

Understanding Stress

It is almost unavoidable for people living in the city to experience stress at certain point in their lives. How much do we know about stress? How should we deal with it?

RECOGNIZING STRESS: WHICH OF THESE IS STRESS?

- You receive a promotion at work.
- Your car has a flat tire.
- You go to a fun party that lasts till 2:00 a.m.
- Your dog gets sick.
- Your new bedroom set is being delivered.
- Your best friend and his wife come to stay at your house for a week.
- You get a bad case of hay fever.
- All of the above.

ANSWER: ALL OF THESE ARE STRESS

Stress is not simply bad things that make you sad, worry or unhappy. Stress is many different kinds of things: happy, sad, exciting, allergic, challenging, physical things, etc.

“TO YOUR BODY, STRESS IS SYNONYMOUS WITH CHANGE.”

Anything that causes a change in your life causes stress, either good or bad. Stress is not necessarily classified as BAD. It may be hard to believe, but stress is a necessary part of life and success. Stress motivates us to work at optimum level and entices us to move forward. However, when stress is acute, chronic and exceed individual's threshold that physical and emotional imbalances emerge; symptoms can be exhibited on cognitive, behavioral and physical level.

HOW STRESS WORKS

Stress drives us all. It motivates and entices us to move forward. But remember, there is a difference between being driven to succeed, and being driven to distress. Distress occurs when worrying leads to physical symptoms like headaches, stomach ache, etc. If you experience these symptoms when under pressure, you're letting stress get the best of you.

WARNING SIGN OF STRESS

Physiological

- Headaches
- Back/muscle pain
- High blood pressure
- Ringing in ears (Tinnitus)
- Insomnia
- Change in appetite
- Weight loss/gain
- Hormonal system dysfunction
- Suppress immune system
- Chronic Fatigue
- Sexual dysfunction
- Chronic diarrhea /constipation

Cognitive

- Memory loss
- Unable to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Lack of creativity

Behavioral

- Avoidance
- Irritability
- Procrastination
- Suspicious
- Argumentative

Psychological

- Fear and Anxious
- Burnout
- Sad
- Agitation

INAPPROPRIATE WAYS TO DEAL WITH STRESS

- Binge eating or not eating
- Alcohol
- Smoke

RELAXATION

Breathing exercise

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Place your hands on your stomach. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose as though you are breathing into your stomach. Hold your breath for a few seconds. Exhale all air slowly through your nose. Repeat slowly several times

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Tighten your hand muscles by making a fist. Feel the tension in your hand. Hold this position for several seconds. Relax your fist, letting the tension melt away. Notice how your hand feels lighter. Note any difference between the tense and relaxed states. Repeat these steps with each muscle group in your body.

Dealing with common irrational thoughts

- Perfectionism. We all make mistakes. Understand when “good” is “good” enough and for whom.
- Catastrophe. Is that flu disease going to kill everyone? Focusing upon facts and possible alternatives prevent situational misinterpretation.
- Pessimism. Look for the possibilities instead of the impossibilities of each situation.
- All-or Nothing. Nothing is either one-way or the other. Learn to think that there should be a way in between.

Other ways:

- Balancing your Work-Life.
- Talking to friends
- Writing a diary
- Creating art
- Listening or playing music
- Exercising and etc

Posted by Psychological Services Admin on January 2, 2008 10:25:00 AM HKT #