



STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress is your reaction to something you consider a challenge or threat. When you are under stress, your body begins to “gear-up” for action. This is to make you stronger and more alert, at least in the short term.

Occasional stress is a part of life. However, when it gets out of control, it can become very harmful.

If stress is long term it can begin to take its toll on:

- **Your health**—When you “gear-up” under stress, your body begins to do more of some things and less of others. For example, blood circulation increases, but digestion slows down. Once the stress ends, your body goes to work to restore the balance. However, if stress returns too soon, your body will never have time to get back on an even keel. Eventually, this can lead to major health problems, such as; heart disease, ulcers, sleeplessness, headaches, and poor digestion.
- **Your relationships**—Under stress, some people take out their frustrations on family and friends.
- **Your efficiency in your work**—for a short time, stress can make you a better, more efficient worker. However, over the long haul, it will gradually wear you down. You will become physically weaker and begin to tire easily. At the same time, you will find it difficult to concentrate and will begin to make poor decisions.

Learn to handle stress

- Talking about your problems is one good way of relieving stress. Choose someone you feel you can be open and honest with, and tell him or her about your problem(s).
- Learn to recognize when you are coming under stress. Everyone has a definite physical response, but it varies from person to person. In one, it might be tightening of the neck or shoulder muscles; in another, queasiness; in yet another, frowning. When you learn what your own stress signals are, try to respond to them by telling yourself to relax. Concentrating on something other than the problem for example, taking a deep breath or deliberately relaxing your muscles will often help.
- When dealing with a major problem, try to break it down into smaller parts. Once one smaller part is completed, pick out another, and so on. Gradually the problem as a whole will begin to seem more manageable.
- Schedule your time realistically; do not try to squeeze more work into a day than you can actually complete. Also, leave room for the unexpected. Usually there will be something that will hold up your work.
- Take occasional short breaks from work. A person who works without breaks becomes steadily less effective during the course of the day. By contrast, a few minutes off will refresh you and give you a new start at the job.
- Learn how to relax. Sit back in a chair and concentrate on relaxing your muscles. If you find that difficult, try alternately tensing and relaxing, until you become familiar with the difference.



Whatever you do, there is no way to completely eliminate stress. Instead, your goal should be to limit the amount of stress and to keep it under control.



