

STRESS

All of us cope with stress in our lives on a daily basis. Stress consists of an initial stage of shock or alarm reaction followed by a phase of increasing resistance or adaption using the various defense mechanisms of the body or mind and culminate in either a state of adjustment and healing or a state of exhaustion and disintegration. One of America's esteemed writers, Henry David Thoreau said that most of us "live lives of quiet desperation". Stress can be caused by both positive and negative things in life. On the negative side, such situations can include the loss of a job, money problems, difficulty with loved ones, poor health, and poor performance. On the positive side, greater performance expectations, job promotion, childbirth, marriage, etc. can prove very stressful. Our bodies deal with both positive and negative stresses in the same way.

Under stressful situations, the body reacts to protect itself this "fight or flight" response causes the release of adrenaline (epinephrine), a hormone produced in the adrenal glands. In turn, this hormone signals the liver to release stored sugar for energy; makes the breathing and heartbeat quicker, raises the blood pressure, and tenses the muscles. The body is prepared to either stand and fight or run away from the perceived danger. If nothing happens, the supercharged body, unable to release the pent up energy, feels so frustrated that it turns on itself, giving rise to headaches, upset stomach, as well as muscular aches and pains. If this kind of frustration happens too often, it can literally be self destructive to the body.

Many studies have shown that there is a direct link between stressful life events and serious accidents and illness the greater the number of events the greater the risk. It is, however, possible to "undo" the harm by not overreacting to life's problems, and by finding other outlets for energy through sports, regular exercise, and by meditation. In order to cope with stress, one must develop a positive attitude. This attitude must focus on an attitude that you are in control of your life and not just a victim. Finally, be kind, everyone you meet is fighting a tough battle!

Dealing with stress is one of the most important parts of our daily lives. People who are stress survivors stay healthy through the worst of times. Consider stress as an opportunity for growth. A well balanced diet will help the body to cope with stress and will guard against illnesses. Coping well under stress may mean seeking help. A doctor, minister, or mental health professional can help; but often, just talking to friends, relatives and trusted co-workers can do much to reduce stress.

Exercise may also prevent the long term effects of stress. Studies have shown that aerobically fit people are less likely to become ill or depressed despite periods of high pressure in their lives.

Visit us in the University Health clinic where we can help you cope more effectively with your stress!



Healthfully yours,

Dr. Healthberry

For questions or comments you can;

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