

April 2014

Think Spring



Stress and your Health...

April is Stress Awareness Month. Managing your stress is important because it can impact your overall health.

If you've been stressed out for a short period of time, you may start to notice some of these physical signs:

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty concentrating
- Upset stomach
- Irritability

When stress becomes long-term and is not properly addressed, it can lead to a number of more serious health conditions, including:

- Depression
- High blood pressure

- Abnormal heartbeat (arrhythmia)
- Hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis)
- Heart disease
- Heart attack
- Heartburn, ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome
- Upset stomach -- cramps, constipation, and diarrhea
- Weight gain or loss
- Changes in sex drive
- Fertility problems
- Flare-ups of asthma or arthritis
- Skin problems such as acne, eczema, and psoriasis

It is important to recognize your stress levels, so hopefully you can prevent it from becoming a bigger problem.

How to De-Stress...

Everyone has different stress triggers, but the most common is work. Coupled with life stresses, it is no wonder people feel out of control.

Unfortunately, stress is a fact of life for most people. You may not be able to get rid of stress, but you can look for ways to lower it. Here are some ideas:

- Learn better ways to manage your time. You may get more done with less stress if you make a schedule.
- Find better ways to cope. Look at how you have been dealing with stress. Be honest about what works and what does not.
- Take good care of yourself. Get plenty of rest. Eat well. Don't smoke. Limit how much alcohol you drink.
- Try out new ways of thinking. When you find yourself starting to worry, try to stop the thoughts. Or write down your worries and work on letting go of things you cannot change. Learn to say "no."

- Speak up. Not being able to talk about your needs and concerns creates stress and can make negative feelings worse.
- Ask for help. People who have a strong network of family and friends manage stress better.
- Make time to do something you really enjoy that makes you happy.
- Meditate, clear your mind and relax.
- Regular exercise is one of the best ways to manage stress.

The key is to try to strike some type of balance. It is important to have some "me" time! If you can't manage it yourself, go see your doctor and get professional help.





Healing through Humor...

Why use humor in daily life? The answer is simple.

You get immediate results. It takes no special talent or ability, no physical prowess or skill, you aren't required to have a masters degree or a license, it makes you feel good, it's fun, fat-free and you don't need batteries.

You are dealing with some kind of health problem or maybe you're taking care of someone who's ill or there are simply not enough hours in a day between work and home. Stress is pretty much a fact of life. Sometimes it can feel pretty overwhelming. It may seem crazy, but laughter can help.

Whatever you're doing right now, stop and find something that makes you laugh. It may feel like a solution that won't last long, but laughter can help you forget about your troubles and help your body heal. Yes, laughter can help your body heal.

Thanks to something called the mind-body connection, the simple act of laughing can tell your brain to produce chemicals that:

- Lower your risk for heart attacks.
- Increase your blood circulation.
- Help your heart work better and pump more evenly.
- Boost your body's immune system to help you fight off infection.
- Increase your deep breathing, which relaxes your muscles, gives you more energy, and lowers your stress.
- Help you make sense of your emotional experiences, improve your mood, and manage your feelings of pain and stress.

Scientific research backs this up: The more you laugh, the better you'll feel and the healthier you'll be. Give it a try.

Easy Medicine...Laughter

Laughter is one of those things, like getting exercise or watching what you eat, that you can do yourself. Here are a few ways to laugh more:

- Ask your spouse, partner, or friends to help by telling you good jokes or bringing you funny movies.
- Spend time with the world's leading experts on laughter: children.
- Surround yourself with people and things that make you laugh—whatever or whoever they may be.
- Surround yourself with humor: An Internet search for "stupid pet tricks" or "funniest home movies" will give you, as well as the people you care for or the people who care for you, plenty to laugh at.
- Ask at your local library or bookstore for funny books, audio programs, or movies. Or subscribe to a free comedy podcast.
- Laugh at yourself, it isn't necessary to constantly put yourself down, but self-deprecating humor shows that you are human. Making fun of yourself can sometimes take the sting out of what other people say.

It's easy to think that the only things that can help your health are things that others do for you or to you—the medicines you take, the doctors you visit, the surgeries or operations you have. And these are all important. But laughter is effective treatment you can do for yourself. It makes you more efficient and allows you to function better. The quickest, most effective way to beat stress is literally to laugh it off. And you don't need a medical license to do it.

Source: www.webmd.com & www.larrywilde.com

