

Health Facts: *Stress*



Prevention Tips

You can't simply wish away stressful events from your life. The key is to handle the stress appropriately to minimize the toll it can take on your physical and emotional health, as well as on your relationships. The following may enhance your ability to manage stressful events in your life:

- Eat a balanced, nutritious diet. General health and stress resistance can be enhanced by eating well and by avoiding alcohol, caffeine, tobacco and junk food.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise promotes emotional well-being as well as physical fitness.
- Schedule your time more effectively using a calendar and to-do lists, prioritizing activities and realizing you can't do everything.
- Learn how to say no to requests that add extra burdens and can wreak havoc on your day.
- Insist on help with regular chores.
- Balance work and play by planning time for hobbies and recreation—activities that relax your mind and temporarily take you away from your stresses. Even diversions like taking a warm shower, going to a movie or taking a walk can help.
- Practice relaxation exercises every day, including visualization, deep muscle relaxation, meditation and deep breathing.
- Rehearse for stressful events. Imagine yourself feeling calm and confident in an anticipated stressful situation. You will be able to relax more easily when the situation arises.
- Let yourself laugh and cry. Laughter makes your muscles go limp and releases tension, so try to keep a sense of humor. Tears can help cleanse the body of substances that accumulate under stress.
- Talk out troubles. It sometimes helps to talk with a friend, relative or spiritual leader. Another person can help you see a problem from a different point of view.
- Help others. Because we concentrate on ourselves when we're distressed, sometimes helping others is the perfect remedy for whatever is troubling us.
- Learn acceptance when a difficult problem is out of your control, which is better than worrying.
- Develop and maintain a positive attitude. View changes as positive challenges, opportunities or blessings.

You don't need to do all of these. Some may work for some people and others for other people. The key is to use the ones that work for you. Some of these become more effective with practice. If you are feeling especially overwhelmed, seek help. There is no need to suffer, and there are trained people out there to help.

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