IDEAS FOR STRESS REDUCTION

Remember that stress is always present and not bad in itself. We need some stress for stimulation. Balance between stress & relaxation is Key.

1. Think about and meet your physical needs. This includes eating a well-balanced diet, getting enough rest, and including physical activities in your life that you enjoy. (biking, walking, aerobics, dancing, etc.)

2. Think about how to meet your emotional needs for warmth and friendship. Some ideas include:
   A. Making time to be with people you like and enjoy being with,
   B. Seeking out new and exciting friends,
   C. Spending time alone; enjoy your own company!
   D. Avoiding people and situations which create stress for you when you can;
   E. Seeking out compatible people to share feelings and problems with. Don’t underestimate how much talking to a good listener can help you feel better.

3. Build time into your life for laughter, play and fun. Find out what’s fun for you and do it! It is a proven fact that laughter is a physiological and emotional process that is important to mental health.

4. Plan vacations, even if just for a day. Do familiar things in a new way! For example, walk to campus instead of taking a bus or car.

5. Make your home and work environment pleasant. Use plants, pictures, collectibles, colors you like.

6. Think about how you use your time. If you often feel rushed, rethink your schedule. Do whatever is possible to allow yourself sufficient time to get places, perform tasks, eat meals, etc. Take advantage of time management courses and books. (see bibliography)

7. Seek out ways to learn "people skills" such as assertiveness and communication. For example:
   A. Learn to say No when you want to;
   B. Learn how to express your anger in a constructive manner;
   C. Learn to ask for what you want.

   They can improve your life and lower your stress level. Look in local papers for classes on relaxation and exercises, yoga, massage therapists, etc.

8. Learn a relaxation activity that works for you. (see bibliography)

9. Whenever possible, focus on the present and how you can gain the most from each day.

10. Remember that major life changes (going to college, marriage, new jobs) cause stress. Do not expect too much of yourself at these times.

11. Take time to take care of yourself. Schedule time to affirm your own well being. This will help you feel better, perform better and have more to give to others.
TIPS TO AVOID NEGATIVE STRESS

1. Make time to be by yourself everyday, no matter how limited.

2. Make time to be with someone you love or enjoy being with.

3. Provide a comfortable and warm environment for yourself both at home and at work. Use pictures, posters, plants, colors.

4. Don't be a hero. When the going gets tough, slow down, find someone to talk with.

5. Know yourself and plan accordingly, e.g., Which vacation is the right one, a very quiet one or a very active one, depends on you.

6. Get some strenuous exercise each week.

7. Identify people, places, situations who/which result in stress for you. Avoid them as much as possible.

8. Try a relaxation exercise that works for you, particularly during a period of stress.

9. Try desensitization activities for stressful situations that can't be avoided.

10. Learn to say NO.

11. Develop new friendships.

12. Renew relationships with old friends whom you enjoy.

13. Schedule different activities each week for personal enjoyment.

14. Be more casual. Start with externals such as dress.

15. Start the day relaxed. Get up 15 minutes early to avoid rushing.

16. Start with a good breakfast in a relaxed setting.

17. Eat a well-balanced meal in a relaxed setting.

18. Avoid excessive amounts of food, cigarettes, alcohol.
Physical Interventions for Stress Reduction

Excess physical tension may have various effects on the body. These effects range from minor physical pain in the neck or shoulders to heart attacks. It's important to release excess physical tension whenever possible. Here are some suggested interventions for reducing and preventing physical tension and stress.

1. Massage of hands, feet, or the entire body is very beneficial. One need not be an expert to massage yourself or another person. Do what feels good! There are also a number of excellent massage therapists in our area.

2. Yawning brings in air and releases tension.

3. Laughter automatically releases physical tension & leaves you feeling good.

4. Deep Breathing - breathe in slowly to the count of 8, breathe out for a count of 4.

5. Yelling is a good tension releaser.

6. Stretch all the muscles.

7. Neck and Shoulder Rotations - many people carry tension in the neck and shoulders. Rotate these body parts slowly clockwise, counterclockwise, forward and back.

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