

Stress Management

What is Stress?

- Stress is an emotional and bodily reaction to physical, psychological, or emotional demands.
- It is a fact of life. Managed stress can become useful and healthy, but unmanaged stress can become distressful and unhealthy.
- What are the causes?
 - Expectations we place on ourselves
 - Expectations of others
 - Our physical environment: noise, movement, weather, season changes
 - Our internal environment: academic pressure, frustration, time, decisions, social life
- What are some symptoms of unmanaged stress?
 - Increased heart rate and blood pressure
 - Feeling tense, irritable, fatigued, or depressed
 - Lack of interest and ability to concentrate
 - Avoidance behaviors: abuse of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco

So What Do I Do About It?

- Associate with people whom you enjoy and who support you.
- Learn and practice relaxation or meditation skills; watch your breathing.
- Get a thorough physical exam.
- Engage in a vigorous physical exercise that is convenient and pleasurable. Sometimes it helps to let a friend to exercise with you.
- Don't let one thing dominate you, such as school work, relationships, jobs, sports, etc.
- View life as challenges to seek, not obstacles to avoid.
- Take responsibility for your life and your feelings.
- Maintain a reasonable diet and sane sleep habits.
- Avoid the use of sleeping pills, tranquilizers, and other drugs to control stress.
- Protect your personal freedom and space. When others intrude, let them know.
- Find a time and place each day where you can have complete privacy. Let go, even if just for a little while, the pressures of the day. Short time-outs during the day can help improve functioning for the rest of the day.
- Don't drift along in troublesome and stressful situations or relationships. Take action to change, rather than avoid, the problem. Taking chances is the key to emotional well being.
- Surround yourself with cues for positive thoughts and relaxation.
- Review your obligations from time to time and make sure they are still good for you. If they're not, let them go.
- Open yourself to new experiences. Try new things, new foods, and new places.
- When worries start to build up, talk to someone.