

Stress

Imagine for a moment how much more enjoyable and productive life might be if you experienced lasting stress relief.

STRESS IS LIKE SALT:

the right amount is good and necessary for life, but in excess, it can kill you.

Change is all around us and stress is the brain and body's way of responding to it. Whether we interpret change as real or perceived, short or long-term, stress is the result.

Stress is not intended to be harmful. In fact, it does serve a purpose. Your body's stress response is meant to protect you from danger. It releases chemicals and hormones to aid the "fight or flight" response. This quickens your pulse, increases your breathing rate, and tenses your muscles. Oxygen shoots toward your brain and your immune system is charged with a short boost.

While stress can be beneficial, our bodies aren't designed to handle activating the stress response all the time. Chronic stress takes a toll, and over time prevents your body from returning to its normal

functioning state. As a result, people might experience high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, or mental illnesses like depression or an anxiety disorder.

TYPES OF STRESS

There are three main types of stress we experience: routine, sudden event, and traumatic. Routine stress occurs with the regular changes in our work, school, or family environments. Another type of stress happens from a sudden event such as an unexpected job loss, death, illness, or divorce. Lastly, traumatic stress follows a disastrous event like an accident, acts of war, assault, or a natural disaster.

RESILIENCE

While we don't always have control over stressful events in our lives, we can manage how we react to them. Resilience is the ability to adapt well over time in response to stressful events. How well do you "bounce back"?

Do you have access to supportive family and friend relationships?

Are you readily able to make a plan and stick to it? Can you problem solve?

Do you believe in yourself and your abilities?

Can you identify and regulate strong, emotional responses?

Do you open up and communicate with your support network?

ACTION STEPS

Practicing the following healthy habits will help you develop resilience and cope with life's stressors:

- ✓ Pay attention to your body and where you're feeling physical tension.
- ✓ Be mindful of your limits and learn to say no once in a while.
- ✓ Clarify your values and prioritize tasks and responsibilities accordingly.
- ✓ Focus on the positive and what you have accomplished.
- ✓ Eat healthy foods, limit caffeine and alcohol, get rest and exercise regularly.
- ✓ Relax your body and focus your thoughts on whatever is uplifting for you.
- ✓ Schedule an appointment for a check-up with your primary care provider.

KEEP IN MIND

Life is challenging and can be very stressful. You're not alone, and help is available. Consider reaching out to your health care provider and engaging other counseling resources for guidance on next steps.

What steps will you take today to be well and live life more fully?