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Let us imagine for a moment that you are in line for that long awaited job interview. You desperately need that job, and you are nervous about the interview. You are trying to put your best front, while your heart is racing, respirations are labored, and sweat is ruining your make-up. You have already made your third trip to the rest room and wondering why the room feels hot. Do not despair. This is just your body's "*Fight response*" to an anticipated stressful situation.

Now consider another individual who is called upon to speak in front of 300 people. This person facing the greatest fear known to mankind namely, "*Public Speaking*," suddenly notices weakness in the legs, dizziness, mental confusion, and shakiness. That person may be thinking, "I rather be dead than make a speech in front of 300 people." This is the "*Flight response*" to a very stressful circumstance.

What is Stress?

It is body's response to internal or external environmental changes or challenges. Some people respond by adrenaline surge which accounts for the fight

symptoms. Others may respond with acetylcholine that produces the flight symptoms by slowing the heart rate or even stopping it for several seconds, dropping the blood pressure, and causing dizziness or fainting. The underlying sequence of events leading to this is very complex and involving our psychological, mental, emotional, physical make-up, prior exposure, and experience with similar situations.

Stress management

Make a list of situations that are stressful to you, how your body responds to those situations, and what makes you nervous? Be aware that 99% of the wrong things that we imagine do not happen in real life. Hence, direct most of your effort and energy on positive aspects, while keeping in mind that the chances of a bad outcome are very slim and you are prepared to deal with the unexpected by anticipation and ongoing training. When you face an unpleasant situation, it is not the time to wonder why it is happening to you, who is responsible for this etc. It is the perfect time to face the situation and do your best and worry later about what you need to do to improve your performance in the future.

The body's response to stress is multi-factorial and hence, we need a multidisciplinary approach to address the physical, mental, emotional, psychological, and personal aspects. The following is a partial list of things

that you may consider as you prepare to face your stress.

Communication is the link that binds us with the people around us. Learn to effectively get your thoughts across to other people. At the same time, try to understand the other person's views. Emphasize facts while minimizing your emotions.

Art of dynamic listening is where you actively engage in understanding the other person's point while paying full attention, noting pertinent points, asking questions, clarifying issues, and restating the summary.

Your attitude in life influences very strongly on how you look at the universe and how people around you judge. You can say the, "the glass is half empty," or "the glass is half full." Why not start with the attitude that the glass is already half-full and every attempt you take to add a little more will get you ever so closer to filling the glass with your rich and colorful life experiences.

Assertive behavior is where you make your point in a firm and positive manner without raising your voice or temper. Once you make your point, you should stand by your words and actions.

Time management can eliminate a lot of stress. It is not the lack of time but the lack of time management that robs our patience. Write down everything you want to accomplish in a day including your free time and then add 10% extra time for delays or unexpected tie-ups. If all your activities cannot fit within 24

hours, you need to delete some items on the list or postpone them to another day.

Crises survival kit is like an insurance policy for major stresses in life such as the loss of a loved one, break-up in relationships, or loss of job among others. Make a list of things you need to do and how you would address the crisis and mentally rehearse.

Healthy eating habits create a sense of well-being, increase your self-image, and boost your confidence. Everyone knows what good eating habits are, but have trouble starting or staying on one. Let us start with one simple change today and add a few more as the time progresses.

Exercise is the key to excellence. Exercise conditions your body's response to stress (less heart racing), improves your strength and endurance, creates a sense of accomplishment, helps to reduce your weight, brings down blood pressure and lowers cholesterol.

Meditation is the ability to control your mind during a stressful situation and direct your mind it to focus on solutions rather than problems. Begin by closing your eyes and focusing on an abstract object for a few seconds and gradually increasing the duration.

Imagery is an art that has been used by Olympic athletes to prepare for the finals. You create an imagery of a stressful situation from start to finish and experience all the unpleasant things that you

might encounter and how you are going to deal with them in a positive problem solving manner. When you do this a hundred times, then you will be ready to execute what you have already rehearsed.

Relaxation and Yoga have been found useful in reducing symptoms such as muscle tension associated with stress. Relaxation involves mentally relaxing a group of muscles at will from top to bottom.

Biofeedback is where your mind is trained to progressively reduce the body's response to stress. This is accomplished by using machines that monitor your heart rate, respirations, sweating, and temperature under imaged stressful situations. Using music, relaxation, and imagery your mind is trained to influence those responses in a positive manner.

Goodnight sleep is essential to start a stressful day. Avoid caffeine in the evening. Evening exercise will also help you to get a good night sleep

Music with 60 beats per minute has been shown to reduce the heart rate, slow the respirations and calm nerves.

Disclosure: The information provided here is for educational purpose only. Please consult with your physician for any medical advice.

Visit www.sugarlandheartcenter.com for a more information.

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