

STRESS

Why is it important to reduce stress?

Stress is the body's natural response to challenging situations, causing muscles to tense and the mind to be more alert. The burst of adrenaline gives you energy to meet your goals. However, if stress does not subside and continues to upset your daily life, the effects can be serious. You may experience problems eating or sleeping, headaches, neck aches, backaches, increased use of alcohol and/or other drugs, upset stomach, fatigue, poor concentration, nightmares, and frustration. Stress affects many bodily functions, especially your immune system. Excessive stress is believed to be a factor in illnesses ranging from colds and flu to heart disease.

Methods to reduce stress

- Set realistic goals (long-term and short-term) and reward yourself on the way to reaching these goals.
- Find a mode for release. Exercising, writing in a journal, and talking to friends are great ways to release built up tension and help you relax.
- Learn relaxation techniques.
- Make a to-do list: plan activities by priority and consolidate similar tasks, trips, and errands. Let paper hold the things you want to accomplish so you don't have to worry about them. Focus on one item from your list at a time.
- Schedule for interruptions. Allow about 10 minutes per hour for unplanned interruptions.
- Eliminate clutter from your day. Unsubscribe from listservs that fill your inbox and throw away mail you don't need to read, like junk mail.
- Schedule breaks. This will give you something to look forward to as you work, helping you be more productive in the long run.
- Stay healthy. Get good sleep, exercise regularly, drink plenty of fluids, and eat a balanced diet.
- Think positively. An optimistic view of the future will help you stay relaxed now. In fact, smiling is linked to good health and longer life.
- Don't dwell on the past. Learn from mistakes and move on.
- Let go of things you cannot control and instead focus on what you can.
- Learn to say "no" and set healthy limits and boundaries.

If you would like to talk about any of these issues, call the Counseling Center at (336) 316-2163.
