

STRESS: Coping with Everyday Problems

Stress is a natural part of life!

Stress is hard to define because it means different things to different people; however, it's clear that most stress is a negative feeling rather than a positive feeling.

Stress can be both Physical and Mental:

You may feel physical stress which is the result of too much to do; not enough sleep; poor diet; or effects of events. Stress can also be mental; when you worry about money; loved ones; or experience an emotionally devastating event (floods, death).

However, much of our stress comes from less dramatic everyday responsibilities. Obligations and pressures which are both physical and mental are not always obvious to us.

How Do I Know if I am Suffering from Stress?

Stress can cause physical, emotional, and behavioral disorders which can affect your health, vitality and peace-of-mind, as well as personal and professional relationships. Too much stress can cause relatively minor illnesses such as insomnia, backaches, or headaches as well as such potentially life-threatening diseases as high blood pressure and heart disease.

Tips for Reducing or Controlling Stress:

- **Be Realistic:** Learn to say NO. Eliminate activity that is not necessary. Be willing to listen to others' suggestions and be ready to compromise
- **Shed the "superman/woman" urge:** No one is perfect, so don't expect perfection from yourself or others. Don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it
- **Meditate:** Just 10-20 minutes of quiet reflection may bring relief from chronic stress as well as increase your tolerance to stress.
- **Visualize:** Use your imagination and picture how you can manage a stressful situation more successfully.
- **Take one thing at a time:** The best way to cope with feeling of being overwhelmed is to take one task at a time.
- **Exercise:** Regular exercise is a popular way to relieve stress
- **Hobbies:** Take a break from your worries by doing something you enjoy
- **Healthy lifestyle:** Good nutrition makes a difference. Limit intake of caffeine and alcohol (alcohol actually disturbs regular sleep patterns), get adequate rest, exercise, and balance work and play

- **Share your feelings:** A conversation with a friend lets you know that you are not the only one having problems or concerns. Stay in touch with friends, friends, support systems. You do not need to cope alone!
- **Give in occasionally:** Be flexible! If you find you're meeting constant opposition in either your personal or professional life, rethink your position or strategy.
- **Go easy with criticism:** You may expect too much of yourself and others.

Where to Get Help:

Help may be as close as a friend or family member. But if you think that you or someone you know may be dealing with more than just a passing difficulty, it may be helpful to talk with your doctor, spiritual advisor, mental health counselor, or our employee assistance professional. Our EAP provider is The Village of Fargo (1-800-627-8220). Counseling services are available here at VCSU Monday-Friday; 3-7424.

Ideas to consider when talking with a mental health care provider:

- List the things which cause stress and tension in your life
- How does this stress and tension affect you, your family and your job?
- Can you identify the stress and tensions in your life as short-or long-term?
- Do you have a support system of friends/family that will help you make positive changes?
- What are your biggest obstacles to reducing stress?
- What are you willing to change or give up for a less stressful and tension-filled life?
- What have you tried already that didn't work for you?
- If you do not have control of a situation, can you accept it and get on with your life?

National Mental Health Association; Alexandria, VA