

Nurturing Yourself

Developing and Using Coping Skills

Diana Mathis

It's All About Attitude...

- ◆ 80% of success is showing up [Woody Allen]
- ◆ If people believe in themselves, it's amazing what they can accomplish. [Sam Walton]
- ◆ Winning is habit. Unfortunately, so is losing. [Vince Lombardi]

Nurturing Areas

- ◆ Physical health
- ◆ Career/financial goals
- ◆ Family/social relationships
- ◆ Mental/emotional well-being

All depend on developing and maintaining
psychological and emotional coping skills

Psychological and Emotional Coping Skills

Cope: “to strive or contend on equal terms or with a measure of success”

- ◆ Life is stress; stress is life.
- ◆ People respond to stress in different ways.
- ◆ Learn and practice coping skills to manage stress.

Life Is Stress...

Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life*, 1950-56:

- ◆ medical specialist in endocrinology
- ◆ all illnesses have similar basic symptoms and treatments
- ◆ “Stress is the wear and tear in the body caused by life at any one time.”

Life Is Stress...

Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life*, 1950-56:

- ◆ common symptoms of illness =
 - feeling/looking sick, aches, pains
 - digestive upset, fever, rash
- ◆ basic treatments =
 - rest
 - eat well
 - adjust environment

Acute Stress Reaction

Acute physical reactions (“Fight, Flight, Stand”) =

- ◆ heart rate
- ◆ breathing rate
- ◆ blood pressure
- ◆ muscle tension
- ◆ sweating
- ◆ pupil size
- ◆ stomach acid

Acute Stress Reaction

Acute mental reactions to excess stress
 (“Fight, Flight, or Stand”) =

- ◆ alertness
- ◆ sensitivity to odors
- ◆ hearing acuity
- ◆ or decisiveness

Chronic Stress Reaction

Neuro-immuno-endocrine system changes -
physical reactions/illnesses:

- high blood pressure
- arrhythmias
- sleep disorder
- chronic headache, backache
- exhaustion
- more infections

Chronic Stress Reaction

Neuro-immuno-endocrine system changes -
physical reactions/illnesses:

- chronic illnesses (if predisposed):
 - diabetes mellitus
 - heart disease, stroke
 - arthritis
 - cancer

Chronic Stress Reaction

Neuro-immuno-endocrine system changes –
mental reactions to chronic excess stress:

- psychological exhaustion
- lethargy
- depression
- anxiety
- irritability

Psychological and Emotional Coping Skills

- ◆ Life is stress; stress is life.
- ◆ *People respond to stress in different ways.*
- ◆ Learn and practice coping skills to manage stress.

People Respond Differently

“No one can live without experiencing some degree of stress all the time.

Crossing a busy intersection, exposure to a draft, or even sheer joy are enough to activate the body’s stress mechanism to some extent.

Stress is not even necessarily bad for you; it is also the spice of life.... But, of course, your system must be prepared to take it.” (Selye)

Know Yourself

“The same stress which makes one person sick can be an invigorating experience for another.”

- ◆ Know causes of excess stress for you
- ◆ Know your signs/symptoms of over-stress

Know Yourself

- ◆ Know causes of stress:
 - loss (loved one, job, expectations, golf game)
 - change (corp. restructuring, disease, bus route)
- ◆ Recognize signs of over-stress:
 - acute (physical, mental)
 - ongoing (over-sleeping/eating/drinking, fretful, forgetful, careless, “hyper”, accidents, fights)

Psychological and Emotional Coping Skills

- ◆ Life is stress; stress is life.
- ◆ People respond to stress in different ways.
- ◆ *Learn and practice coping skills to manage stress.*

Learn and Practice Skills

Learn tactics to decrease excess stress:

- ◆ physical – breathing control, yoga, other relaxation techniques
- ◆ mental – imagery, “counting”, personal “mantra”/verse/phrase
- ◆ verbal/social – silence, “Let me reflect on that”, “I understand your position”

Learn and Practice Skills

Practice tactics when confronted with stressful situations:

- ◆ with family, family, co-workers
- ◆ start with mildly stressful and progress
- ◆ learn what works for you, what doesn't
- ◆ build on your knowledge

“Preventive” Coping Skills

Nurture yourself:

- ◆ healthy diet
- ◆ exercise
- ◆ entertainment/creative outlet
- ◆ talk with friends
- ◆ regularly upgrade/refine your Coping Tactics Repertoire

Get Professional Help

Get professional help for:

- ◆ significant physical illness
- ◆ unmanageable anxiety, declining coping ability
- ◆ depression lasting 2 weeks or more
- ◆ thoughts of suicide

Nurturing Yourself



- ◆ Don't wait for a crisis or a New Year's resolution
- ◆ Assess/Start to improve coping skills now

Thank you

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