News Article

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Stress Management: Dealing with daily issues

Stress management isn't a quick fix you use only in emergencies. Rather, it's a set of tools you can use to deal with the big and little issues that arise every day. Making a commitment to practice stress prevention strategies will pay off over time. Stress is more likely to rear its ugly head if you're not taking care of yourself.

Take time for yourself. Just 10 to 20 minutes of quiet reflection may bring relief from chronic stress as well as increase your tolerance to it. Use the time to listen to music, relax, and try to think of pleasant things. If you feel your muscles begin to tense, take a minibreak and breathe deeply, inhale to the count of six, pause for a second and then slowly exhale.

Be active regularly. Physical activity can help keep depression and anxiety under control. Just 30 minutes or more of exercise each day benefits the body and mind.

Eat healthy foods. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can give you more energy to keep stress under control. Drink water and stay away from sweetened foods and drinks.

Keep a reasonable schedule. Resist overcommitting your time and energy. Find ways to give yourself some "me" time. It is OK to say "no" to new requests, so you can devote time to activities you're already committed to.

Be prepared for challenges. Whether it's preparing for a project at work, planning a family gathering, or handling a sick child, being prepared can help you face stressful situations with confidence. If necessary, set aside extra time for you to calm yourself.

Banish negative thoughts. If you find yourself thinking, "This can't be done," snap back and think positively that it CAN be done. By making it work, you put a positive spin on negative thoughts which can help you work through stressful situations.
Keep laughing. Humor is a great way to relieve stress. Laughter releases endorphins --
natural substances that help you feel better and maintain a positive attitude. Studies
suggest laughter may lower blood pressure, boost the immune system and increase
circulation as well.

If new stressors are challenging your ability to cope or if familiar techniques seem to
have lost their effectiveness, you may need to look for new ideas. There are plenty of
books, websites, and support groups dedicated to helping people get through tough
times. You may also find it helps to talk to someone about the stressors in your life, e.g.,
a good friend or a professional counselor. Sometimes an outside perspective makes all
the difference. Visit www.healthfinder.gov and search for stress management, you will
find multiple sources for help and guidance.

Remember, stress is a part of life -- it's never going to completely disappear, but you
can build a toolbox of tips and techniques to help keep stress from taking over your life.

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