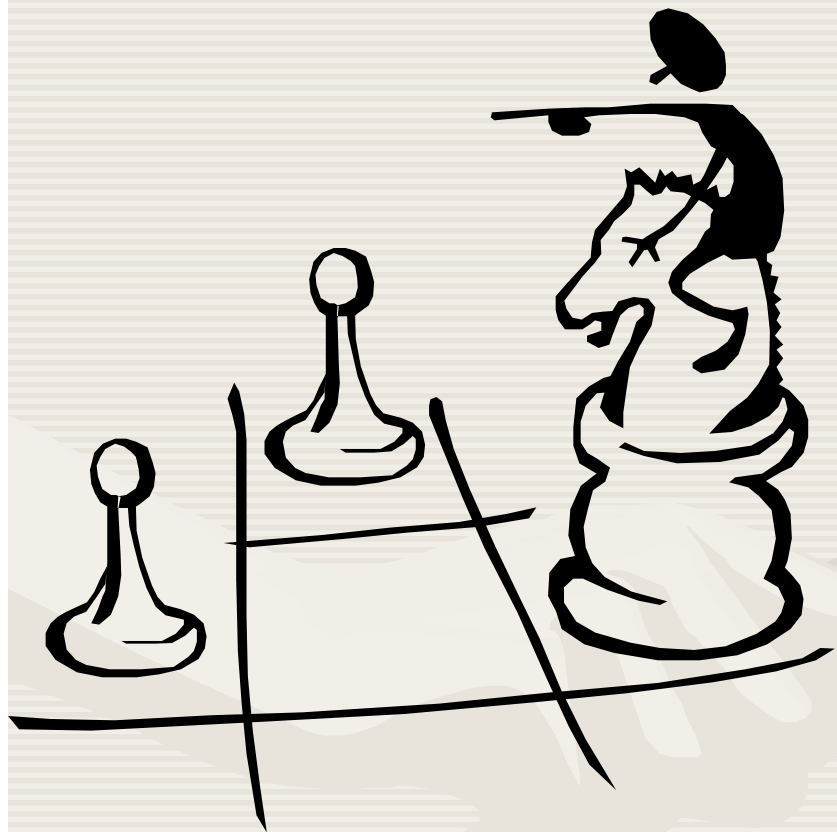


Managing Stress Before It Manages You

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Advantage EAP
Employee Assistance
Program

What is Stress?

- An automatic physical and emotional reaction in response to danger, to a demand, or to change.
- Any changes in your life can lead to stress. Such changes may range from divorce, to a change in job responsibilities, to holidays, or receiving a traffic ticket.

Positive vs. Negative Stress

- Stress can be positive It can help us perform at peak efficiency, assisting in increased focus, motivation, and overall performance. Some people work best under pressure.
- Stress can be negative if it is too intense, prolonged, or frequent.
- Don't try to eliminate all stress. Instead, find your optimum stress level.

Fight-or-Flight Reaction

(or the body's emergency response)

- This is an innate response to a perceived threat. It prepares us to fight or to run. The body is readied for action with increased heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate, muscle tension, and perspiration.

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“The fight or flight response is perfectly normal. Though, traditionally, the bride takes flight.”

Cortisol

- “The Stress Hormone”
 - Produced by the Adrenal Gland
 - Increases blood pressure
 - Increases blood sugar
 - Counter acts insulin

High & Prolonged Levels of Cortisol

- Impaired Cognitive Performance
- Blood sugar imbalances
- High Blood Pressure
- Suppressed Thyroid Function
- Decreased Bone Density
- Increased Abdominal Fat

Symptoms of Stress

- fatigue
- insomnia
- depression
- anxiety
- frustration
- alcohol or drug abuse
- mood swings
- increased health problems
- Loss of sexual interest
- irritability
- poor appetite
- loss of concentration
- marital conflict
- helplessness
- loss of self-esteem
- social withdrawal
- inability to enjoy yourself

Costs of Stress

- Stress is linked to 6 leading causes of death in the USA
- 75-90% of all doctor visits are stress-related
- Americans spend billions each year to fight the symptoms of stress

Important Role of Control

- Less Perceived Control= More Stress
- More Perceived Control= Less Stress
- Rat in a Skinner Box



Lifestyle Choices for Effective Stress Management

Exercise

- Active physical exercise done regularly can help with handling stress, relieving tension, and reducing depression.
- Aerobic exercise is especially helpful, such as walking, jogging, swimming, bicycling.

Lifestyle Approaches (continued)

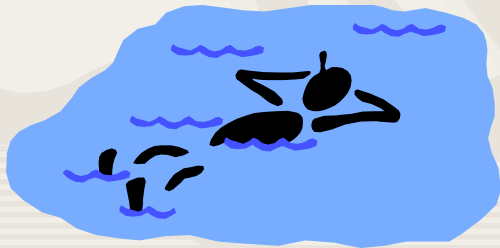
Nutrition

- Foods can influence your ability to handle stress.
- Limit use of caffeine, sugar, sodium, and alcohol.
- Don't skip meals.
- Avoid junk food (fatty, high caloric).

Lifestyle Approaches (continued)

Rest

- Get enough sleep at night.
- Take vacations.
- Enjoy your free time by putting worries aside.
- Fun is serious business.



SERIOUS!!!

Lifestyle Approaches (continued)

- **Develop a Support System**

- Learn to talk about your feelings.
- Rely on your friends, family, church, etc.

- **Develop outside interests**

- Avoid becoming too wrapped up in one area of life (e.g., workaholic)



Change Your Stress-Producing Thinking

- Stress is created by your perception of events, not the events themselves.
- Focus on the positive aspects of the situation, maintain hope, and avoid setting unrealistic expectations.



Types of Stress-Producing Thinking

- **Catastrophising/Awfulizing**
 - It would be a terrible catastrophe if I don't get what I want in this situation.
- **All-or-nothing Thinking**
 - I must be perfect in this situation or I am a total failure.
- **Fear of failure**
 - I might fail and get rejected. He may not like me if this were to happen.
- **Jumping to Conclusions**
 - I'm helpless. Forces beyond my control are causing me problems in this situation.

Developing Resiliency In the Face of Stress

- Adopt a positive attitude. Attend to pleasant situations. Say positive statements to yourself.
- Crises at work or at home can be seen as opportunities for growth and development. Setbacks can be seen as temporary and an occasion to re-evaluate your direction or goals.
- Accept that which you cannot change. Focus more on that over which you have control.
- Don't sweat the small stuff!



Developing Resiliency (continued)

- Accept that change occurs constantly. Being flexible allows us to adapt.
- Hang around friends or coworkers who are positive and upbeat. Negative emotions are draining.
- Humor!
- Strive towards a healthy balance between work and home. Try to avoid stress in one arena carry over into the other.

