

3 Tips for Reducing Stress



The Science of Stress

Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the constant demands (stressors) you face in life. Everyone experiences stress and deals with stress in different ways. But everyone's bodies have all adapted to respond to stress in the same way. When you are trying to cope with a stressor, your body responds by going into "fight or flight" mode to try and bring your body back to a stable equilibrium (homeostasis). This response causes a production of hormones such as epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol. It also causes an increase in blood pressure and a decrease in immune function.

It is important to know that you are not alone and to know that not all stress is bad for you. Since dealing with stressors is something that will never completely go away, it is essential to learn how to manage and reduce your stress levels. Failure to manage your body's physical and emotional imbalances leads to the development of chronic stress. Chronic stress is associated with negative health outcomes, even serious diseases which further harm and damage our bodies.

Stress Management Tips

1. Reduce Stress through Journaling

Journaling is beneficial because it gives you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences. This helps you to be more mindful of your thoughts and emotions. You can use journaling to help you deal with stressors you don't feel comfortable sharing with others.

Topics to journal about:

- Organize and plan ahead to reduce stress. List a specific problem that you are facing, and a systematic, but realistic approach to solving it.
- Write about a time you were in control. When you focus on this topic, studies show that people make better decisions.
- Write about something that you are grateful for to stimulate positive thinking and lift your mood.
- Think about your favorite place, or your favorite vacation. What are all the reasons it became your favorite? Go into detail about the things that made you happiest.
- Write down your short term and/or long term goals, and why they are important to you. Finish with a general plan on how you see yourself reaching them.

2. Reduce Stress through Moderate to Intense Exercise

Although exercise can cause physical stress on your body, it is considered a positive stress if you recover properly! Exercise is a positive stress because it is associated with improved performance and productivity. Participating in exercise regularly helps improve the way your body handles stress. Exercise stimulates neurotransmitters in the brain such as dopamine and serotonin that affect mood and behavior. People commonly feel calmer after a 20 to 30 minute bout of aerobic exercise, and the calming effect can last for several hours afterward!

If possible, exercising in a group or finding an exercise buddy to workout with is encouraged! When working out with others, it helps build your support network. You can use this network for emotional support and encouragement to help reduce stress while keeping yourself motivated to continue your exercise.

3. Reduce Stress by taking a Spirit, Mind & Body Class at the Y!

Classes like Qigong, Meditation, Tai Chi, Yoga, and so much more are offered at the YMCA. They are designed to elevate your spirits and clear your mind, and assist in your recovery process following more strenuous exercise!



Reference:

http://journals.lww.com/acsm-healthfitness/Fulltext/2013/05000/STRESS_RELIEF_The_Role_of_Exercise_in_Stress.6.aspx