

SKILLS FOR MANAGING STRESS



Becoming knowledgeable about stress:

- Understand the process and effects of stress.
- Identify your major sources of stress.
- Anticipate stressful periods and plan for them.
- Find your optimum stress levels in all the areas of your life - be honest about what you really can cope with.

Keep physically fit:

Research has consistently demonstrated that the fitter you are, the less likely you are to develop either physical or mental illnesses. If you are fit, you have more energy to confront the daily problems you encounter, and more resilience when things do not work out well.

Develop a style of life that will act as a buffer against the effects of stress:

- Drink in moderation.
- Eat a balanced diet, have regular meals, and always begin the day with an adequate breakfast.
- Cut out or reduce smoking.
- Minimise your use of foods high in sugar, salt and saturated fats.
- Increase your fibre intake.
- Maintain your recommended weight.
- Get sufficient sleep.



Manage your time:

Determine your priorities, distinguish between what *must* be done and what would be *desirable* to **do**.

Be assertive:

Develop the skills of asking for what you want, stating your preferences, and saying no' to those who demand too much of your time.

Develop an effective support system:

Having someone to turn to, talk to and rely on has been shown to be perhaps the most significant factor in helping people minimise the occurrence and impact of stressors in their lives and on their health.

Have clear objectives:

- Many of us end up doing too much, inefficiently, and too quickly.
- This is often because we have not stopped to ask ourselves what it is that we really want.
- Training oneself to think in terms of objectives is a crucial skill.
- This does not refer to major life decisions, but to all activities in our lives.
- How often do we ask ourselves, 'Is this what I want to be doing right now, and why do I want to do it?'



Be clear about your values:

Until you know what is important to you, you will find it difficult to set objectives for yourself.

Develop a positive self-concept:

An improved self-concept will help you to feel confident and more able to cope.

Be systematic about making decisions and solving problems:

Learn to divide a problem into manageable components, gather sufficient information about the problem to put it into perspective. Discover your range of decision-making styles, and learn which is appropriate to a particular decision.

Learn relaxation techniques:

There are a variety of relaxation techniques which are very effective in reducing and preventing stress, such as meditation, visualization techniques, listening to music and fun activities.

Seek out Professional help:

Once stress has become overpowering in your life, seeking out professional help such as On-site Stress Management programs, or de-stressing modalities such as Aromatherapy, Reflexology, various massages therapies and acupuncture.



For more information call Dr. Paul West on 011 883 4552