Using Mindfulness to Cope with Stress

What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is being fully aware of what is happening in the present moment without judgment.

- Mindfulness allows you to be fully present in your life and work and can help you notice what your body needs in order to make good lifestyle choices.

Benefits of being mindful include:

- Reduced stress
- Better relationships
- Less anxiety and depression
- Improved mood
- Improved memory and focus
- Increased immune function
- Overall improvement to well-being

Mindfulness meditation exercises:

1. <u>One minute of mindfulness</u> - Sit quietly and focus on your breathing for one minute.

2. <u>Mindful observation</u> - Observe an object, allowing your attention to be fully absorbed by the object.

3. <u>Ten-second counts</u> - Close your eyes and focus your attention on counting to ten. If your mind wanders to thoughts other than counting to ten, start back at number one.

Stress Management Resources

Apps for your phone or tablet at the iTunes App Store:

- Happify
- Breathe2relax
- Calm
- Headspace
- Nature Sounds- Relax and Sleep
- Acupressure

Mindfulness-based stress reduction programs:

- UMass Memorial Center for Mindfulness
https://www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org/umass-memorial-center-mindfulness

Download meditation practices:

- The Mindfulness Solution
www.mindfulness-solution.com

- Audio Dharma
www.audiodharma.org/series/1/talk/1835/

UMass Psychiatry Wellness Initiative

Improve Your Health Through Better Stress Management

Start to lead a healthier life, and be a healthier you, today!

Learning how to manage stress helps us deal with how hectic life can be.

Managing stress can help your body and mind!

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What is Stress?

Stress is a reaction to situations, events or people. Stress can be in the form of a big project at work or having bills to pay. Stress impacts how your body and your mind feel on a daily basis.

When stress is good stress, it prepares you to meet a challenge. But when stress becomes too strong or lasts too long, it can start to negatively impact your health.

High levels of negative stress have been linked to:

- Headaches
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Heart disease
- Obesity
- Sleep problems
- Getting sick more easily
- Longer recovery time from illness

Unhealthy ways to cope with stress include:

- Drinking alcohol, smoking or using other drugs
- Lashing out at others
- Eating comfort food

These may help us feel better for a short period of time but will likely make us feel even worse in the future.

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

Deep Breathing:

1. Sit comfortably in a chair and close your eyes.
2. Breathe in through your nose and inhale as fully as possible imagining there is a balloon in your stomach that you are trying to inflate.
3. Exhale very slowly through your mouth.
4. Repeat the deep cleansing breaths 10-20 times.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation:

1. Lie down or sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
2. Starting at the top of your body, slowly tighten your forehead muscles as much as you can, hold for 10 seconds and then slowly release.
3. Move down your body, tightening and relaxing the different muscles one at a time.
4. Notice how your body feels when the muscles are relaxed.

Imagery:

1. Sit or lie in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
2. Try to imagine a place that is relaxing for you, such as a beach or a field.
3. Take a 'mind walk' to that place, taking in all the sights, sounds, and scents.
4. Allow yourself 5 minutes to be in this place you love before coming back to reality.

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress

Exercise:

- Take a 10-minute walk during the day.
- Exercising 3 to 4 days a week can help you feel less stressed all the time.

Social Support:

- Reach out to a friend or family member to talk about what is bothering you.
- You don't even have to talk about your stress; just spending time with people we love can help us feel more relaxed.

Recognition, Acceptance, and Action:

There may be times when we have no control over things that cause us stress. However, we do have control over HOW we deal or cope with the stress.

When this happens:

- Recognize the stress is not in your control.
- Accept the things you can not change.
- Take action in a way that is healthy for you and your loved ones.