

Stress Management and Relaxation

Stress — What is it?

- Physical, emotional and behaviour changes in our body in response to a change in the environment.
- Built in response — we cannot shut it off.
- We all have stress at some point.
- Fight or Flight Mechanism — This is how your body protects you from a perceived threat or challenge (stressor).
- Think of a how you can turn up or turn down the volume on TV, our stress response works similarly. If the volume remains high or is persistent it can be very taxing on the body both physically and emotionally.
- Example — How does your body respond if the lights suddenly go off “low volume” compared to if a fire alarm goes off “high volume”.
- There are related health effects of persistent high volume stress. Most health problems (about 80%) are related in some way to stress and coping poorly with it.

Reflect on a stressful situation: how did your body respond?

- Physically
 - Emotionally
 - Behaviourally
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What can cause a stress response in these areas of your life?

- Environmental
- Social
- Daily
- Life events
- Institutional such as being in the hospital, going to school



Stress is a part of life and this we cannot control. What we can control is how we respond and cope with it.

What are some ways to help cope with stress?

- Relaxation strategies deep breathing, positive self-talk, visualization, distraction and relaxation CDs
- Be prepared/plan/set goals
- Pacing or modifying an activity
- Communication (effective open, honest and direct)
- Humour/laughter
- Music
- Self-care sleep, nutrition, hygiene
- Recreation do things you enjoy/bring you pleasure
- Exercise
- Change the environment if possible

What works for you?
