

Employee Assistance Program

Your resource for help with daily challenges and difficult situations



April is National Stress Awareness Month

Stress Management

Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances. Stress can affect your emotions, body, and behavior in many different ways. When stressed, your body may react as though you are in danger. When that happens, the body produces hormones that speed up your heart rate, make you breathe faster and give you a burst of energy. This is called the fight-or-flight stress response. You may also feel irritable, angry, anxious, or overwhelmed if you are stressed.

Although we often associate stress as bad, some stress is good for you and can even be beneficial. The right level of stress can help if you need to work hard or react quickly. For example, it can help you win a race or finish a project on time. Some amounts of stress are good to push you to optimal alertness and behavioral and cognitive performance.

Too little stress can lead to performance below your potential, and too much can impair performance. The right stress level for maximum performance is different for each of us. If stress happens too often, lasts too long or is too high, it can have adverse effects. It can be linked to headaches, an upset stomach, chronic pain or trouble sleeping. If you already have a health problem, stress may make it worse. It can make you moody, tense or depressed. Your relationships may also suffer, and you may not do well at work or school.

Tips to Cope With Stress

Stress is a fact of life for most people. While you may not be able to eliminate it, you can look for ways to lower it. Below are some tips to help manage stress.

- Manage your time. Make a schedule, consider the most important things, and do those first.
- Find better ways to cope. Look at how you have been dealing with stress. Be honest about what works and what does not.
- Take care of yourself. Exercise regularly, get plenty of rest, eat well, don't smoke and limit your alcohol intake.
- Reevaluate your thinking. Write down your worries and work on letting go of the things you cannot control or change.
- Focus on the present. Try meditation or guided imagery exercises.
- Let your feelings out. Talk, laugh, cry and express anger when needed.
- Do something you enjoy. Volunteer work or work that helps others can be a great stress reliever
- Ask for help. Building a solid network of friends, supporters and family can be a positive tool for managing stress.

Sometimes stress is too much to handle alone. Talking to a friend or family member may help, but you may also want to speak to a professional.

For more information about stress management, call your Employee Assistance Program at 1-866-EAP-4SOC (1-866-327-4762) TTY: 711 or visit eap.calhr.ca.gov.

Source: Healthwise