

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

Live Healthy - Live Well
Strategies for Preventing/Reducing Stress

“Life-style” refers to personal behavior and habits such as exercise, eating habits, cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug use, safety, and stress management. Experts tell us that a person’s life-style helps him or her resist the negative effects of stress and prevents stress from becoming a problem. Stress is a normal part of our lives. However, extended periods of stress can be damaging to our livelihood.

Experts in the health management fields describe four types of strategies that can help reduce stress.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF-

Following are some simple things to do that help us to take care of ourselves:

- ✓ **Get physical exercise** – This is the **single most effective method for dealing with stress.**
- ✓ **Practice good nutritional habits** – This includes eating healthy, nutritious foods and avoiding overeating. Also avoid eating a lot of junk foods that are laden with fat and sugar. Eating the right foods allows your body to have the proper fuels that it needs to function. **So, avoid foods that contain a lot of fat and sugar.**
- ✓ **Don’t abuse alcohol or drugs** – Obviously, too much alcohol and drugs impairs your health and your ability to think.
- ✓ **Get enough sleep** – You need a sufficient amount of sleep to function physically and mentally.
- ✓ **Use relaxation methods** – Using methods of relaxation will enable you to control your “fight or flight” emotions as well as help to keep you on a level playing field with life in general.

TAKE IT OUT-

Sometimes we have issues and we dwell on them until we have the opportunity to talk to the party involved. In many or most cases, after talking through the issues, the problem wasn’t as serious as we anticipated. So we had developed an unneeded stress level that wasn’t there to begin with.

Talk with someone else – Talk with someone who cares and whom you trust about how you feel about what is happening in your life. Sometimes having a meaningful conversation with a friend or confidant helps you to see things a little more clearly, which reduces your stress level.

Engage in positive self-talk – Control those voices in your head. Challenge all the negative talk and thoughts and work hard at thinking positive. Negative self-talk increases your stress level while positive self-talk reduces stress.

Refresh events and situations – Look for the silver lining instead of a black cloud. Don’t be like Chicken Little, thinking that the sky is falling. There are ways to improve your dialogue in defining events and situations that will reduce your stress level.

Refrain from certain events and situations -

Sometimes we get into a negative mood, thinking that the world is “caving in” around us, so we put ourselves into a “pity party,” feeling that we are losing control of our demeanor. Then we have to work through it to return to normal. Following are some tips that can aid in developing good habits for a pleasing life-style.

- ✓ **Practice taking responsibility for your choices** – If you are sharing or giving credit or blame with another party, you need to begin the practice of being the “Bell Cow” or “Top Possum,” taking the lead and being the decision maker in your life.
- ✓ **Don’t abuse alcohol or drugs** – How many times have we seen a situation where a person gets into a rut and turns to alcohol or drugs as an “out” or a “crutch”? Obviously, we folks that don’t have this problem have a hard time with those that do. We need to be cognizant of their problems and offer help, if they will allow it.
- ✓ **Develop a sense of independence** – This is an extension of the first tip above. Take responsibility for your choices – this will aid in establishing your independence. Constantly remind yourself that you are capable of making positive choices.
- ✓ **Clarify your values and set priorities** – Sit back and take a look at what is important to you. Once you establish these priorities, you can work with them and feel less stress.
- ✓ **Manage your time** – As you begin to spend more time on the things that are important to you, your stress level will reduce.
- ✓ **Practice writing a daily schedule** – If you will form this habit of preparing a written daily schedule of needs and requirements, you naturally become more organized, and stress levels will reduce.

DEVELOP A SUPPORT SYSTEM-

- ✓ **Build & maintain a strong support system** – Support systems are also known as “networking.” Networking with a group of trusted employees will be a positive in your work and will reduce the stress.
- ✓ **Understand the need for intimacy** – This is not like a love affair, but with a group of trusted employees you can enjoy a “mutual admiration society” that can help you in management decisions and control your stress level.
- ✓ **Learn assertive skills** – In your support system, be cognizant of some individuals that may not have your best interests at heart or understand your management skills. Consult with them so they understand your philosophy and make them feel that they are team players. Having a family or team concept in your work does wonders for reducing stress levels and accomplishing your work goals.

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Excerpts: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/family/livehealthy-livewell>

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WORKING SAFELY
EVERDAY WILL KEEP
THE DOCTOR AWAY
<ALERT TODAY> > ALIVE TOMORROW