



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department
"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

For more information, please call: (989) 773-5921 ext. 8409
2012 E. Preston Avenue, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858, www.cmdhd.org

TO: Senior Newsletter

FROM: Shelli Wolfe, Health Educator

Release Date: August 2011

RE: Relieving Stress

Stress is a normal part of life. In small quantities, stress is helpful -- it can motivate you and help you be more productive. However, too much stress, or a strong response to stress, is harmful. It can set you up for general poor health, as well as physical and psychological illnesses like infection, heart disease, and depression. Ongoing stress can lead to anxiety and unhealthy behaviors, like overeating and abuse of alcohol or drugs.

Stress can come from any situation or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, nervous, worried, or even anxious. What is stressful to one person may not be stressful to another. Anxiety is a feeling of apprehension or fear which is related to stress. Anxiety can be accompanied by physical symptoms such as: abdominal pain, diarrhea, dizziness, dry mouth or difficulty swallowing, headaches, muscle tension, rapid breathing, irregular heart rate, sweating, and shaking. Sometimes anxiety can lead to difficulties with sleep and concentration.

The most effective solution to reducing stress and anxiety is to find and address the source of it. This can be difficult, because the causes may not be conscious. A first step is to think about what might be making you "stressed out". Try to be as honest with yourself and ask yourself these questions:

- What do you worry about most?
- Is something constantly on your mind?
- Is there something that you fear will happen?
- Does anything in particular make you sad or depressed?
- Are your thoughts adding to your anxiety in some situations?

If you are not able to identify the cause of your stress or you need help reducing it, find someone you trust (friend, family member, clergy) who will listen to you. Often, just talking to a

friend or loved one is all that you need to relieve anxiety. Most communities also have support groups and hotlines that can help. Social workers, psychologists, and psychiatrists can be very effective in helping you reduce anxiety through therapy or medication. Sometimes changes in your behavior can reduce stress. For example, getting enough sleep, eating a well-balanced diet, and exercising regularly can all help to reduce stress in your body.

Research indicates that older adults who seek out professional help for their stress or anxiety, benefited considerably from these services. Learning techniques for stress reduction is essential in restoring inner peace and physical health. Some stress relievers that can help you feel less affected by stress in your life include: writing in a journal, meditation, breathing, playing games, laughter, taking a walk, gardening, listening to music, eating a balanced diet, learning assertive communication skills, and reducing caffeine intake.

Medical science is making remarkable discoveries about how your state of mind can affect your mental and physical health. Simple things like smiling, laughing, deep breathing, and spending time with others can increase your feelings of wellness. Laughing can help relieve stress, lower blood pressure, boost immune and brain function, and help you feel connected to others. Deep breathing can help you to relax, think clearer, and feel better.

The way that you think and feel about things can affect your mental and physical health. The more we do to feel good about ourselves, the better we can actually feel. Remembering to let yourself smile, laugh, and enjoy the company of others can increase your feelings of wellness.

This article has been provided by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the local residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola, and Roscommon Counties. Visit our website at www.cmdhd.org

###