Lifestyle Stress Reduction

Stress is unavoidable. How we think about it and how we react to it makes the difference in how it impacts our self-care and our health. While some medicine may help to manage stress, there are many things that you can do to help you manage stress and improve overall health. Partnering with your health care team can help you determine a plan of action for stress reduction.

Self-Management Tips

- Connect with others
- Get involved in activities
- Try different healthy ways to relax (music, exercise, dance, meditation or yoga)
- Take time for fun creative activities or hobbies
- Keep a gratitude journal or write about stressful events
- Take care of spiritual needs
- Make time to laugh (comedy, joke books etc)
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol
- Try deep breathing techniques
- Get a massage

Good Stress/Bad Stress

Not all stress is bad for us; in fact some stress can be helpful for completing important projects, studying for an exam, speaking in public, or accomplishing challenging goals. On the other hand, distress or negative stress is the type of stress that can cause short- or long-term anxiety, decreased performance and lead to poor mental and physical health. Distress can be caused by many factors that differ for everyone. It is important to recognize the things in your life that cause distress, so you can come up with a plan to manage or cope with or view situations differently.

See Stress Differently

Look at events or triggers from a different angle. Consider "Is there another way to look at this situation?" and remember it's not helpful to focus on what cannot be changed. Try to improve your mood by looking at what is going well in life. Focus on your accomplishments or what you have overcome.

Stress Reduction Goals

Setting goals around stress management is a great way to decrease any negative impact stress may have on your health. It's often easier to achieve positive goals. An example of a positive stress management goal is, "I will write about what I am thankful for at least 10 minutes three times per week."

Specific - What are you going to do to manage your stress?

Measurable - How much time, how many sessions?

Attainable - Do you have what it takes to follow through?

Realistic - What can you actually do? (improvement over perfection)

Time-Connected - How frequent? How long will you commit?



Helpful resources:

The American Institute of Stress
www.stress.org

National Institute of Mental Health:
nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress

American Psychological Association:
apa.org/topics/stress

Mentalhealth.gov

Headspace (App Store)

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