

WHAT IS STRESS?

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In general, stress is caused by the mind overreacting to a difficult situation or environment which then causes the body to act inefficiently.

A small amount of stress can be beneficial - it adds interest and motivation to our lives - it keeps us on our toes! It makes us stronger as we deal with certain changes in our lives. However, when many changes occur or they influence our lives negatively, our capacity to deal with the stress can become overburdened.

Unfortunately it is a proven fact that prolonged stress can often lead to illness and possibly mental breakdown. It is important to understand the warning signals that your body and mind send out in response to a physical and mental overload. By acquainting yourself with these you will recognise the stress symptoms and decide to deal with them quickly before they get out of hand.

Relaxation is the key. Relaxation is something we all perceive differently - it does not however mean lounging in front of the television with a G&T or a beer, packet of crisps and smoking a cigarette or cigar. [Although there are times when that may sound pretty good!]

To be beneficial, relaxation needs to be progressive. That means the relaxation process is gradual and continuous until you feel relaxed in mind and body.

There are several ways to achieve this:

Exercise: - This does not mean going to the gym and working out for four hours per day five or six days per week - Very Stressful! Exercise in this case means two or three specific routines lasting 10 minutes in total - We can all find time for that if we really try.

Walking: - Particularly in the evening is very beneficial, try it with some of your favourite music or even a story on your Walkman.

Swimming: - in a leisurely style relaxes most of the muscle groups.

Breathing: - Of course we all know how to breathe - Or do we? We breathe approx 1800 times per hour without thinking about it. Correct breathing is done through the diaphragm, Stomach out when breathing in and stomach in when breathing out. It takes practice but well worth the effort. Correct

breathing will correct anything from mild anxiety to panic attacks - It will subdue anger and leave you feeling calm ready to take on the world.

Imagery: - is simply finding 15 minutes of quiet time and learning to visualise a passive scene which does not contain any form of activity. e.g. a deserted beach, a waterfall, a forest, a range of snow covered mountains etc. But no semi-clad men or women running in slow motion up the beach - that's not passive!

You have to learn how to do this because at first, thoughts will keep popping into your mind while you are sitting or lying there - such as - have I done all I need to do on that project? What did my wife/husband ask me to bring home? I wonder if so and so will ever return my calls? etc. But once you've mastered this, the benefits are truly amazing.

Laughter: - Considerable research has been done and it's official - Laughter is the best medicine. When we laugh, every organ in our body is affected in a positive way... we inhale deeply and exhale through our vocal chords. Laughter exercises the neck, face, shoulders, stomach and diaphragm. Blood pressure is reduced. The amount of oxygen in the blood is increased which helps the healing process thereby resisting infection. It can lower the heart rate and burn calories. It has also been proved that it stimulates the body's natural pain killing tranquillisers, which some experts say can prevent ulcers and digestive disorders. So watch some funny DVD's, get a joke book or just hang around funny people - you will start to feel a whole lot better.

Living here in Saudi Arabia can bring its own form of stress. For those of you who are here for some time, learning to fit into a different culture can be very rewarding but can also be very frustrating. But if these changes in your life are not dealt with in a certain way then stress can build up and you will start to feel pressured and maybe struggle just to get through each day - In some cases turning to alcohol or tranquillisers.

It is how you react to a situation that may or may not create stress within you. And of course you may still have family members that you are still responsible for in another country. If you are feeling any form of inner disharmony then now is the time to do something about it.

Talking a situation or a problem through with a trusted friend or relative is of course beneficial but will not always help you to find a solution within yourself.

A trained qualified stress management consultant will show you the way to manage your particular stress while fitting the solution to your lifestyle.

Everyone deserves to be happy and you owe it to yourself to have the best quality of life that you can.

"Quality of Life and Mind"