Five Simple Steps to Managing Stress in Your Life

PASFAA NextPage - 2019
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Agenda

- Stress Defined
- Stressors
- Recent Facts & Statistics
- Steps to Handle Stress
- Summary
STRESS IS THE BODY’S REACTION TO A CHANGE THAT REQUIRES A PHYSICAL, MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT OR RESPONSE

Source: WebMD
5 Cents Please!!
Stress

• **Negative stress** is referred to as distress
  • Caused by losing, failing, overworking and not coping properly
  • Can be harmful if not handled, but is perfectly normal
Stress

• **Not all** stress is negative
• **Positive stress results from exhilarating experiences**
  • Winning the lottery
  • Unexpected promotion
  • Recognition/awards
Stress is a part of everyday life...

Time, money and relationships ensure that stress will ALWAYS be with us.
Facts

66% of Americans surveyed believe stress impacts their physical health

63% of Americans surveyed believe stress impacts their mental health

Source: “Stress in America Survey” published by the American Psychological Association in 2014
Recent Statistics

• 72% of Americans surveyed say their stress level has increased or stayed the same over the last 5 years
• 80% of Americans say their stress level has stayed the same over the last year
• 20% say their level of stress has decreased over the last year
• 20% of Americans surveyed rate their stress level as high (8-10 on a 10 point scale)

Source: “Stress in America Survey” published by the American Psychological Association in 2014
Stressors

Source: “Stress in America Survey” published by the American Psychological Association in 2014
Causes of Stress in Life

- Lack of sleep
- Competing priorities
  - family, housework, personal
- Money
- Social Media
- Others?
Nearly half of respondents indicated poor or insufficient sleep affected their daily activities

- 67% of those also reported poor or only fair health
- 76% of women reported waking up feeling rested on zero of the past seven days
- 84% of men reported waking up feeling rested on zero of the past seven days

Source: National Sleep Foundation, 2014
Causes of Stress in the Financial Aid Office

- Shortage of resources (staff and budgets)
- Increasing aid applicants
- Negative interactions with students
- Verification
- Increasing regulations and oversight
- Others?

Source: NASFAA 2010 Administrative Burden Survey
Two thirds of respondents indicated a resource shortage was their major stressor.

- 80% of those said the shortage was permanent in nature.
- 90% indicated the shortage impacted:
  - Face to face counseling
  - Outreach efforts
  - Attention to target populations

Source: NASFAA 2010 Administrative Burden Survey
Stress Categories

Shown below are the average Stress Index Scores for each of the categories.

- **Time and Work Load**: 15.8
- **Student and Parent Contact**: 13.4
- **Regulations and Training**: 12.4
- **Quality Issues**: 12.1
- **Management**: 11.5
- **Technology**: 9.7

*Source: Inceptia 2013 Survey: Stress in the Financial Aid Office*
5 Steps to Handle Stress

1. Awareness
2. Attitude
3. Action
4. Control
5. Commitment
STEP 1

AWARENESS
Awareness

• You must know your own body so you can recognize stress
  • Increased heart rate
  • Increase in blood pressure
  • Breathing speeds up
  • Sleeplessness
  • Changes in eating habits
  • Susceptible to illness
STEP 2
ATTITUDE
Attitude

• Positive attitude
  • Positive thinking and negative thinking are attitudes – they determine how you handle life situations

• Belief in being able to handle the situation

• View problems as opportunities in disguise

• Train your mind to think in terms of “possible” and “can be done”
“The pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, the optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

Winston Churchill
Attitude

• View life as a series of challenges
• Do not view life as a threat or endless problems
• Seek out challenges – opportunities to grow
• Believe you will learn from the challenges you will face
Attitude

• Change your self talk
• Watch and monitor what you say and how you say it
• Switch your inner voice from “I can’t” to “I can!”
“A man is but the product of his thoughts, what he thinks, he becomes.”

Mahatma Gandhi
Step 3

Action
Action

• Attitude is action in motion!
• Embrace stressful situations
• Learn from others
• Alter your perspective
• Change what you can
• Let go of the rest
• Learn to laugh!
Action

• Learn to say “No”
• Practice relaxation techniques
  • Muscle relaxation
  • Breathing techniques
  • Imagery/visualization
  • Exercise
  • Meditation/prayer
  • Massages
48% of Americans surveyed say they listen to music to reduce stress
40% of Americans surveyed say they read to reduce stress
34% of American surveyed say they watch TV or movies more than 2 hours a day to reduce stress

Source: “Stress in America Survey” published by the American Psychological Association in 2012
Action (cont.)

- Ideas for stress reduction at work
  - Retreats (part day or full day)
    - Team-building
    - Planning
    - Inter-office
  - Potlucks
  - Take breaks and lunches
  - Desk stretching
  - Flexible schedule
“Don’t sweat the small stuff! It’s almost all small stuff.”

Dr. Richard Carlson
STEP 4
CONTROL
• **37%** of Americans surveyed believe they are doing an excellent or very good job of managing stress

• **60%** of Americans surveyed over the past five years are trying to reduce stress

• **53%** of those who responded over the past five years state they are STILL working on reducing their stress level

Source: “Stress in America Survey” published by the American Psychological Association in 2012
Control

- You **must** believe you have control of your life – easy to say, harder to believe!
- You **must** believe you can manage any problem you face
- You **must** develop a positive outlook on life
- “Feeling” in control helps reduce stress
Control

- Respond appropriately to any given situation – act, don’t react!
- Minimize the effects of stress by exploring possible consequences of action or inaction - preparation
  - Remoes fear of the unknown
- Deal with it rationally
- Ask for help
STEP 5

COMMITMENT
Commitment

• Have a mission or purpose for your life
• Be committed to whatever you do
• Believe what you do is meaningful, purposeful and right
  • Financial Aid is an honorable profession
  • Those in it do it because it helps others
  • Dedicated people
Commitment

• Commit to learn from EVERY experience
• By experiencing stress, we learn to deal with stress
• We actually train ourselves to better handle stress
Summary

• It’s not rocket science
• Take control of your life
• Learn to live and enjoy every day, one moment at a time
• After all, the present is all we have
  • The past is gone
  • We have no guarantee on tomorrow
QUESTIONS ARE GUARANTEED IN LIFE; ANSWERS ARE NOT.
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