Do You Let Stress Overtake Your Life?

By Monika Erős-Sarnyai, M.D., MA, Department Of Health And Mental Hygiene

Ever had money problems, too much work, and unreasonable deadlines? Ever felt overwhelmed by family responsibilities and personal health issues? If yes, then you know stress. Stress is part of our daily lives. We are so used to being stressed out, that we do not even recognize how it affects us anymore. Or if we do, we just ignore it…until our body says enough is enough.

There is a biological change that occurs when we respond to a stressful situation that makes us ready to deal with it. It’s as a result of this change that we experience a variety of stress reactions. Restlessness, irritability, sweating, rapid heartbeat, exhaustion, forgetfulness, difficulties concentrating and making decisions, gastrointestinal problems and emotional outburst are just a few of the reactions we can expect.

This change is normal, but only if it’s short-term. Stress that lasts a long time and makes us feel exhausted and overworked in body and mind, is not okay. It hurts us. Chronic, unmitigated stress can contribute to the development of numerous health problems and can even lead to early death. The most common consequences of ignored or poorly managed stress are headaches, problems with sleeping, and extra pounds around the waist line. Stress can also contribute to the development of asthma, and lead to high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke. Mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse commonly accompany prolonged stress. What’s more, unmanaged stress can also worsen existing health conditions.

In short, stress negatively affects our mind and body. It impacts on how we deal with our responsibilities, both at home and at work. So our goal is to as much as possible reduce the stress in our lives. Since what causes stress is different for everyone, how we manage stress has to be unique and individual to us. What works for me might not work for you, and vice-versa. We need to find what works best for us, and then stick with it. But some simple steps for stress reduction are universal. These are things that we can all do, every day. We can be active, positive, connected, purposeful, curious, and resilient. By following these steps we can move towards living a healthier, happier, and more fulfilling life.

**TAKE THE STEPS:**

**Live a Healthier, Happier and More Fulfilling Life**

**Be Active:** When we feel good about ourselves we deal with stress more effectively. Keep your body strong and fit. The gym is not the only option; find a physical activity that you enjoy. Eat balanced and nutritious diet and get enough sleep.

**Be Positive:** A lot depends on how we look at life. With positive outlook we tend to feel happier and stronger and manage stressful times more confidently. Practice positive self-talk to remind yourself that you are strong, and stop those negative thoughts that make you feel anxious, sad and angry.

**Be Connected:** Being connected to those around us can give us a sense of belonging and serve as a source of help and support. Make an effort, nurture existing relationships and make new ones.

**Be Mindful:** When mindful we are in the here and now, appreciating the moment. We do not waste time with regretting past mistakes, or worrying about what the future. Notice what you see; enjoy how the sun feels on your skin.

**Be Purposeful:** We need to live a life that has a meaning and set ourselves goals that matter to us. Achieving both big and small task can giving us the strength we may need when dealing with difficulties. Join a hobby group, pick up a new book, get practical and do some home improvement.

**Be Curious:** When we mastered new skills, we feel good about ourselves, and what we can achieve. With improved self-esteem we can deal with whatever life throws at our way. Explore new things, learn new language, travel.

**Be Resilient:** When resilient we can bounce back from difficult life experiences unharmed, maybe even stronger. Do things that boost your self-confidence.