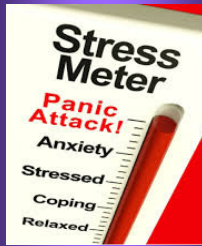


April 2016

Stress Awareness Month



Did you know?

A study found that workers distracted by email and phone calls suffer a fall in IQ more than twice that found in marijuana smokers.

76% of Americans are stressed by financial situation.

77% of Americans are stressed out by something at work which costs businesses billions of dollars each year.

Short 10-minute bursts of activity that elevate your heart rate and make you break out into a sweat can help to relieve stress

De-clutter your desk, office, home, life!! De-stress!

Old Yiddish proverb says, "What soap is to the body, laughter is to the soul".

One pioneer in laughter research, William Fry, claimed it took 10 minutes on a rowing machine for his heart rate to reach the level it would after just one minute of hearty laughter.

**THE GREATEST
WEAPON AGAINST
STRESS IS OUR
ABILITY TO CHOOSE
ONE THOUGHT
OVER ANOTHER.**



Wellness Corner Connection

Debby Schiffer, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO

What is Stress and What Does It Do To Our Health?

What is stress?

Stress is our body's response to any demand placed upon it, whether real or perceived. There are many things that can cause this reaction. It can be positive or negative. It may be recurring, short-term, or long-term. It can be mild and relatively harmless, such as winning a race, watching a scary movie, or riding a rollercoaster. Or it can be major, such as a marriage or divorce, serious illness, or car accident.

How does stress affect the body?

Some stress can be beneficial at times and actually give us the boost we need to get through situations such as work deadlines. All animals have a stress response, which can be life-saving in some situations. The nerve chemicals and hormones released during such stressful times, prepares the animal to either face the threat or flee to safety. We know this as the "fight or flight" response. When faced with danger, our pulse quickens, we breathe faster, our muscles tense, our brain uses more oxygen and increases activity — all functions aimed at helping us to survive. In the short term, it even boosts our immune system.

However, if the stress becomes chronic, and this alert reaction stays elevated, normal bodily functions could be affected. For example, your immunity decreases and your digestive, excretory, and reproductive system stops working normally. Typically when the threat passes, our body systems act to restore normal functioning. Untreated chronic stress can result in serious health conditions including anxiety, insomnia, muscle pain, high blood pressure and a weakened immune system. Research shows that stress can contribute to the development of major illnesses, such as heart disease, depression and obesity.

How do you currently cope with stress?

Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. If you aren't sure, start keeping a stress journal and log those things in your life that typically cause you stress. Note how you responded. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy, helpful or unproductive? Unfortunately, many people cope with stress in ways that compound the problem.

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they end up causing you more damage in the long run. Here are a few examples of unhealthy coping methods:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much
- Bingeing on junk or comfort food
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)



Start a stress journal

A stress journal can help you identify the regular stressors in your life and the way you deal with them. Each time you feel stressed, keep track of it in your journal. As you keep a daily log, you will begin to see patterns and common themes. Write down:

- What caused your stress (make a guess if you're unsure)
- How you felt, both physically and emotionally
- How you acted in response

Learning healthier ways to manage stress

If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it's time to find healthier ones. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control. Check out the next two pages for some ideas. Please feel free to reach out to me if you would like to set up a worksite session on stress management techniques for your employees.

