

April is Stress Awareness Month

Take Time to Unwind.....

Stress happens. Sometimes it's unavoidable, at times it's unbearable. That's why taking time for yourself is invaluable. It's healthy to relax, renew, and rejuvenate.

Stress does not merely afflict your mind; it can also affect you on a cellular level. In fact, long-term stress can lead to a wide range of illnesses—from headaches to stomach disorders to depression—and can even increase the risk of serious conditions like stroke and heart disease. Understanding the mind/stress/health connection can help you better manage stress and improve your health and well-being.

The Fight or Flight Response

The sympathetic stress response is a survival mechanism that is hardwired into our nervous systems. This automatic response is necessary for mobilizing quick reflexes when there is imminent danger, such as swerving to avoid a car crash.

When you perceive a threat, stress hormones rush into your bloodstream—increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and glucose levels. Other hormones also suppress functions like digestion and the immune system, which is one of the reasons why chronic stress can leave you more vulnerable to illness.

Danger triggers the stress response. Unfortunately, so can work conflicts, concerns over debt, bad memories, or anxiety in general. Although one bad day at work won't compromise your health, weeks or months of stress can dampen your immune response and raise your risk for disease.

Combat Your Stress

If you suffer from chronic stress and can't influence or change the situation, then you'll need to change your approach. Be willing to be flexible. Remember, you have the ability to choose your response to stressors, and you may have to try various options.

- ◆ Recognize when you don't have control, and let it go.
- ◆ Don't get anxious about situations that you cannot change.
- ◆ Take control of your own reactions and focus your mind on something that makes you feel calm and in control. This may take some practice, but it pays off in peace of mind.
- ◆ Develop a vision for healthy living, wellness, and personal growth, and set realistic goals to help you realize your vision.

Relax and Recharge

Be sure to carve out some time to relax and take care of yourself each day—even just 10 to 15 minutes per day can improve your ability to handle life's stressors. Also, remember that exercise is an excellent stress reliever.

Everyone has different ways they like to relax and unwind. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- ◆ Take a walk
- ◆ Read a Book
- ◆ Go for a run
- ◆ Have a cup of tea
- ◆ Play a sport
- ◆ Spend time with a friend or loved one
- ◆ Meditate
- ◆ Do yoga

While you can't avoid stress, you can minimize it by changing how you choose to respond to it. The ultimate reward for your efforts is a healthy, balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun.

Source: Stress Awareness | Federal Occupational Health. (n.d.). Retrieved March 08, 2017, from <http://foh.psc.gov/calendar/stress.html>



CMMHC's Wellness Committee Mission Statement:

It is the mission of the CMMHC Wellness Committee to promote the health and wellness of staff through education and initiatives that:

- Encourage habits of Wellness
- Increase awareness of factors and resources contributing to well-being
- Inspire and empower individuals to take responsibility for their own health.

Brought to you by your

Central Minnesota Mental Health Center Wellness Committee

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| • Ashley Conner | • Ray Sjogren |
| • Chrissy Johnson | • Steven Loos |
| • Jessica Williams | • Maggie Dilks |
| • Kasey Mol | • Brie Frantsl |
| • Kayla Levtzow | • Chad Rhoads |
| • Marie Fisher | |



Central MN Mental Health Center

"Together, Creating a Healthier Life"