

Recognize Your Stress

By Nancy Hopstein, Licensed Mft

“Cast all your anxiety on Him, for He cares for you.” – 1 Peter 5:7

We all deal with stress in our lives; everyday events along with other situations that may feel out of our control (illnesses, the economy, relationships) can quickly consume us with worry. For many of us this worry is situational and temporary and will subside as our trials get resolved. But there are times when we are more vulnerable and become overwhelmed, and cannot turn the worry off.

The Key To Understanding And Managing Your Stress Is Awareness

Listen for physical cues:

- Sweaty palms
- Fast breathing
- Muscle Tension, etc.

Look for behavioral clues:

- Over indulging in food
- Drinking
- Smoking
- Yelling, etc.

Pay attention to emotional cues;

- Feeling Angry
- Frustrated
- Keyed up, etc.

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Taking Charge of Your Stress

1. Pray - *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus”*. Philipians. 4:6
2. Practice deep, full abdominal breathing. This will increase the oxygen supply to your muscles and brain, stimulate the parasympathetic nervous system promoting a state of calmness and quiet, helps you to get out of your head, better mind body connection, and improves concentration and relaxation.
3. Exercise on a regular basis, eat right, stay away from junk food and get plenty of sleep. If you are having trouble sleeping, , establish a regular sleep routine turning off the TV, phone and other mind stimulating electronics a good hour before going to bed.
4. Eliminate stimulants from your diet, i.e. caffeine, sugar, nicotine
5. Cultivate a good support system, talk to friends, family, learn to acknowledge and express your feelings, appropriately, especially anger and sadness.
6. Practice positive self- talk and affirmations. *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things”* Philipians 4:8

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