

STRESS AWARENESS 101

INFO FROM THE NYCDCCBF

WHAT IS STRESS?

STRESS IS THE BODY'S PHYSICAL AND/OR MENTAL RESPONSE TO AN EXTERNAL CAUSE. STRESSORS COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES. THEY MAY BE A ONE-TIME EVENT (CAUSING ACUTE STRESS), OR A RECURRING SITUATION (CAUSING CHRONIC STRESS). COMMON CAUSES OF STRESS ARE JOB PRESSURES, FINANCIAL CONCERNS, AND FAMILY ISSUES. TRAUMATIC STRESS CAN OCCUR AS A RESULT OF FAMILY LOSS, VIOLENCE, AND/OR NATURAL DISASTERS, AMONG OTHERS.

HOW DOES STRESS AFFECT ME?

STRESS TRIGGERS OUR "FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT" RESPONSE, INCREASING OUR HEART RATE AND RAISING OUR BLOOD PRESSURE. AS STRESS LINGERS AND PERSISTS THIS RESPONSE CAN LEAD TO A NUMBER OF DETRIMENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, SUCH AS:

EFFECTS OF STRESS ON YOUR BODY:

- HEADACHES
- MUSCLE PAIN AND TENSION
- CHEST PAIN
- FATIGUE
- UPSET STOMACH
- SLEEP PROBLEMS

EFFECTS OF STRESS ON YOUR MOOD:

- ANXIETY
- RESTLESSNESS
- DIFFICULTY FOCUSING
- FEELING OVERWHELMED
- IRRITABILITY AND ANGER
- SADNESS AND DEPRESSION

EFFECTS OF STRESS ON YOUR BEHAVIOR:

- OVEREATING/UNDEREATING
- ANGRY OUTBURSTS
- DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL MISUSE
- TOBACCO USE
- SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL
- EXERCISING LESS OFTEN

HEALTHY WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS

- TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY. THIS INCLUDES GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP, EATING HEALTHY MEALS, AND EXERCISING.
- TALK TO OTHERS. SHARE YOUR PROBLEMS AND FEELINGS WITH A FRIEND, FAMILY MEMBER, COUNSELOR, DOCTOR, OR PASTOR.
- TAKE TIME TO UNWIND. ENJOY SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE ACTIVITIES (WATCHING A FAVORITE MOVIE, PLAYING A FAVORITE GAME, SPENDING TIME IN YOUR FAVORITE PARK, ETC.)
- UNPLUG. SET BOUNDARIES ON THE TIME YOU SPEND READING THE NEWS AND ENGAGING ON SOCIAL MEDIA.
- AVOID DRUGS, ALCOHOL, AND CAFFEINE.
- PRACTICE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES SUCH AS DEEP BREATHING, MEDITATION, YOGA, AND GUIDED IMAGERY. TRY OUT DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES AND SEE WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU.