

Learning to Manage Stress

Physical or emotional stress is overwhelming, but manageable

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Let's talk about stress. Stress is when tension builds, muscles tighten, and a migraine returns. Perhaps physical exhaustion takes over. The day seems to become endless. Sound familiar? It could be stress.

Research confirms stress can have a tremendous physical effect on a person's life. Think about the number of times you had headaches, backaches, neck aches or behavioral changes, such as yelling or screaming. Maybe you are overeating, depressed or frustrated.

Physical or emotional stress is overwhelming, but manageable. The trick is to build good defenses and coping techniques. When you feel stress building, search your defenses, and apply the best coping technique for the situation.

Some good examples of coping with stress are:

EXERCISE. Medical research proves people who are physically fit are less likely to suffer stress than people who are sedentary. Make exercise a major part of your life. Exercise is work for the body, but also a holiday for the mind. Exercise releases endorphins, the body's natural mood-enhancing drug.

LEARN TO SAY NO. Know your limitations. When you are asked to add another commitment to your overburdened schedule, just say no.

BE POSITIVE. If you continually remind yourself you can't change your tension-filled life, you probably won't. By feeding yourself a constant flow of negative thoughts, you create anxiety in your life. Say to yourself, "I will try," or "I can do it."

DON'T MAJOR IN MINOR THINGS. Some things in life you can't control. Don't try to change something you can't. You only waste energy and produce tension when you become obsessed over uncontrollable things.

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SHOW YOUR EMOTIONS. Don't keep your emotions locked inside yourself. You may look calm, cool, and collected on the outside, but inside you're not. Locked up emotions may bring ulcers or something worse.

TREAT YOURSELF. Without going overboard, find a means to reward yourself. The reward will lift your spirits, and reduce another stressor.