



Stress Management

Several Definitions of Stress

"Stress is the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them. It arises when they worry that they can't cope."

"...a reaction in your mind and body to an event in the outside world that alarms or arouses you."

What does stress feel like?

Worry
Tense
Tired
Frightened
Elated
Depressed
Anxious
Anger

Why is it important to understand stress(ors) and how to reduce it?

2/3 of medical visits are for stress related illnesses Stress response contributes to: coronary artery disease, cancer, respiratory disorders, unintentional injuries, cirrhosis, suicide

Examples of How the Stress Response Make Us Sick:

Chronically elevated BP
atherosclerosis (plaque on artery walls)
myocardial ischemia (literally, heart not getting enough O₂ → heart attack)
Constantly using stored energy → tire more easily
Blocked insulin secretion → higher risk of diabetes

Now lets learn a bit more about stressors and Signs of Stress so we can better control it...

Stressors can be internal and / or external

External Stressors:

Environment: Noise, Bright Lights, Heat/Cold, Confined Spaces

Social Interaction: Rudeness, Bossiness, Aggressiveness

Major Life Events: Birth, Death, Lost job, Marital status change

-Even good things can be stressful: moving out of transitional housing

Daily Hassles: Commuting, Mislabeled belongings, Mechanical breakdowns

Internal Stressors:

Lifestyle choices: Caffeine, Lack of sleep, variable schedule

Negative self-talk: Pessimistic thinking, Self criticism, Over-analyzing

Mind traps: Feeling “on edge,” Vague sense of future doom, Fear, losing control, Racing thoughts, Detached from self, Decreased ability to learn

A Closer Look at Negative Self-talk

The Worrier Voice - “What if.....?”

Make a plan then get it out of your head.

The Critic Voice - “How stupid.....”

Recognize what is really true.

The Victim Voice - “I’ll never be able to.....”

There is always something to do to work toward a goal.

The Perfectionist - “I should.....”

Assess your unrealistic expectations of yourself.

Physical Signs of Stress

Short term (like SNS "Fight or Flight" response):

-Increased BP, HR, RR, Decreased digestion, Increased metabolism

Long term:

Increased vascular constriction, Decreased inflammatory response, Decreased immune response

Behavioral Signs of Stress

Withdrawal

Suspiciousness

Excessive Humor or Silence

Increased Smoking, Alcohol or Food intake

Change in Activity Level Angry Outbursts

Crying Spells

Coping Skills to Manage Anxiety/Anger/Stress:

Change your thinking

Change your behavior

Change your lifestyle

Recognize the problem:

Find the source of negative stress...this is NOT an admission of weakness!

Most of the stress we experience is self-generated. Self-generated stress is something of a paradox, because so many people think of external causes when they are upset. Recognizing that we create most of our own upsets is an important first step towards coping with them.

Relaxation Techniques:

- Abdominal breathing,
- Stretches
- Active Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Visualization
- Self-Hypnosis/Meditation
- Music

Exercise (non-competitive if competition puts you on edge): great for your health too!

- *Improves circulation
- *Lowers blood pressure
- *Clears the mind of worrying thoughts
- *Makes you feel better about yourself
- *Increases social contact

Examine Self Talk:

How we perceive life - whether an event makes us feel threatened or stimulated, encouraged or discouraged, happy or sad - depends to a large extent on how we perceive ourselves.

Reframing: technique to change the way you look at things in order to feel better about them. There are many ways to interpret the same situation so pick the one you like. Re-framing does not change the external reality, but helps you view things in a different light and less stressfully.

Positive Thinking:

Forget powerlessness, dejection, despair, failure

Stress leaves us vulnerable to negative suggestion so focus on positives;

Focus on your strengths

Learn from the stress you are under

Look for opportunities

Seek out the positive - make a change.

Develop Action Plan:

Don't set unachievable goals, but also don't waste time making up excuses for not doing something. Make lists; break up large tasks into smaller categories

Nutrition: healthy foods → healthy body and mind**Stick to food pyramid**

Most people (esp. in the Northwest) are deficient in **Vitamin D** (less sun exposure)

Vitamin D3 (calciferol) deficiency can lead to muscle weakness, weak bones

Get it in fatty fish: salmon, cod, mackerel, sardines,

Also, dairy products, eggs

Avoid Stimulants: caffeine, nicotine, sugar**Distraction/Humor:**

learn to laugh at yourself;

-get those endorphins up!

-causes deep abdominal breathing

-increases circulation

-relieves tension

-puts life in perspective:

"A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs --- jolted by every pebble in the road." –

Henry Ward Beecher,

"Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion . . . I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward."

-Kurt Vonnegut

Diplomacy skills: If you are often involved in personal conflicts, learn to empathize with the other person

Sleep:

-Alcohol, sedatives may help you fall asleep, but are bad for your sleep cycle (it puts "holes" in your deep sleep) so the next day/night you'll want to make up for it

-try to get 8 hrs, women may need more (9-10hrs)

-best for your rhythm to make sure you're sleeping from 3-5 a.m.

Develop/Maintain friendships: we all need a variety of support systems

Counseling and Drug Therapy

King County Public Health
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthServices/MentalHealth/Resources/ProvidersAll.aspx>

[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) - Greater Seattle](#)

802 NW 70th Street
Seattle, WA 98117
Phone: 206-789-7722 | MH
Line 1-800-782-9264 | Public
206-783-9264
<http://www.nami-greaterseattle.org/index.htm>

[National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) - South King County](#)

515 Harrison Street, Suite 215
Kent, WA 98032
Phone: 253-854-6264
Therapy Project
<http://www.therapyproject.org/>
3417 Fremont Avenue N, #225
Bus lines: 5, 17, 26, 28, 30 and 31

[Crisis Clinic](#)

1515 Dexter Ave N, Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98109
Phone: 2-1-1 or 206-461-3222

or 1-866-427-4747

TTY: 206-461-3219

[Asian Counseling & Referral Service](#)

3639 Martin Luther King Jr
Way S
Seattle, WA 98144
Phone: 206-695-7600

[Community House Mental Health Center](#)

431 Boylston Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98102
Phone: 206-322-2387

[Community Psychiatric Clinic](#)

11000 Lake City Way NE
Seattle, WA 98125
Phone: 206-461-3614

[Consejo Counseling & Referral Services](#)

3808 S Angeline Street
Seattle, WA 98118
Phone: 206-461-4880

[Downtown Emergency Service Center](#)

515 Third Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: 206-464-1570

[Harborview Mental Health Services](#)

325 Ninth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104
Phone: 206-744-9611
Outpatient MH Services
Phone: 206-744-9600

[Navos](#)

2600 SW Holden Street
Seattle, WA 98126
Phone: 206-248-8226
Burien Office: 1010 S 146th
Street
Seattle, WA 98168
Phone: 206-241-0990

[SeaMar Community Health Centers](#)

1040 S Henderson Street
Seattle, WA 98108
Phone: 206-764-4700

[Seattle Counseling Service](#)

1216 Pine Street, Suite 300
Seattle, WA 98101
Phone: 206-323-1768

[Sound Mental Health](#)

1600 E Olive Street
Seattle, WA 98122
Child & Family Services Phone:
206-301-2600
Clients Phone: 206-302-2300
or 1-800-828-1449

[Valley Cities Counseling & Consultation](#)

2704 - I Street NE
Auburn, WA 98002
Phone: 253-939-4055

[YMCA of Greater Seattle](#)

2100 24th Avenue S
Seattle, WA 98144
Phone: 206-382-5340