

YOUR STRESS

Costs, Implications and Preventions



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Find your Happy Place, Pre-Op

Blue Shield of California has a new tactic to ease surgery: The insurer sends members a 20-minute guided-imagery tape or CD. Patients listen to it several times before surgery. A soothing voice instructs them to visualize an operating room complete with a team of competent surgeons and a cheering section of their family and friends. Next it guides them into a recovery room where they calmly awaken as their body continues to heal. It sounds a little strange, but studies have shown that patients who listen to the tapes experience less anxiety before surgery, and less blood loss and pain after surgery. They even need less medical care and medication (saving the insurer \$654 of expenses per patient). Blue Shield also offers guided-imagery material to members with persistent conditions, such as heart disease, asthma and chronic pain. Check with your insurance company to see if it offers a similar benefit.

You too can use guided imagery and bio-rhythmic music to transform your environment into your happy place.

The most stressful jobs

1. Teaching
- 2. Nursing**
3. Management
4. Other professionals
5. Social workers
6. Road transport
7. Police and prison officers

Source: HSE

Hidden Cost of Stress

Annually, \$26 billion are paid out in disability claims related to stress. Other conditions that result from occupational stress incur health care costs that are compounded by the cost of lost work time.

4% of all work hours are lost to absenteeism, which costs millions of dollars annually.

Heart disease is related to the loss of 135 million workdays each year.

Alcoholism costs U.S. industry approximately \$20 billion each year.

Mental illnesses such as depression -- which can result from workplace stress -- cost the U.S. economy about \$30 billion each year.

Absenteeism

According to the American Stress Institute, "Stress is America's number 1 health problem." Stress may be singularly responsible for loss of productivity in the workplace today. Last year the American workforce lost 550,000,000 days to absenteeism

On an average workday, an estimated one million workers do not make it to work due to stress

Job Stress

It is estimated that job stress cost Americans more than \$300 billion annually due to diminished productivity, absenteeism, and employee turnover, medical, legal and insurance fees. It is also projected that 60 to 80% of all work related accidents are due to stress. Some of the most noted e.g., the Three Mile Island nuclear incident and the Exxon Valdez oil disaster have cost billions in clean up efforts alone, to say nothing of the devastating environmental damage.

40% of worker turnover is due to stress alone and last year employers spent more than \$150 billion in worker compensation claims.

Illness

- The average back and neck pain case costs business and industry \$24,000 annually.
- Up to 90% of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress-related complaints.
- Up to 80% of industrial accidents are due to stress.
- Over 50% of lost work days are stress-related.
- 14% of all workers say stress caused them to quit or change jobs in the previous two years.

"Employee Burnout: America's Newest Epidemic" (Northwestern National Life);
"Job Stress: The 20th Century Disease" (UN International Labor Organization);
"Mitchum Report on Stress in the '90's."

Hidden Cost of Stress

- Perhaps the biggest cost of occupational stress, and the one which is most difficult to calculate,
 - is the effects of errors made by workers who are impaired but still working.
 - The industrial accidents caused by on-the-job stress -- which account for 75-85% of all accidents
 - are estimated to cost American companies \$32 billion annually.
- Other estimates suggest that annually
 - over 2 million workers suffer disabling injuries, and
 - 15,000 people lose their lives, due to work-related accidents.

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“Health and Executive Magazine,” claims 6.5 million sick days are being taken every year as a result of stress

HOW VULNERABLE ARE YOU TO STRESS?

The following test was developed by psychologists Lyle H. Miller and Alma Dell Smith at Boston University Medical Center. Score each item from 1 (almost always) to 5 (never), according to how much of the time each applies to you.

- _____ 1. I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.
- _____ 2. I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.
- _____ 3. I give and receive affection regularly.
- _____ 4. I have at least one relative within 50 miles on whom I can rely.
- _____ 5. I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.
- _____ 6. I smoke less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.
- _____ 7. I take fewer than five alcoholic drinks a week.
- _____ 8. I am the appropriate weight for my height.
- _____ 9. I have an income adequate to meet my basic needs.
- _____ 10. I get strength from my religious beliefs.
- _____ 11. I regularly attend club or social activities.
- _____ 12. I have a network of friends and acquaintances.
- _____ 13. I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters.
- _____ 14. I am in good health (including eye sight, hearing, teeth).
- _____ 15. I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.
- _____ 16. I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems, e.g., chores, money and daily living issues.
- _____ 17. I do something for fun at least once a week.
- _____ 18. I am able to organize my time effectively.
- _____ 19. I drink fewer than three cups of coffee (or tea or cola drinks) per day.
- _____ 20. I take quite time for myself during the day.

