

NOVEMBER 2014

EPIC WELLNEWS

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY: TAKING THE PROACTIVE APPROACH



Fourth quarter quotas at work, hustle and bustle of the holiday season and managing travel plans with family and friends can lead to work-life balance struggles during the fall and winter months. We all know this time of the year can be stressful. It helps to be aware of the signs and symptoms of stress and to adopt a proactive approach to managing stressors before it gets worse.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the body's reaction to harmful situations -- whether they're real or perceived. When you feel threatened, a chemical reaction occurs in your body that allows you to act in a way to prevent injury. This reaction is known as "fight-or-flight," or the stress response. During stress response, your heart begins to race, breathing quickens, muscles tighten, and blood pressure rises. You've gotten ready to act. It is how you protect yourself.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Low energy
- Headaches
- Upset stomach, including diarrhea, constipation, and nausea
- Aches, pains, and tense muscles
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Insomnia
- Frequent colds and infections
- Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear, cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated, and moody
- Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control
- Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless, and depressed
- Avoiding others

BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Changes in appetite -- either not eating or eating too much
- Procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes
- Exhibiting more nervous behaviors, such as nail biting, fidgeting, and pacing

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Looking for a little help in finding some of those natural stress-reducing remedies? Look no further than a healthy meal and a healthy hardy laugh!

AVOID STRESS FOOD TRAPS, CONSIDER SOME HEALTHY EATING HABITS

- Eat a diet rich in foods of many colors, such as vegetables.
- Select foods that are high in antioxidants, like broccoli, carrots, whole grains, spinach and any kind of berries.
- Opt for organic foods whenever possible.
- Drink filtered water to keep you hydrated.
- Reduce or eliminate your caffeine intake.
- Cook with fresh herbs and spices.
- Consume free-range meats to avoid ingesting synthetic hormones and fertilizers.
- Avoid eating genetically modified foods, especially meat products.
- Consume at least 30 to 40 grams of fiber each day. Good sources of fiber include apples, peas, whole wheat bread, and bran cereal.
- Add omega-3 fatty acids to your diet, either with a supplement or in foods such as salmon, walnuts, shrimp and soybeans.

WHY LAUGHTER

Laughter makes you feel better in the moment, and also has long-term benefits:

- It reduces stress hormones in the body by releasing endorphins in the brain.
- It can lower blood pressure.
- It improves alertness, creativity and memory.
- Laughter increases the intake of oxygen while also stimulating the heart, lungs and blood vessels.
- It improves the immune system.
- It helps the body produce natural painkillers.
- Laughing helps you get through tough situations and enables the body and mind to relax.

UP YOUR DOSAGE

It's easy to incorporate some healthy laughter into your day. Consider these ideas:

- Hang up silly pictures of your family and friends, comic strips or jokes around your home and office.
- Look for the silver lining or comical aspects of everyday struggles. Associate yourself with others who try to do the same, rather than those who tend to focus on the negative.
- Whenever you feel overwhelmed or negative, watch a funny movie or television show, or play with your children or pet.
- Buy a joke book or find an author whose writing you find humorous.
- Host a game night with family and friends.
- Listen to a comedy CD on your commute to and from work.
- Do not take yourself too seriously; know when you need to relax.

YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY...
**LAUGHTER IS CONTAGIOUS.
 SO, SPREAD SOME AROUND
 TO BENEFIT YOUR HEALTH
 AND THE HEALTH OF
 THOSE AROUND YOU**