



Signs of Stress



We know that we have to fill a car's gas tank before the gauge is on empty. The gas gauge is a signal that it's time to stop and get more fuel. As well, when cars hit potholes or curbs, tires get out of alignment and the car has trouble driving straight. A shaky wheel is a signal that alignment is needed. When oil is left unchanged for a long time, it causes other parts of the car to not work and break down. Odd noises under the hood, trouble starting the car, and sometimes smoke are signals that maintenance is needed.

Just like a car, our bodies also signal when we need to take care of ourselves. These signals are sometimes called "stress signals." We sometimes experience physical, emotional, mental, and behavioral signs.

What are some things that happen to you when you are stressed?

Physical

- Headache
- Body aches
- Heart pounds and breathe fast
- Upset stomach
- Feel very tired
- Not hungry
- Want to eat all the time
- Muscles tighten up

Emotional/Mental

- Worry something bad will happen
- Feel helpless or overwhelmed
- Feel frustrated
- Become moody or grouchy
- Cannot concentrate
- Think people are disappointed in you
- Have trouble remembering things
- Get nervous and can't relax

Other "stress signals" you experience:

What are some ways your partner and your partner's body responds to stress?

Feeling stressed is not a bad thing. In fact, sometimes it can push us to do well or do something positive. But, sometimes how we respond to stress can harm us and could hurt others whom we care about. When we feel stressed, the first step in handling our stress is to understand how it makes us feel. Help those you care about, and who care about you, understand your stress signals.

When you start noticing your stress signals use healthy coping strategies to make yourself healthier.

When you are healthy, your relationship with others will be healthier!



Managing Stress



When it comes to stress, sometimes we need to take care of ourselves before we can care for others. How we take care of ourselves and react to stress is important. There are many ways to cope with stress. Some are healthy and some are not.

What are some ways that you deal with stress?

HEALTHY

- Go for a walk or exercising
- Meditation
- Read a relaxing book
- Listen to music
- Do a favorite hobby
- Eat just enough healthy food
- Go to religious services
- Pray
- Get enough sleep at night
- Seek help from a professional
- Talk to your partner or a close friend
- Write your concerns down in a journal
- Think positive thoughts
- Look for the good in your life

UNHEALTHY

- Yell, shout, scream, or curse
- Dwell on things that make you angry
- Smoke
- Drink
- Use drugs
- Hurt yourself or others
- Eat unhealthy food
- Eat too much or too little
- Sleep too much or too little
- Buy things you do not really need
- Avoid being with or talking to others
- Complain a lot to others
- Take things out on other people
- Destroy or damage things

List other healthy coping strategies you use:

List other unhealthy coping strategies you use:

Make an Action Plan:

How can you use more healthy coping strategies the next time you feel stressed?

What do you need to help you cope with stress?

Who can you turn to for help when you are stressed?

When we are healthy, our relationships with others are healthier!



Goals for Better Health



Many of us want to take better care of ourselves, but it is not always easy. We might not think we have enough time, money, or energy to do things that will help us be healthier. But, if we focus on our strengths and what we already do or have in our lives, we set ourselves on a path to success.

Taking steps to live a healthy life starts by first understanding what we already do well and then deciding what else we can do to improve.

Read through the list below and mark some of the ways you already take good care of yourself:

- Get enough sleep (not too much, not too little)
- Keep a regular sleep schedule
- Eat a variety of healthy foods
- Rest when my body tells me to
- Limit alcohol intake
- Avoid drugs
- Talk with others when I feel stressed
- Get regular exercise
- Spend some quiet time alone each day

What are some other ways you already take good care of yourself?

What are some ways you would like to take better care of yourself?

How can you make those changes? Come up with specific goals that you can reach.

What else might need to change for you to be successful?

When we share our goals with others, they can check-in from time to time to offer support and encouragement. Who can you turn to for help in reaching your goals?

When you take care of yourself it is easier to take care of others!