

# **STRESS MANAGEMENT:**

## ***STRATEGIES FOR STRESS FREE ART***

***OF***

***LIVING***

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### **ARE YOU STRESSED?**

Each one's experience or perception of stress may be unique depending upon his or her past experience, personality, temperament, attitude, expectations and coping abilities.

### **REACTIONS TO STRESS :**

The body has its unique way of communicating to us when it is under discomfort or is subjected to prolonged stress. We all respond physically, mentally, emotionally and behaviorally to stress. While some respond predominantly through bodily symptoms other may do so more emotionally. Likewise some are more aware of these symptoms than others. Yet others

are so externally oriented that they are not aware of their own feelings and may deny having symptoms.

**A. MENTAL SYMPTOMS :**

- Increased irritability or angry outbursts
- Inability to concentrate.
- Indecisiveness
- Difficulty in remembering or forgetfulness
- Difficulty in making rational judgment
- Muddled thinking

**B. EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS :**

- Becoming fussy
- Becoming suspicious
- Becoming touchy or weepy
- Feeling anxious
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling insecure
- Increased moodiness or fear of criticism

**C. PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS :**

- Tense muscles (aching shoulders, backache etc.)
- Irregular breathing
- Sweaty palms
- Cold fingers
- Dryness of mouth

- Dizzy spells
- Palpitations
- Nausea
- Increased frequency of urination
- Diarrhea
- Restlessness, e.g. pacing up and down
- Shaky hands and legs

**D. BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS :**

- Increased smoking or alcohol drinking
- Increased or decreased sleep
- Increased or decreased eating
- Nail-biting
- Hair pulling
- Not mixing around with others
- Neglecting looks or hygiene
- Reckless driving
- Tapping fingers, grimacing, lip-smacking or other mannerisms
- Non-stop talking
- Work holism or absenteeism

**THE ART OF RELAXATION**

We live in a chaotic age with time in short supply, worries aplenty to shoulder, juggling family and social lives, charging frantically from one stress situation to the next. There are many easy to practice stress

management strategies that focus mainly on the self and also reduce the impact of external stressful situations.

- **DEEP BREATHING :**

Have you ever noticed your breathing pattern when you are tense or under stress? It is usually shallow, jerky and unsteady and from the chest region. Until and unless this shallow, erratic breathing is replaced by deep and even breathing from the abdomen, the body will continue to be in a state of tension. Practicing abdominal breathing makes us feel calm and relaxed, mentally and physically. So concentrate on your breathing several times during the day — anywhere, anytime. Take a deep breath. Inhale through the nose. Feel the energy coming in and revitalizing your body. Breathe out through your mouth making a quiet relaxing whooshing sound like the wind you gently blow out. Continue to take long, slow, deep breaths which raise and lower your abdomen. Continue for 5-10 minutes and you'll feel instant sense of well being.

- **MUSCLE RELAXATION TRAINING :**

One of the most tangible experiences of bodily stress is muscle tension or a tight contraction of several muscle groups in the body. By consciously doing the opposite, i.e. learning to keep the muscles loose and relaxed you could induce physical ease and mental calmness. To do this you have to first tense a set of muscles deliberately, as hard as you can do to feel real tension and discomfort in the muscles. Then slowly allow the muscles to relax and become aware internally the difference between tension and relaxation. This is done progressively through every muscle group of the body like hands,

arms, face, neck, shoulders, stomach, back, pelvis, legs and feet. Practiced in regular ½ hour sessions, sometimes with the help of machines (**BIOFEEDBACK**) over two weeks consistently can make you a relaxed, calm person.

- **VISUALIZATION :**

Through the power of creating positive, desirable images in your mind, you can literally wish away tensions calm yourself and relax both body and mind. Though we all daydream or fantasize all the time, creative visualization harnesses your verbalizations and consciously employs them for bettering yourself and your life. All you have to do is to sit or lie down in a quiet place, close your eyes and allow your mind to form mental sense impressions — using all the five senses of touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste — create visions, scenes of your own favorite place, real or imaginary. As you do so, affirm verbally your ability to relax “(I am letting go of tension from my body” or “I am calm and peaceful, etc.)”. Practice this thrice a day for 15 to 20 minutes regularly for best results.

- **MEDITATION :**

Meditation is not necessarily a religious practice, nor is it just a form of rumination or mind control. Meditation is a process of making the mind free from disturbing thoughts. It teaches you to let your mind wander free and leads to pleasant experiences, heightened awareness and higher states of consciousness. It allows you to see yourself in a true perspective of being an observer, while being a part of it. It is deeply relaxing and rejuvenating.