_____ **TOTAL See how vulnerable you are next page.**

To get your score, add up the figures and subtract 20. Any number over 30 indicates a vulnerability to stress. You are seriously vulnerable if your score is between 50 and 75, and extremely vulnerable if it is over 75.

STRESS REDUCTION

Introduction Why participate in a stress management program?

1. You will feel and look better
2. You will think more clearly
3. You'll be less irritable
4. You'll get more positive recognition
5. You'll accomplish more
6. You'll sense inner peace
7. You'll become more patient
8. You'll be more promotable
9. You'll sleep better
10. You'll contribute to others' well being

The number one cause of stress. Stress is any change that you must adapt to. **CHANGE** – Change is constant which means stress is constant so the way one adapts is the measure of good and/or bad stress. What type of changes have you experienced over the last 24 months? Your experiences come from four basic sources:

1. Environmental Stressors
2. Social Stressors
3. Physiological Stressors
4. Your thoughts
 - Stinking thinking – Thoughts become reality
 - Toxic tongues – words are things
 - Hung by the tongue or saved by the tongue
 - You are what you think you are

Internal Causes

- Emotions
- Decisions
- Chemical
- Physical

External Causes

- Family situations
- Dealing with others
- Social or status change
- Environment and surroundings
- Work

How stress affects the body. Blood pressure; sleep habits, nervousness, and confusion. Whenever our bodies are stressed – whether the stress is real or imagined – our brains take over and respond. Stress, by the way, can come in many forms: an impending deadline, an inability to complete your work tasks, or even a verbal lashing from another person. Yet, the physiological response is basically the same.

Here's what happens:

Stress Starts As	Options are	Unchecked it becomes Distress
A situation	Accept it	Anger
Physical Condition	Physical condition	Anxiety (worry)
Mental Attitude	Change it	Depression

STRESSOR

Perceived by

BRAIN

Which activates

ADRENAL GLANDS

Which release Adrenaline-related hormones into

BLOODSTREAM

HERE'S HOW THE BODY RESPONDS TO STRESS:

- Increased heart rate
- Elevated blood pressure
- Increased breathing rate (rapid and shallow)
- Release of stored energy from liver into bloodstream
- Dilation of pupils to let in more light
- Heightening of senses
- Tensing of muscles for movement or protection
- Shutdown of digestive processes; blood diverted to muscles and brain
- Constriction of blood flow to extremities
- Perspiring

STRESS SYMPTOMS

PHYSICAL:

Headaches _____
Digestive problems _____
Insomnia _____
Oversleeping _____
Rashes/skin problems _____
Sexual difficulties _____
Elevated blood pressure _____
Chest pain _____
Heart palpitations _____
Loss of appetite _____
Always hungry _____
Neck or back spasms _____
Chronic fatigue _____
Jaw pain _____
Dizzy spells _____
Nausea _____
Frequent urination _____
Nail biting _____
Body warmer or colder than usual _____
Night sweats _____

EMOTIONAL:

Increased moodiness _____
Withdrawal from others _____
Difficulty concentrating _____
Loss of memory _____
Increased restlessness _____
Frenzied activity _____
Difficulty making decisions _____
Annoyed by little things _____
Overly sensitive _____
Frequent crying _____
Considered suicide _____
Fear of criticism _____
Angers easily _____
Nightmares _____
Hopeless outlook _____

BEHAVIORIAL:

Finger tapping _____
Compulsive eating _____
Nail biting _____
Repetitive thoughts _____
Increased smoking _____
Increased drinking/drug use _____
Work absenteeism or lateness _____

How stress reduction works

It changes our perception. By changing the way we perceive a given situation, we change the way we respond to it. Changing perception does not mean that the problem is not real, but it does mean we take control of how a tragedy affects us.

Every behavior is reward driven, even if the reward is negative. Therefore, one must find the **WIIFM** – What’s in it for me reward in order to have the motivation to change a behavior.

