

Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Helpful Resources from your Employee Assistance Program

October 2013

Page 1

Take Control of Stress With These Stress Management Tips



Is being stressed out a common occurrence for you? While a little stress can be good for you - it can motivate you and push you to your potential, many of us are dealing with too much stress.

Whether it is concerns about finances, job stress or over-committed responsibilities, unrelenting stress can cause the fight or flight response to be activated most of the time.

This chronic stress can be harmful to your health and well-being. This makes dealing with stress a priority for you.

One of the first steps to managing stress is to know what is causing your stress. The old adage that "You can't fix a problem until you can recognize the causes" is true of stress management as well!

Whether it is the long commute to work, the irate boss complaining about deadlines or concerns about how you are going to pay the next bill, it is important to identify those causes of stress in your life.

By identifying your stressors, even if they are daily hassles and how you react to them, can give you the objective information to deal with stress.

In essence once you know your causes of stress, the things that trigger that stress and how you react to them - you are in a better place to manage your stress in an appropriate manner.

In my practice I find that different people like different stress management techniques, and that some of these are more useful in certain situations than others.

For example, identifying financial stress as a cause of stress allows you to put in place a budget strategy and debt consolidation to manage your finances. Whereas if you get stressed about the long commute to work then this may represent an opportunity to practice your breathing exercises.

Chat Reminder

Stress Management

Connect with Deer Oaks and a counselor for a live confidential chat.

When:

October 16, 2013

Where:

www.deeroaks.com

Session Time (CDT):

12:15 PM to 12:45 PM





Take Control of Stress With These Stress Management Tips continued...

However, like any skill, whether it is learning to play tennis or to drive a car - stress management techniques take practice. But the good news is that you can develop a suite of techniques to cope with stress that you can use at just about anytime.

I have taught these stress management techniques to elite athletes to use just before a major race, barristers in the middle of their presentations, and airline pilots and surgeons who have complex decisions to make in limited amounts of time.

The point is that stress management techniques can be used just about anywhere by anybody to reduce stress.

Some of these techniques include:

Relaxation exercises. At the physiological level, relaxation exercises counter the stress response. By activating the parasympathetic nervous system, relaxation exercises such as various breathing exercises, autogenic training, progressive muscle relaxation and meditation can clear the mind and relax the body.

Guided imagery. Imagery involves re-creating a relaxing scene with all of your body's senses. For me a relaxing scene usually involves a beach, where I can smell the salt air, feel the sand between my toes, the sun on my face and can hear the waves lapping the shore. Having a scene that you can go to, that is familiar and serene, can be a very useful tool to manage stress or facilitate performance.

Time management skills. If you have a to-do list as long as your arm and you are feeling pressured by a lack of time then you are not alone. Planning and prioritizing may be a way to deal with this increasingly common cause of stress. One of the simplest and most effective strategies is to draw up a to-do list the night before for the next day's activities and start with your most important activity first.

Exercise. Exercise has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety and the incidence of depression. But exercise also promotes good health and well-being. In terms of stress, one of the benefits of exercise is that it relaxes the muscles and rids your body of the excess stress products that can accumulate. Exercise is basically making use of the fight or flight response that is activated during stress.

These are just some of the many strategies that you can use to take control of stress.

Article Source: <http://EzineArticles.com/3816737>

Seven Ways to Prevent An Infection

Your skin acts as a natural barrier against harmful germs that cause infections, but smart “bugs” have found alternative routes to get into your body and cause infection. By making a few simple behavioral changes (which ultimately reduce their access into your body), you can easily prevent the spread of many infectious diseases.

Beyond the obvious—steering clear of runny noses and hacking coughs—the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology presents some other practical ways of staying infection-free.

1. *Wash your hands frequently.* Did you know that germs can live on surfaces anywhere from a few minutes to several months? Imagine these disease-causing microorganisms living on your computer keyboard, your light switch, or even on the elevator button. Wash with good old soap and water for 20 seconds and hand dry with a paper towel.
2. *Don't share personal items.* Toothbrushes, towels, razors, handkerchiefs, and nail clippers can all be sources of infectious agents (bacteria, viruses, and fungi). Not sharing is caring, in this case.
3. *Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.* Why is this important if you aren't sick? For most infections, the disease-causing germ has already started growing and dividing long before any symptoms begin to show. Coughing or sneezing can spread these germs through microscopic droplets in the air. The current recommendation is to cover your mouth with your arm, sleeve, or crook of the elbow, rather than using your hands.
4. *Get vaccinated.* Your immune system is designed to have a “memory” of previous infections. When your body encounters a germ that has previously caused an infection, it enhances its production of white blood cells and antibodies to prevent infection a second time. However, by getting vaccinated (the flu shot is one example), you “trick” your body into thinking that it has been infected by a particular microbe, hence enhancing its own defenses against infection.
5. *Use safe cooking practices.* Microbes thrive on virtually all food items, and more so on foods left at room temperature. Refrigeration slows or stops the growth of most microbes. Promptly refrigerate foods within 2 hours of preparation.
6. *Be a smart traveler.* Infectious diseases can easily be picked up while traveling, particularly to underdeveloped countries. If your travel destination is one where water is questionable, make sure to use a safe water source such as bottled water for drinking and brushing your teeth. Eat foods that have been cooked, and avoid raw vegetables and fruits.
7. *Watch the news.* A good understanding of current events can help you to make wise decisions about traveling or other recreational activities. For example, a bird flu outbreak in Asia may make you think twice about a trip you were planning. Recent reports of West Nile Virus spread by mosquitoes? You may want to bring some insect repellent on your camping trip after all! Salmonella in tomatoes? Don't eat tomatoes. Listeria in cantaloupes? Don't eat cantaloupe. You get the idea.

