

Avoidable Stress & Increasing Awareness

LIVING WELL – APRIL 2024

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Stress is often misunderstood.

While we know that stress can negatively affect us physically and emotionally, research tells us that only half of our stress is caused by external factors - such as work demands, family challenges, financial concerns - the other half is internal. Reducing avoidable internal stress gives us the mental, emotional and physical strength to cope with external stress better.

Avoidable stress means getting to know what makes you feel calmer, along with understanding unnecessary causes of stress and taking preventative steps to try to lessen them and where possible to avoid them altogether.

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It is not the load that breaks you down, it is the way you carry it.

LOU HOLTZ



Take care of yourself everyday by eating well, getting enough sleep and exercise on a regular basis. Create a routine that you follow daily, prioritize what needs your attention now and what can wait, and include time to do things you enjoy.



Worse-case scenario thinking only projects negative thoughts into the future - we do not know what is going to happen tomorrow, next month or next year so why worry about what you cannot control - stay in the present, taking time to experience what is happening right now.



Clutter in your home or workplace can create stress- start decluttering in small stages, a little at a time, to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Ask yourself 'have I used or looked at this in the last year' and if not, let it go.



Expectations of any situation are within your control, having an optimistic instead of a pessimistic mindset has proven to lower stress and reduce anxiety.



Procrastination is usually the result of feeling overwhelmed or scared of what needs to be done. Put together a plan to work through it in stages, using smaller goals along the way, to gain a sense of accomplishment that will motivate you to continue.



Rest and recovery are necessary for everyone, especially after stressful situations, to avoid a cycle of chronic and overwhelming stress where you are not even able to step out of the negativity.



Replaying stressful situations in your mind over and over again does not change what happened and just makes you continue to relive the stressful experience - replace these thoughts instead with positive affirmations to change the way you think about what happened. Something as simple as 'I move forward confidently into the future' can stop the negative-thinking cycle.



Being late due to circumstances beyond your control, leaves you with the ability to choose how to react. Time anxiety occurs when you show up late because you did not manage your time well. Being late can also happen if you're afraid to go somewhere or if you regret saying yes to things you do not have time or interest in doing. Understand your reason for being late and be realistic about your time commitments.



Social media use where you compare yourself to others can negatively impact your self-worth and self-esteem. And oversharing can lead to vulnerability. Doomscrolling can cause anxiety and unnecessary worry. Set personal boundaries and look at social media feeds only at certain times and for limited durations.

While we cannot completely eliminate stress from our lives, make it a goal to eliminate as much *avoidable stress* as possible every day, so you are better equipped to handle unavoidable stress. And don't be too hard on yourself - if today was stressful or a situation made you feel anxious, pause for a moment to consider what you can do differently tomorrow. If you find what you are experiencing now causes you extreme stress, you have three choices - remove yourself from the situation, change it, or accept it totally.

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