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health and Helpguide.org

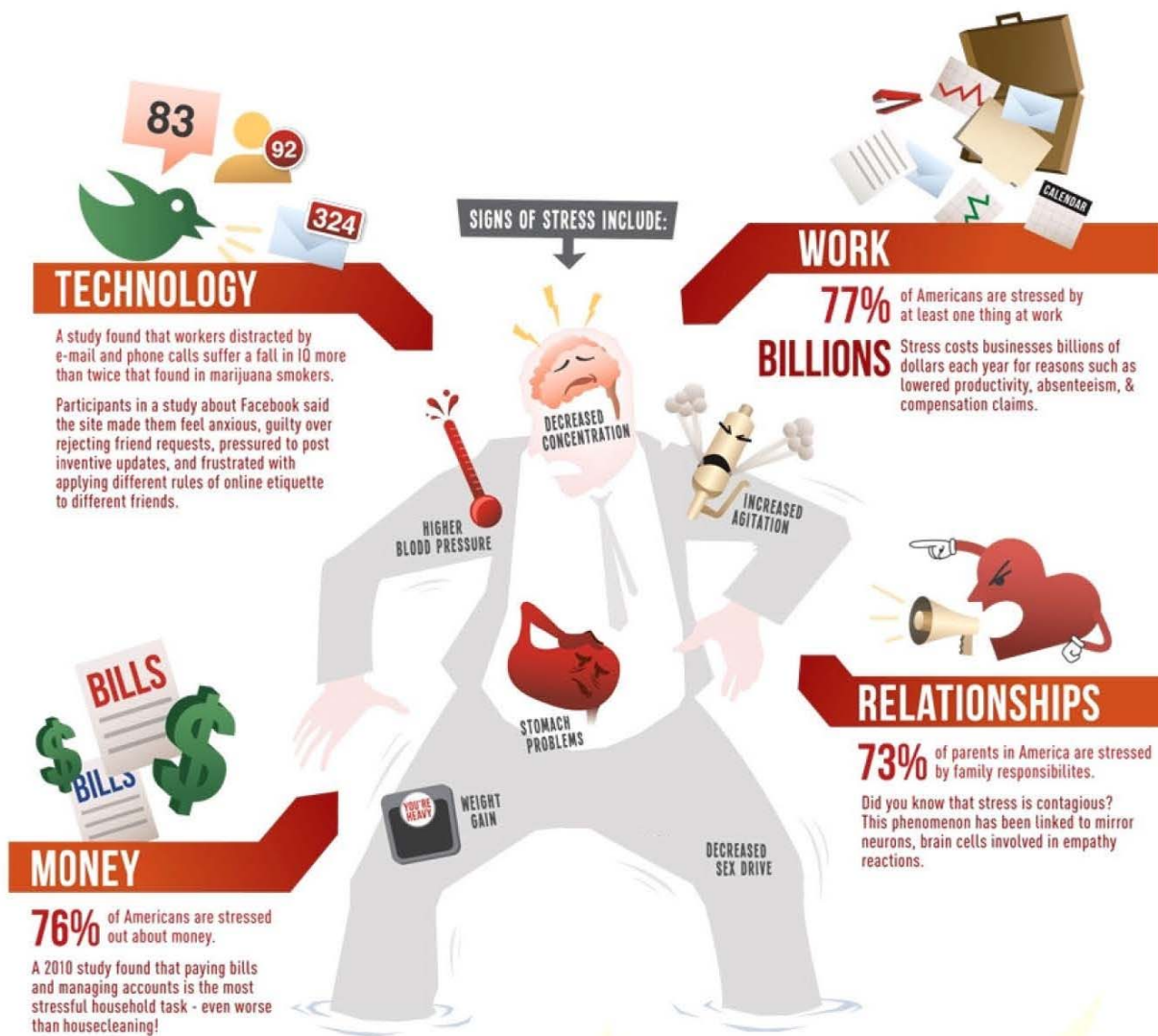
THE EFFECTS OF STRESS

Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the ever-increasing demands of life. Surveys show that many Americans experience challenges with stress at some point during the year.

In looking at the causes of stress, remember that your brain comes hard-wired with an alarm system for your protection. When your brain perceives a threat, it signals your body to release a burst of hormones to fuel your capacity for a response. Once again, this is labeled the "fight-or-flight" response.

Once the threat is gone, your body is meant to return to a normal relaxed state. Unfortunately, the nonstop stress of modern life means that *your alarm system rarely shuts off.*

That's why **stress management is so important.** Stress management gives you a range of tools to reset your alarm system. Without stress management, all too often your body is always on high alert. Over time, high levels of stress lead to serious health problems. **Don't wait until stress has a negative impact on your health, relationships or quality of life!** Start practicing a range of stress management techniques today.



How to Reduce Stress

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Stress can be crippling, but successful stress management can make drastic improvements in your life. One study found that a major characteristic consistent among people who live to 100 is the ability to manage stress. Want to be among them? Then try the simple tips below.



EXERCISE

48% of adults exercise or walk to manage stress.

If your schedule doesn't allow for regular trips to the gym, try parking further away and walking to work, taking the stairs, or stretching at your desk to relieve tension.



CLEARER
DECISION MAKING

z z z

BETTER
SLEEP



BETTER
MOOD AND
OUTLOOK

MORE
PRODUCTIVE

LESS STRESS
EATING

HEALTHIER
IMMUNE SYSTEM



ORGANIZE

Stop stress before it starts: a survey investigating the most effective stress management techniques revealed that planning is the #1 way to minimize stress.

