

Quick tips to

MANAGE STRESS



While we all talk about stress, many of us don't really understand what it is and how it affects us. Stress is our body's response to a demanding or threatening situation. When we experience stress, our body tries to meet the demands of the situation by releasing adrenaline; pumping more blood to the heart and muscles and shutting down all non-essential functions. What can we do to ensure we don't end up paying a toll with our health, vitality, and peace-of-mind? Here are some suggestions for increasing stress resistance and avoiding burn out down the road:

INCREASING STRESS RESISTANCE AND AVOIDING BURN OUT

Laughter. Laughter can reduce stress, boost your immune system functioning, and help discharge pent up emotion. If you can't make yourself laugh, then go see someone who makes people laugh for a living, like a comic.

Breathe. Be aware of your breathing. Think "my body can relax," inhale slowly and purposefully noticing the breath as it enters through your nostrils and fills your lungs. Expand your abdomen as you breathe to the count of four, hold the breath for a moment, and slowly exhale to the count of four. For your second breath, visualize warmth and relaxation entering your body as you inhale; tension exiting your body as you exhale. This is a good technique to use when you get a stressful phone call, for example. Put the person on hold, take your breath, release it slowly and thoughtfully, then return to the call.

Say 'no.' Are you a "yay-sayer" (i.e. "sure, I'll do all the cooking for the party," "certainly, I can work overtime anytime you need me to")? Think about the things that you would like to do and separate these from the things that you have to do. Begin to say "no" to some of the expectations other people place upon you if they aren't "have to's." A cautionary note, however. Sometimes we have to do things that we don't like despite temporary feelings of discomfort. You are the best judge. Do what takes care of you, your career, your family, and your relationships. Everything else you agree to is a bonus and should only be considered if you have time and energy.

Learning to

ADAPT AND BUILD RESILIENCE



How often have you crossed paths with individuals who seem to navigate the bumpy road of life with comfort and ease...“the glass is half full”...“live each moment to the fullest”...“make lemonade when life gives you lemons” ? You might attribute their positive attitude and strength to exceptional luck in dodging life’s stressful events. What enables them to stay strong and in control when things go wrong?

Research has shown that these individuals have successfully engaged their own personal strategy for building *resilience* — a personal trait that allows them to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress. Can you develop resilience, hardiness, and a talent for good fortune? Absolutely!

TRAITS THAT PROMOTE RESILIENCE AND YOUR ABILITY TO BOUNCE BACK

Resilient people have a passion or purpose that nourishes and sustains them. Build your resilience by identifying those things that “light your fire”, bringing you a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction — then figure out how to translate your desire into action.

Establish and maintain good relationships with close family members, friends, or significant others. Make a commitment to spend time with people who genuinely care for you and accept their encouragement and support. Many people find that being active in a community group, faith-based organization, or a support group can provide a sense of connectedness. When we share information, ideas, and emotions, we help one another and get comfort from knowing that we are not alone in facing the challenges that day-to-day living can bring.

