Stress Management

What happens when you are stressed?

Stress is what you feel when you have to handle more than you are used to. Your body responds as though you are in danger when it's stressed. The body makes hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster, and create anxiety. Some stress is normal and functional. Stress can help if you need to accomplish something in a timely manner or react quickly.

However, if we don't learn to manage stress by building in ways to process and release it, it can be cumulative and destructive to the mind and body. Stress release is not synonymous with stress avoidance.

Stress, unchecked and managed, creates sleepless nights, anxiety, stomach pain and other body pains, weaken the immune system making us more vulnerable to disease, create personal and work relationship problems, and negatively impact overall functioning and performance.

By identifying the source(s) of stress, ways to reduce and manage it can be identified. New decisions can be made to discard unhealthy, self-destructive ways of reducing stress and it's far reaching effects on our lives.

Major life changes, losses, adjustments, and irrational ways of thinking and perceiving all contribute to stress. Living life more consciously and decisively can dramatically reduce stress, making more room for being creatively efficient in problem solving and a more peaceful existence on the planet.

What can you do about stress? There are plenty of ways to reduce stress and prevent illness! This may include:

- Learn *better ways to manage your time*. You may get more done with less stress if you make a schedule. Think about which things are most important, and do those first - prioritize.
- Find *better ways to cope*. Look at how you have been dealing with stress. Be honest about what works and what does not. Think about other things that might work better.
- Take *good care of yourself*. Get plenty of rest. Eat well. Don't smoke. Limit how much alcohol you drink.
- Try out *new ways of thinking*. When you find yourself starting to worry, try to stop the thoughts. Work on letting go of things you cannot change. Learn to say "no."
- *Speak up*. Not being able to talk about your needs and concerns creates stress and can make negative feelings worse. Assertive communication can help you express how you feel in a thoughtful, tactful way.
- *Ask for help*. People who have a strong network of family and friends that they are able to confide in manage stress better.
- *Work with a mental health professional* to help you evaluate your sources of stress and develop an effective stress management plan for everyday living!