Clutter in your physical environment can affect your mood and productivity. Clearing your work space just might help you clear your mind, too.

SURE!
Why not?

I CAN'T.
Sorry!

TAKE CHARGE

Feeling out of control is a top stressor. So try focusing on what you can control. Set small, achievable goals that give you a sense of daily accomplishment.

Learn to say "NO." Taking on new tasks when you're already busy may seem helpful, but too much on your plate is likely to decrease the quality and volume of work you actually accomplish.



MORE
NATURAL ENERGY



SCHEDULE "ME TIME"

Taking "me time" is one of the most popular ways that Americans tackle their stress:

31%
relax with
a hobby

35%
play
video games

49%
listen to
music

The Measured Breath

- You can sit or stand, but be sure to soften up a little before you begin. Make sure your hands are relaxed, and your knees are soft.
- Drop your shoulders and let your jaw relax.
- Now breathe in slowly through your nose and count to four, keep your shoulders down and allow your stomach to expand as you breathe in.
- Hold the breath for a count of four.
- Now release your breath slowly and smoothly as you count to seven.
- Repeat for a couple of minutes.

Belly (or diaphragmatic) Breathing

Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose. Make sure your shoulders are down and relaxed. In this exercise, your stomach should expand, but your chest should rise very little. So, if you want, you can place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest so you can feel how you are breathing.

Exhale slowly through your mouth. As you blow air out, purse your lips slightly, but keep tongue and jaw relaxed. You may hear a soft "whooshing" sound as you exhale. That's good, listen for that sound every time you practice and learn to value it as the sound of relaxation.

Repeat this breathing exercise for several minutes. Make your outgoing breath as long and smooth as you can. The out breath is the key to relaxation so give it your full attention and practice breathing out in a long slow controlled breath and you will quickly feel the benefit.

Benefits of Meditation

Meditation is widely recommended as a healthy way to manage stress, and for good reason. It provides many health-enhancing benefits, like reducing symptoms of stress and anxiety, relieving physical complaints like headaches, and even enhancing immunity to illness.

For many of us who have tried meditating, thoughts come in and out of our minds constantly. Our focus may dart from one thing to the other and quieting the mind is next to impossible. But like with anything new, it takes practice. And the benefits are worth the effort!! Here are some basics:

Quiet Mind: With meditation, your thinking mind becomes quiet. You stop focusing on the stressors of your day or your life's problems, as well as solving these problems. You just let that voice in your head be quiet, even for a few minutes, which I know is easier said than done. For example, start thinking about nothing now. (It's OK; I'll wait.) If you're not practiced at quieting your mind, it probably didn't take long before thoughts crept in. It's normal...just don't give up trying.

Being In The Now: Rather than focusing on the past or the future, virtually all meditative practices involve focusing on *right now*. This involves experiencing each moment and letting it go, experiencing the next. This, too, takes practice, as many of us live most of our lives thinking toward the future or relishing and rehashing the past.

Altered State of Consciousness: With time, maintaining a quiet mind and focus on the present can lead to an altered level of consciousness that isn't a sleeping state but isn't quite your average wakeful state, either. **Meditation increases brain activity in an area of the brain associated with happiness and positive thoughts and emotions**, and some evidence shows that regular practice brings prolonged positive changes in these areas.

Different Types of Meditation

Activity-Oriented Meditation Techniques: With this type of meditation, you engage in a repetitive activity, or one where you can get 'in the zone' and experience 'flow.' Again, this quiets the mind, and allows your brain to shift. **Activities like gardening, creating artwork, or practicing yoga can all be effective forms of meditation.**

Mindfulness Techniques: Mindfulness can be a form of meditation that, like activity-oriented meditation, doesn't really *look* like meditation. It simply involved staying in the present moment rather than thinking about the future or the past. (Again, this is more difficult than it seems!) Focusing on sensations you feel in your body is one way to stay 'in the now,' focusing on emotions and where you feel them in your body (not *examining why* you feel them, but just *experiencing them* as sensations) is another.

Basic Meditation Techniques: This involves sitting in a comfortable position and just trying to quiet your mind by thinking of nothing. It's not always easy to do this if you don't have practice with it. But a good way to begin is to think of yourself as an 'observer of your thoughts,' just noticing what the narrative voice in your head says, but not engaging it. As thoughts materialize in your mind, just let them go. That's the basic idea.

