



## **STRESS MANAGEMENT**

### **What is stress?**

Stress is our body's response to something in the environment that places a demand on our system. Each person responds to stress in a predictable biological manner. Stress prepares the body for an emergency by quickly activating hormones that makes us stronger, more alert, and cause the blood to clot faster. Our bodies can tolerate short-term stress, but long-term activation of these hormones may lead to serious health problems, such as coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression and sleep disorders. We need some stress to have enough motivation to get up in the morning, but too much makes you vulnerable to stress symptoms and distress.

### **How do I recognize when stress has become distress?**

Recognizing when stress has become distress is critical if we are to successfully manage our lives and maintain optimum health. Some common symptoms of distress are headaches, insomnia, fatigue, tightness in the chest, depression, anxiety, grinding of the teeth, loss of sex drive, stomach pain and increase or loss of appetite.

### **If I have some of these symptoms of distress what can I do?**

The first step is to stop and examine which events in your life are triggering the stress response. These events are called stressors. It is our perception of the event that determines the level of our emotional reactions.

### **What can I do about my stress reaction? How can I change my response?**

Psychologists tell us that it takes approximately four weeks to change our response to a stressor. It can be done by changing the way we think by a process called cognitive restructuring.

### **What other things can I do to cope with stress?**

Exercise – Did you know it is impossible to be angry and exercise at the same time? Exercise redirects the mind and body into positive action. As the body relaxes our minds can think clearer and cognitive restructuring is then possible.

### **How about yoga?**

<https://www.doyogawithme.com>

Supportive relationships – Every person needs a connection with someone outside of themselves. Friends, animals and plants can provide comfort in times of distress. If you have someone who will sit and listen, then you have a valuable resource.

Journal Writing – Many people benefit from keeping a journal of their thoughts and feelings. It is a great way to find out more about yourself. It may also help to keep you motivated as you make changes in your lifestyle.

Humor – Laughter is often called internal jogging. It causes a release of endorphins in your body, which acts as a mood elevator. Try to see some humor in your life. Smile more often. It takes fewer muscles to smile than to frown.

Relaxation – Relaxation techniques can be useful to break the stress cycle. It allows our body to calm down, the blood pressure to decrease, and the heart rate to decrease. Choose a quiet place, away from distraction, and focus on deep relaxing breaths as you think about a peaceful favorite place. Some people listen to music or use a specific relaxation tape for this purpose.

Try the following guided meditations

<http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>

<http://www.freemindfulness.org/download>

<https://www.meditationoasis.com/podcast/>