

Managing Day-to-Day Stress

Stress is just a part of 21st Century life! We can't live without it, but sometimes we feel that we can't live with it!

Stress comes from many sources:

- It might be from a family crisis – a death, divorce or long separation.
- It might be from overloaded schedules.
- It may be caused by expectations that cannot be met or unexpected circumstances.
- It may be caused by a loss of job, health, home or friendship.
- It can even come from a happy event as marriage, the birth of a child, or moving into a new home.

Regardless of the cause, the following are three ways you can manage your stress:

- alter it,
- avoid it,
- or accept it.

Alter your life by removing the source of stress. Some stressors can be relieved by better planning or organization in your life. Simple things like having emergency supplies on hand, not shopping at the busiest times of the week, or organizing your work space can each be stress relievers. If morning schedules are tight, lay out children's clothes or set the table for breakfast the night before.

Avoid stress is another management strategy.

- Learn to say "no", when an addition to your schedule will only add to your stress.
- If you are stressed by long waits, plan something to do (like reading a book) while you wait for an appointment.
- If there is too much tension in your home or office, go for a walk to clear your mind and relieve the tension.

Find a way to **accept** the stressors that we have no control over.

- Talking to a trusted friend will help you put things in perspective.
- Keeping in good health by eating well, getting enough sleep and keeping a routine are essential.
- Look for the good. Even in the worst of circumstances, there are things that can bring a smile to your face, reasons to be thankful, and opportunities to help others.

This stress management plan was suggested by the late Dr. Herb Lingren, Extension Family Scientist:

1. Describe the **most stressful experience** you had in the past month.
2. What were your **symptoms**? How did stress affect you physically and emotionally?
3. If it happens again, what could you do to **alter** the source of your stress?
4. What could you do to **avoid** the source of this stress?
5. What could you do to **accept** the source of stress by equipping yourself physically and mentally so you can tolerate the stress through better developing your:
 - **physical health?**
 - **social health?**
 - **spiritual health?**
6. How can you **change** your unrealistic expectations, irrational beliefs and negative self-talk?

If you do not feel these self-management strategies are enough, it is advisable to seek professional help from a physician or mental health practitioner.

Source: "How to Manage Daily Stress" by Dr. Herbert G. Lingren, Extension Family Scientist, NF98-388.

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