Health-e headlines™

Clean plate club

About 40% of all food in the U.S. goes uneaten, according to the National Resource Defense Council, an environmental advocacy group. That's about 20 pounds of food wasted per person each month. Consumers buy more food than they need or can be used before the expiration date. You may not want food to go to your waist, but don't let it go to waste either.

Health-e headlines™

Before you get out of bed the next two days, take your pulse.

Count the number of times your heart beats per minute. Average the numbers from each day. This is your resting heart rate. By keeping track of your heart rate (every 3 months) when you're least active, you can measure progress in your exercise program over time. The lower your resting heart rate, the better shape your heart is in.

Health-e headlines™

An EAP Reminder

Life Can Be Hectic. The EAP Can Help You Find Your Balance.

Deer Oaks, your EAP, is always available to you and your household members.

If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact Deer Oaks by calling the Helpline.

Counselors are available 24/7 to provide you with immediate care.



DEER OAKS EAP SERVICES



Clinician's Corner..

Monthly Advice from the Deer Oaks Clinical Team

Stress Management



Do you find yourself cringing at the thought of stress? Or even when you hear the word “stress?” One of the keys to controlling the level of stress in your life is to learn to accept it. Stress is a natural and even helpful reaction. From a survival standpoint, before we became a civilized society, stress was what kept us alive and thriving. Even though times are different, the purpose of stress remains the same: to keep us motivated and engaged.

When we lack deadlines, multiple priorities, or any other reasons to complete tasks, we become lethargic, disengaged, and under-stimulated. When we have too many deadlines, priorities, and tasks to complete, we become completely overwhelmed, physically and psychologically. The key to coping with stress is to manage it, not prevent it from ever being a part of your life.

The basic building blocks to stress management are of course self-care. So often we find ourselves saying that we don't have time to sleep, eat well, or exercise. Although it seems that way, we can always make time. Stress management is not an all or nothing phenomenon – every little attempt to manage your stress counts. From taking five minutes to stretch and do deep breathing each morning, to committing to one healthy meal per day, or even taking a wellness walk on your lunch hour, all of these things can boost your energy and decrease your stress level.

Another way to manage your stress is to become more familiar with it, instead of running from it. Get to know the specific triggers that lead you to feel high levels of stress and pressure. When you can foresee a stressor, you can amp up your coping and self-care efforts even more. You won't ever be able to eliminate stress, but you can be proactive in your approach.

By:

Kira Rogers, Psy.D, SAP, HSP-P
Regional Clinical Manager
Deer Oaks EAP Services, LLC



How to: Avoid Credit Card Dependence

As the cost of living rises and the economy continues to weaken, many find themselves hard-pressed to make ends meet each month.

In some dire cases, financially burdened consumers are relying on credit cards to purchase necessities such as food and gas, driving up card balances and compounding the issue of higher food and energy prices – with interest. Whether you're using credit for splurges, or for necessities, it can be an expensive habit. Consider the following tips to help wean you from dependence on credit cards:

- *Shelve your credit cards.* Consider carrying cash or your debit card for daily use. Leave credit cards at home and only carry one when you plan to use it for a larger purchase or something that you have already reserved for your credit card.
- *Tighten up your budget.* Create a real budget and include even the smallest expenses. Maybe filling up at the station or picking up a few things at the grocery store were once expenses that would previously go unnoticed in your checkbook. However, with much higher prices in gas and food today, even smaller ticket items add up.
- *Cut back on non-essentials.* The easiest way to free up extra cash is to know the difference between needs and wants, and make a conscious effort to do without those things that you don't need such as eating out, vacationing, and shopping for discretionary items such as furniture and electronics.
- *Create a plan to pay down debt.* Sometimes it's easier to break a habit when you have a goal you are trying to accomplish. Make a commitment to pay down a portion of your debt within a certain time frame, and get your family involved in working towards a shared goal.



Finally, if your financial obligations become overwhelming and you find yourself losing control, seek help. Your human resource or employee services department may have options available. Community service and counseling agencies are also available and can offer a number of services to assist you with gaining control over your finances.

About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800.432.7310 or visit www.MoneyManagement.org.