

Since 1992, April has been designated as Stress Awareness month. As we are only a few days into April, I thought this would be a great topic to get your month started in the right direction.

According to helpguide.org, “stress is a normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance”. How we handle stress is just as important as figuring out the cause, and relieving it. Like most things in life there are good and bad stresses. The good ones are the ones that keep us on our toes during work, while driving or while competing in sports. The bad stress is caused when you are feeling overwhelmed and depressed. You know that feeling where if just one more thing goes wrong you’re going to break, well those emotions(stressors) will be what causes the most mental and physical harm.

Learning how to recognize and then controlling your stress levels is a key element to your mental & physical well-being. Stress has a tendency to slowly creep up on us as we keep handling and handling until each step just starts to seem more normal and part of a daily routine. Here are some examples of symptoms of stress: memory problems, poor judgment, constant worrying, moodiness, agitation or an inability to relax, sense of loneliness, nausea, dizziness, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, eating more or less, isolating yourself from others, using alcohol or drugs to relax. Each one of these symptoms can cause further health issues. Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body.

One thing I found out in my research was that some of the happiest events in our lives are also the most stressful, for example high school or college graduation, planning a wedding, having a baby, buying a new car or house and even receiving that promotion you have been working toward.

Now that we know some of the causes, what do we do about them and how do we calm ourselves? If you are aware of your stress levels, then you probably have ways of dealing with them. For me, I tend to take a walk or turn on music, during my high school years living in Ventura CA; the beach was always my go to place. Just sitting and listening to the waves would calm most everyone. A quick survey of my co-workers’ stress busters reveals everything from a warm bath to exercise to yoga & deep breathing practices as well as gardening and playing with pets.

Just remember that every one of us has it within ourselves to reduce the impact of stress as its

happening. Managing stress is all about taking control and changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, taking care of yourself and making time for rest and relaxation. Also, know that you are not the only one battling stress. Talking things out or venting can be very beneficial in helping to calm your stress levels. Letting loose of the reins will also help. No one person can do everything without help and as difficult as it can be to ask for help, know that your health may depend on it. Keeping children stress free is also important as they do not have the mental fortitude to deal with it in a healthy way. Symptoms of stress in children are mood swings, acting out, changes in sleep and even bedwetting. One of the simplest things to help reduce their stress is putting aside yours and just spending time with them.

Hope this has been helpful and remember when you start feeling pressure, recognize it for what it is and deal with it calmly. Take a walk, pet a dog or

do whatever you have to keep yourself calm and happy.

Keep Smiling

Gina