Setting boundaries: When dealing with the sexes women like to talk about their problems which is OK and allows them to flush their system of the frustrations that accompany these stressors. That is until they tell the problem to a man, usually their spouse. Unfortunately men are plessed with the fixit syndrome. So they before the story is even completed are already in the fixit mode, which now adds to the stressor and frustration to the female/spouse. A double bind has been created – she wants to talk about the problem. He wants to fix it. Now her stress is magnified because she didn’t wanted fixed in the first place and he is now frustrated because he can’t figure out why she told him if she didn’t want it fixed.

So think about this: If you consider how hard it is to change yourself. Then you must consider how hard it is to change others or to fix their problems. Just listening is a wonderful gift that few possess.

Ten Ways to Cut Down on Stress

1. Talk it out. Get support from family and friends.
2. Exercise regularly.
3. Avoid false guilt.
4. Set realistic goals and priorities.
5. Avoid perfectionism.
6. Keep a sense of humor.
7. Hang loose. Set aside idle time to relax every day.
8. Live by the calendar, not the stopwatch.
9. Avoid overindulging in drugs, alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine.
10. Think positively

The five steps for stress reduction.

1. Progressive relaxation.
2. Create a positive visualization.
3. Create kinesthetic sensations that go along with the visualization.
4. Establish a positive anchor to hold on to the relaxed, positive sensations.
5. Rehearse using the anchor.

Everyone experiences relaxation differently. The key is to relax to the best of your ability at this moment in time. List some of the items that might enhance, or interfere with relaxation.

How to enhance the relaxation response

- Quiet place
- Positive self talk
- Biorhythmic music
- Day dreaming

- Taking a walk

Proper abdominal breathing. Which very few people know how to do. Rather than thinking about taking a deep breath which usually expresses itself as throwing out the chest, lifting the shoulders and tensing the neck. This is a very tense and pain producing way to take a deep breath.

Do this: Blow your stomach out like blowing up a balloon. This will drop the diaphragm down and automatically pull into the lungs a deep breath. This will get more air into the two lower lobes of the lungs. The two lower lobes of the lungs are highly vascular and will get more oxygen into the cells of the body, which greatly helps decrease stress.

The importance of practicing once or twice a day.

Self-talk affects stress. To create a positive affirmation the following are necessary and examples are given.

The affirmation must be:

- Realistic
- Believable
- Measurable
- Positive
- Presence tense
- Rewardable
- Simple

I walk 20 minutes and meditate twice a day so that I am healthy and happy.
--

I am relaxed and in control. I feel good. I control how I feel.

EXERCISE

Exercise is the most widely recommended form of treatment for relieving the effects of stress and depression. Exercise increases endorphin release along with melatonin and serotonin production. It helps level out blood glucose and focuses the attention to create a meditative hypnotic state some call getting in the zone. Exercise helps us sleep better in itself creates a more relaxed being.

Listed are some statements from prominent publications:

THINK STRESS CONTROL

Skipping breakfast is a bad idea. Starting your day on an empty stomach results in **DECREASED ATTENTION** and **POOR PERFORMANCE**. Even if your breakfast consists of something sweet or fatty, which is common, it can still help you get a better start on your workday. It is also true that breakfast eaters are leaner, have lower blood pressure, eat less throughout the day, and are in better health than those who skip the most important meal of the day.

SOURCE: NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE

People who begin weight training in their 40's and 50's can be stronger at 60 than they were at 20. A physically fit middle-age person can have more strength and endurance than a 25 year old.

SOURCE: CHICAGO TRIBUNE

One new study found that regular workouts during middle age could halve the risk of colon cancer.

SOURCE: JOURNAL OF NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

Scientists have now proven a link between stress and illness. Being under stress and feeling a loss of control can almost double your chances of catching a cold by lowering your resistance to infection.

SOURCE: NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE

Workers who suffer the least job stress are those who feel in charge of their workloads, who are firmly committed to their work, and who thrive on challenges.

SOURCE: STUDY AT YALE UNIVERSITY

These are the most stressful jobs: customer service personnel, complaint resolution personnel, secretaries and office workers, inner city high school teachers, police officers, air traffic controllers, medical interns, waiters and waitresses.

SOURCE: AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF STRESS