Focused Meditation Techniques: With this technique, you focus on something intently, but don't engage your thoughts about it. You can focus on something visual, like a statue; something auditory, like a metronome or tape of ocean waves; something constant, like your own breathing; or a simple concept, like 'unconditional compassion'. Some people find it easier to do this than to focus on nothing, but the idea is the same - staying in the present moment and circumventing the constant stream of commentary from your conscious mind, and allowing yourself to slip into an altered state of consciousness.

Spiritual Meditating: Meditation can also be a spiritual practice. (It does not have to be, and certainly isn't specific to any one religion, but can be used as a spiritual experience.) Many people experience meditation as a form of prayer -- the form where God 'speaks,' rather than just listening. That's right, many people experience 'guidance' or inner wisdom once the mind is quiet, and meditate for this purpose. You can meditate on a singular question until an answer comes (though some would say this is engaging your thinking mind too much), or meditate to clear their mind and accept whatever comes that day.

The Healing Power of Laughter

We all know that laughter makes us feel good and puts us in high spirits, but did you also know that laughter actually causes physiological responses that protect the body from disease and help your vital organs repair themselves? **Laughter is similar to a mild workout: A good laugh contracts your abdominal muscles, gets the blood flowing, decreases blood pressure and stress hormones, improves sleeping patterns and boosts the immune system by increasing the number of T-cells in your body.** Yet despite the fact that laughter has so many benefits, far too many of us forget to even crack a smile every once in a while, let alone laugh. Many of us have lost the ability to unselfconsciously roar with laughter like we used to when we were young children. It is time you claim back your laughter and express pure joy without any inhibitions. The following are some ways to incorporate more laughter and joy in your life:

- Drop the stress and don't take life too seriously—don't beat yourself up over a mistake. Let it go!
- Find humor in a bad situation—Some situations are genuinely sad and certainly not laughing matters. But try to look at the irony in a situation and take a minute to laugh over what you can't control...don't let it defeat you!
- Remind yourself of funny moments from the past.
- Surround yourself with fun people who like to laugh a lot.
- Get a pet—they are great at boosting our happiness and they can do such amusing things without even trying!
- Eat foods that increase feelings of joy—and NOT foods high in sugar, fat or salt! They may taste good but have a negative effect on your body. Eat salmon, avocado, dark chocolate, and berries which contain vitamins that assist the body in feeling happy.
- Try a Laughing Yoga class. It's a revolutionary idea that is becoming very popular. Guided by an instructor, laughter is contagious. It oxygenates our body and brain making us feel more healthy and energetic.

How many calories does laughing burn off?

Laughing raises energy expenditure and increases heart rate 10%—20%. Ten to 15 minutes of laughter could increase energy expenditure by 10 to 40 calories per day, which could translate into about four pounds a year.

Resource: Psychology Today

Laughing 100 or more times a day may have the same health benefits as 10 minutes of aerobic exercise. Now that's something worth laughing about!!!

Crock Pot Maple Dijon Chicken

I have made this recipe twice now and each time it gets more delicious!! You put everything in the crock pot and let it go. This is a great recipe for a busy weeknight dinner, for a pot luck lunch, to take to a party, or anytime! It's great over brown rice. But what about over quinoa or in a tortilla wrap? Absolutely! The chicken falls apart on your fork like pulled pork. Buon appetito!!

Ingredients:

- 8 skinless drumsticks—I don't like drumsticks so I used thighs
- 1/4 cup pure Maple syrup
- 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard
- 3/4 tsp garlic powder
- Fresh cracked pepper & pinch of salt

Directions:

Season chicken with garlic, salt and pepper and place in slow cooker. Combine maple syrup, balsamic vinegar and Dijon in a small bowl and whisk until smooth. Pour over the chicken making sure all pieces are covered. If you are using thighs and find not all pieces get covered initially, don't worry. The pieces will shrink and you'll be able to rearrange them in the pot to get covered. Set a 6-quart slow cooker to HIGH and cook for 4 hours, or until cooked through and tender.

Nutrition Information

Serves 4 Size: 2 drumsticks

Calories: 219; Total fat: 4g; Carb: 17g; Sodium: 796mg; Sugars: 12g; Protein: 26g



Recipe taken from www.skinnytaste.com

Debby Schiffer, Wellness Director for BURLCO & TRICO JIF
Home Office: 856-322-1220 Cell: 856-520-9908

If you do what you always did, you will get what you always got.