

## Dealing with Stressful Situations

Stress in small amounts will not kill you. Stress in this form can actually be good. However, chronic and severe stress can physically damage your body by blocking the communication to and from most organs in the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis and in the limbic system, the brain's emotional center.

These two systems need to function as smoothly as possible, with low levels of the delinquent stress hormones in your bloodstream.

### Simplify

Answer the question – “What will happen if a specific task doesn't get accomplished?”

### Prioritize

Prepare a to-do list and establish prioritize the tasks into a level using give a number between 1 and 10: 10 being the most important and the

- Emergency – insert at top of the list (10)
- Urgent / Do As Soon As Possible (9)
- Must Do Today (8)
- Should Do Today (7)
- Reschedule (6)
- Can Wait (5)
- Procrastinate (4)
- Postpone Indefinitely (3)
- Cancel (2)
- Delegate (1)

### Flexibility

Circumstances change but the changes trigger high stress levels in some individuals. You are in control and can erase a task or reorganize your priorities at any time.

### Arrange Your Time

Everyone is subject to the limitations and conditions of a 24-hour day. Be realistic in the amount of time necessary to accomplish individual tasks and especially the amount of time it takes to travel from point A to point B.

Many people do not allow enough extra time given anticipated highway, train, and air travel conditions. These factors can vary according to holidays, major weather patterns, and how rested/relaxed we are when we start the journey.

### Collaborate and Cooperate

Can you work with others to share tasks like car-pooling kids to activities? This takes one time organization to schedule who does what on specific days, but it avoid the duplication of tasks that feels up time to do other things on your list.

### Be Positive

A positive attitude can reverse the effects of chronic and severe stress that causes physical health problems. Humor/laughter helps the auto-

nomic nervous system and the heart rate to dial back a level. A lighthearted approach can increase a person's ability to reduce the levels of three stress hormones: cortisol, epinephrine, and dopac.

### Exercise

Moderate exercise relieves stress in several ways:

- First, a cardiovascular workout stimulates brain chemicals that foster growth of nerve cells.
- Second, exercise increases the activity of serotonin and/or norepinephrine.
- Third, a raised heart rate releases endorphins and a hormone known as ANP. ANP reduces pain, induces euphoria, and helps control the brain's response to stress and anxiety.

Individuals involved create their own stressful situations by establishing very high benchmarks of physical performance they feel is necessary to win competitions. Thus the actual competition experience is be very stressful for many individuals.

### Multi-tasking

Multi-tasking is part of our daily lives in 2009. We must realistically decide what task can be simultaneously performed – cell phones and texting while driving is not an acceptable example of multi-tasking. Carrying a portable device to the rink to accomplish some job related tasks is acceptable.

If you have a difficult time chewing gum and walking at the same time, concentrate on performing one activity at a time.

### Times and Places for Specific Tasks

Establish some rules when the computer, cell phone, etc. will be turned off. Carve out times for work, volunteering, and family activities in the evening and on weekends.

### Perspective

There are far worse dilemmas that other people face on a daily basis. Don't sweat the small stuff, and most of it is small stuff.