

Stress is Not a Bad Thing It Comes Down to How You Deal With it

By Jan Reinhart



Jan Reinhart

The conventional wisdom when it comes to managing stress is simple: Reduce it! But first, you have to understand it. Intuitively, we all know what stress is, but defining it can be difficult. Essentially, stress refers to the things or circumstances that bother us and to the physical/emotional discomfort we feel about them. Stress is both a stimulus and a response to that stimulus. It's what's on your plate and how you react to it.

Most people talk about stress in terms of "pressure." Depending on the individual, it can result in jumpiness, a tendency to fly off the handle, dizziness or insomnia. One could have a dry mouth, a thudding heartbeat, a knot in the stomach or recurrent indigestion. Actually, we need stress to gear us up to meet life's demands. Without it, we wouldn't get out of bed in the morning, make any plans or have any goals. So the problem isn't having stress – rather it's the type, amount, frequency and duration of the stress. What's important is having skills to deal with it.

One thing leads to another

The *Wall Street Journal* reports that 75% to 90% of all visits to the doctor are due to stress-related conditions and 60% of lost workdays can be attributed to stress. *Prevention Magazine* reports seven out of 10 people feel stress on a typical weekday. When you've gone past your stress tolerance point, your brain actually begins to malfunction. You forget things, lose things, can't concentrate and indulge in bad habits. Stress can lead to other problems: obsessive worrying, spending sprees, lack of concentration or an inability to see the point of a joke.

According to the American Institute on Stress, job stress costs U.S. industry billions of dollars every year in absenteeism, diminished productivity and employee turnover. People report being stressed at work once per week, and some say they are stressed on a daily basis. A recipe for stress is a typical job + pressure + lack of control over the work process.

the Seeds of the Future

Efficient fulfillment and distribution.

Flexible communication and printing solutions.

Environmentally responsible.

Online Solutions.

Variable and digital print.

 SAINTCLAIRPRESS

1203 E. St. Clair Street • Indianapolis, IN 46202
Phone 317-612-9100 • Toll Free 800-748-0323
www.stclairpress.com

Add in too little time, too much to do, too many new requirements, an atmosphere of mistrust, unclear policies, job insecurity, low appreciation, lack of communication and a noisy work environment, and stress can become commonplace.

Finding ways to cope

Among stress reduction tools:

- Yawning – although usually associated with boredom, it is also a tremendous way to rid your body of stress
- Breathing – When done from the belly (like inflating a balloon), it is restorative
- Regularly taking a deep breath, bringing your shoulders up to your ears, holding this for five seconds, slowly breathing out and dropping your shoulders
- Exercising regularly (because stress is felt in the body) and creating a healthier lifestyle (e.g., reducing caffeine, alcohol consumption, fatty foods, quitting smoking)
- Rhythmically tensing and relaxing different body sections (e.g., arm to shoulder, thigh to ankle).

Sometimes we need to make new decisions. Avoid stress by saying "No" and never saying "Yes" to someone who makes demands that aren't right for you. Avoid Sunday night stress. If you dread Monday mornings, the real culprit might be Sunday night – historically the worst sleep night of the week. Try going to bed earlier. Don't schedule something you dislike as

the first thing to do on Monday morning.

Decide not to take the work stress – or the stressful work – home with you. When you must, be very specific about what you want to accomplish. Never make working at home a routine. Home is its own stress zone, so be sure to build in a short period of relative quiet (15 minutes) to help you transition. Another simple way of reducing the stress of your workday: create a to-do list. Just having it will give you a sense of personal control.

Think positive

None of us is going to make it through life stress free. But stress should not be an energy thief, either. We need just enough stress to deal with challenges and to be happy, no more. To achieve this, turn whatever stress-reducing skill you like into a daily habit. It takes 28 days to make a behavior a habit. So, breathe from your belly for the next month, shrug your shoulders up to your ears or make that to-do list. But do something. In a month's time, you may be surprised how much better you feel!

INFORMATION LINK

Author: Jan Reinhart is a licensed mental health counselor for Cummins Behavioral Health Systems, Inc. She can be contacted at (317) 247-8900.



SEARCHING FOR WAYS TO
SAVE YOUR COMPANY MONEY?

WE CAN HELP!

New Indiana Chamber member benefit:

Free expense analysis by



- Save 20-40% on leases and service contracts
- Reduce overpayments, duplicate payments
- Realize earned discounts, returned deposits

Visit www.indianachamber.com/bizperks to learn more or check out TCT at www.tcttechnologies.com.

Indiana Chamber

*The Voice of
Indiana Business.*[®]