



Stress Awareness Month

Take time to unwind...

It's healthy to relax, renew, and rejuvenate.

Stress happens. Sometimes it's unavoidable, at times it's unbearable. That is why taking time for yourself is a necessity.

Stress does not merely afflict your mind; it can also affect you on a cellular level. In fact, long-term stress can lead to a wide range of illnesses from headaches to stomach disorders to depression and can even increase the risk of serious conditions like stroke and heart disease. Understanding the mind/stress/health connection can help you better manage stress and improve your health and well-being.

The Fight or Flight Response

The sympathetic stress response is a survival mechanism that's "hard wired" into our nervous systems. This automatic response is necessary for mobilizing quick reflexes when there is imminent danger, such as swerving to avoid a car crash.

When you perceive a threat, stress hormones rush into your bloodstream increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and glucose levels. Other hormones also suppress functions like digestion and the immune system, which is one of the reasons why chronic stress can leave you more vulnerable to illness.

Danger triggers the stress response but, unfortunately, so can work conflicts, worry over debt, bad memories, or anxiety. Although one bad day at work won't compromise your health, weeks or months of stress can dampen your immune response and raise your risk for disease.

Combat Your Stress

If you suffer from chronic stress and cannot influence or change the situation, then you'll need to change your approach. Be willing to be flexible. Remember, you have the ability to choose your response to stressors, and you may have to try various options.

- Recognize when you don't have control, and let it go.
- Don't get anxious about situations that you cannot change.
- Take control of your own reactions, and focus on what makes you feel calm and in control. This may take some practice, but it pays off in peace of mind.
- Develop a vision for healthy living, wellness, and personal-professional growth and set realistic goals to help you realize your vision.

Relax and Recharge

Be sure to make time for fun and relaxation so you'll be better able to handle life's stressors. Carve some time out of your day, even 10 to 15 minutes to take care of yourself. Also, remember that exercise is an excellent stress reliever.

Everyone has different ways they like to relax and unwind. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Take a walk
- Read a book
- Go for a run
- Have a cup of tea
- Play a sport
- Spend time with a friend or loved one
- Meditate
- Do yoga

While you cannot avoid stress, you can minimize it by changing how you choose to respond to it. The ultimate reward for your efforts is a healthy, balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun.

By: Federal Occupational Health

Recipe of the Month

Cheesecake

Serves 8

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons cold water
1 envelope unflavored gelatin
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1/2 cup skim milk, heated almost to boiling
Egg substitute equivalent to 1 egg, or 2 egg whites
1/4 cup sugar
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 cups low-fat cottage cheese
Lemon zest (optional)

Directions:

Combine water, gelatin and lemon juice in blender container. Process on low speed 1 to 2 minutes to soften gelatin. Add hot milk, processing until gelatin is dissolved. Add egg substitute, sugar, vanilla and cheese to blender container. Process on high speed until smooth. Pour into 9" pie plate or round flat dish. Refrigerate 2 to 3 hours. If you wish, top with grated lemon zest just before serving.

Nutritional Information:

Calories 80, Total Fat <0.5g, Cholesterol 3mg, Total Carbs 10g, Dietary fiber <0.5g, Protein 9g

