

STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

Tips for Stress Awareness Month

Everyone experiences stress, but that doesn't mean we all experience it the same way. Your definition of stress may be very different from your spouse, friend or co-worker's definition. The most common description, however, is a physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension, often in reaction to a situation where a person feels anxious or threatened. Learning to cope with stress and finding healthy ways to deal with difficult situations can go a long way to helping you live a healthy and positive life.

SIGNS OF STRESS

Common reactions to a stressful event include:

- Disbelief, shock and numbness
- Feeling sad, frustrated and helpless
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Headaches, back pains and stomach problems
- Smoking or the use of alcohol or drugs

Long-term stress can affect more than just your mind — from headaches and stomach disorders to depression. Even serious issues like stroke and heart disease can come as a result of stress.

LEARN TO LET GO

Sometimes we do not have the power to change the source of stress in our lives. It is important to learn how to overcome issues you cannot control. Try to...

- Recognize when you don't have control, and let it go.
- Avoid getting anxious about situations you cannot change.
- Take control of your reactions and focus your mind on something that makes you feel calm and in control.
- Develop a vision for healthy



living, wellness and personal growth, and set realistic goals to help you realize your vision.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Learning healthy ways to cope and getting the proper care and support can help reduce stressful feelings and symptoms. Here are some tips to try when you're feeling stressed:

- Take care of yourself — eat healthy, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, give yourself a break if you feel stressed.
- Share how you are feeling with a family member, friend, doctor, pastor or counselor.

- Avoid drugs and alcohol. These can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- Recognize when you need more help — know when to talk to a psychologist, social worker or counselor, if things continue.

The most valuable takeaway here is knowing when to talk to others about your stress. And remember this goes both ways — in recognition of Stress Awareness Month in April, be ready to listen and support anyone who may come to you with their own issues.

— Adapted from stress.org