WHAT IS STRESS?

You probably have a good idea of what it means to be stressed out-
BUT- WHAT IS STRESS?

We are all familiar with the word "stress". Stress is when you are worried about getting laid off your job, or worried about having enough money to pay your bills, or worried about your mother when the doctor says she may need an operation. In fact, to most of us, stress is synonymous with worry. If it is something that makes you worry, then it is stress.

• Stress is the wear and tear on your body that results from the demands of life
• Stress is an everyday fact of life. You can’t avoid it.
• Stress is any change you must adjust to
• Stress can be positive or negative

Your body, however, has a much broader definition of stress. TO YOUR BODY, STRESS IS SYNONYMOUS WITH CHANGE. Anything that causes a change in your life causes stress. It doesn't matter if it is a "good" change, or a "bad" change, both are stress. Good or bad, if it is a CHANGE in your life, it is stress as far as your body is concerned.

Your Stress Scale

STRESS RESPONSES

There are three basic sources of stress:

• Environment
  o The environment bombards you with demands to adjust (such as weather, noise, demands on your time, outside pressure and performance standards)
• Physiological
  o Stress on your body such as illness, aging, poor nutrition, sleep disturbance, accidents
• Thoughts
  o Your brain interprets and translates complex changes in your environment and determines when to push the panic button.
  o How you interpret, perceive and label your present experience and what you predict for the future can relax you or stress you

Stress begins with your appraisal of the situation
  1. First you ask yourself what is happening and why (cause)
2. Then you determine the situations’ significance to your well-being. You assess how dangerous it is and what resources you have to cope.

3. Stressed, anxious people often feel that events are dangerous and they don’t have the resources to cope.

**BENEFITS OF MANAGING YOUR STRESS**
- You reduce your general level of anxiety
- Your increase your energy and raise your productivity
- You’ll fall asleep more easily and sleep more soundly
- You’ll increase your ability to focus and concentrate
- You’ll feel less irritable
- You’ll decrease the chances of developing psychosomatic disorders (ulcers, migraines, etc.)

**STRESS CHECKLIST**
- 1. I often feel shaky or tremble
- 2. I experience muscular tension or aches
- 3. I feel edge and keyed up
- 4. I am easily tired
- 5. I feel restless most of the time
- 6. I am startled easily
- 7. I feel irritable
- 8. I have problems falling or staying asleep
- 9. I have difficulty concentrating. I keep forgetting things
- 10. I keep worrying all the time. I dwell on problems.

**TEN STRESS BUSTERS**

1. Learn how to set limits- say “no” to certain activities and people. Pare down your schedule so that you have more time for activities meaningful to you.
2. Delegate or share responsibilities or workload when appropriate. Recognize that you cannot do everything.
3. Learn how to prioritize.
4. Take enough “space” or time alone.
5. Give yourself permission to relax.
6. Revise your expectation of yourself and of others. Be realistic so that you don’t feel guilty or agitated when a project isn’t complete by an unrealistic deadline.
7. Improve your nutrition and your exercise or physical activities
8. Communicate your feelings appropriately.
9. Be sure to get support from family and friends
10. Refute the negative thoughts that you have. Negative thoughts produce negative moods. How we perceive a situation affects how we react to it.