to housekeeping. Have regular conversations with the people in your household about the details: chores, money, relationships, and daily living issues.
6. Have some fun. At least once a day, find something that makes you smile or laugh.
7. At the beginning or end of each day, take a quick inventory of how you are doing. What hurts? Are you tired? Are you sad? Are you angry? What kinds of thoughts are popping up? Compare your present state to one week ago, one month ago, three months ago. Are you improving? If so, reward yourself.
8. If your daily inventory is not showing an improvement, seek professional help. If you are still struggling, and you really desire to feel better, talk to your doctor, minister or spiritual adviser, or to a counselor. They are outside the situation and will see it from a different perspective, which can help in getting you back where you want to be.
9. Keep all changes in personal routine focused on managing your current level of stress, which means you are back to saying "no" to extra activities.



For more information on adult stress, please visit:
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/stress.html>
http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_signs.htm