



Recovery Notes

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Scientific Recovery

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For Problems with Alcohol

OUTPATIENT TREATMENT FOR HIGH-PROFILE WOMEN

2010 • ISSUE 5



Stress Management Tips

Effective stress management requires knowledge, determination, persistence, and time. When pursued seriously, stress management strategies can be very successful.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the “wear and tear” our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment. Stress has physical and emotional effects and can create positive or negative feelings. As a positive influence, stress can help compel us to action; it can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn can lead to health problems such as headaches, insomnia, heart disease, and problem drinking. With the death of a loved one, a geographical move, a job promotion, or a new relationship, we experience stress as we readjust our lives. In so adjusting to different circumstances, stress will help or hinder us depending on how we react to it.

HOW CAN I ELIMINATE STRESS FROM MY LIFE?

Positive stress adds anticipation and excitement to life, and we all thrive under a certain amount of stress. Deadlines, competitions, and even our frustrations and

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sorrows add depth and enrichment to our lives. Our goal is not to eliminate stress, but to learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us. Insufficient stress may leave us feeling bored or tired; on the other hand, excessive stress may leave us feeling “tied up in knots.” What we need to do is find the optimal level of stress, which will individually motivate, but not overwhelm each of us.

HOW CAN I TELL WHAT IS OPTIMAL STRESS FOR ME?

There is no single level of stress that is optimal for all people. We are all individual creatures with unique requirements. As such, what is distressing to one may be a joy to another. And even when we agree that a particular event is distressing, we are likely to differ in our physiological and psychological responses to it.

The person who loves to arbitrate disputes and moves from job site to job site would be stressed in a job that was stable and routine, whereas the person who thrives under stable conditions would very likely be stressed on a job where duties were highly varied. Also, our personal stress requirements and the amount that we

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can tolerate before we become distressed changes with age.

It has been found that many illnesses, including alcoholism, are related to unrelieved stress. If you are experiencing stress symptoms, you have gone beyond your optimal stress level; you need to reduce the stress in your life and/or improve your ability to manage it.

HOW CAN I MANAGE STRESS BETTER?

Identifying unrelieved stress and being aware of its effect on our lives is not sufficient for reducing its harmful effects. Just as there are many sources

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of stress, there are many possibilities for its management. However, all require work toward change: changing the source of stress and/or changing your reaction to it. How do you proceed?

1. Become aware of your stressors and your emotional and physical reactions.

Notice your distress. Don't ignore it. Don't gloss over your problems. Track what sets you off. What are you telling yourself about the meaning of these events. Determine how your body responds to the stress. Do you become nervous or physically upset? If so, in what specific ways?

2. Recognize what you can change.

Can you avoid or eliminate your stressors

or reduce their frequency or intensity? Can you shorten your exposure to your stressors? Can you devote the time and energy necessary to making changes? If so, consider these approaches: prepare; plan; prioritize; delegate; or, simplify. Be flexible. Set new goals. Implement time management techniques or delayed gratification strategies.

3. Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress.

Stress reactions are triggered by your perception of danger...physical danger and/or emotional danger. Are you viewing your stressors in exaggerated terms and/or taking a difficult situation and making it a disaster? Are you expecting to please everyone? Are you overreacting and viewing things as absolutely critical and urgent? Do you feel you must always prevail in every situation?

Work at adopting more moderate views; try to see the stress as something you can cope with rather than something that overpowers you. Put the situation in perspective. Do not labor on the negative aspects and the "what ifs."

4. Learn to moderate your physical reactions to stress.

Slow, deep breathing will bring your heart rate and respiration back to normal. Relaxation techniques can reduce muscle tension. Medications, when prescribed by a physician, can help in the short term in moderating your physical reactions. However, they alone are generally not the

answer. Learning to moderate stress reactions on your own, without medication, is usually a preferable long-term solution.

5. Build your physical reserves.

Exercise for cardiovascular fitness several times a week (moderate, prolonged rhythmic exercise is best, such as walking, swimming, cycling, or jogging). Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals. Maintain your ideal weight. Avoid nicotine, excessive caffeine, and other stimulants. Drink alcohol

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safely. Get enough sleep. Be as consistent with your sleep schedule as possible. Mix leisure with work. Take breaks and get away from your routine when you can.

6. Maintain your emotional reserves.

Develop mutually supportive relationships. Pursue realistic goals that are meaningful to you, rather than goals others have for you that you do not share. Use your personal strengths. Schedule time for hobbies and activities you enjoy. Practice gratitude. Limit time spent with negative people. Expect some frustrations, failures, and sorrows. Always be kind and gentle with yourself -- be a friend to yourself.

7. Seek professional help.

Consider a consultation with a mental health professional if extreme or chronic stress cause any of the following: chronic irritation or trouble sleeping, excessive drinking, overeating, loss of appetite, relationship problems, loss of pleasure in life, anxiety, or depression. Ask yourself if the stress you feel is worth the consequences. Remember, nearly all stress-induced problems can be managed and treated.

Scientific Recovery

Scientific Recovery is an evidence-based treatment program for women seeking state-of-the-art, individual therapy for problem drinking. Our focus is on professional women who have recognized that alcohol is a problem they no longer want in their lives. Our goal is to assist women not only to eliminate their alcohol dependence, but also to be happy that they did.



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