

### 3. Stress Management

Stress is a part of our everyday life. There is good stress which is called eustress because it helps us to perform at our peak levels but after prolonged exposure to stress it becomes "harmful" stress or what is known as distress and our performance declines.

There are two sources of stress, external triggers and internal triggers. External stressors include things like losing a job, having an ill family member, or financial worries. Internal stressors are often self-generated. These include putting high demands and expectations on ourselves. The good news is that since we generate much of our stress we can also do things to reduce it, however to do so requires change.

#### Exercise : Stress Test

**These questions apply to the last month only. Circle your answers and add them up. The key is below for scoring.**

1) How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

0=never      3=fairly often  
1=almost    4=very often  
2=sometimes

2) How often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

0=never      3=fairly often  
1=almost    4=very often  
2=sometimes

3) How often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?

0=never      3=fairly often  
1=almost    4=very often  
2=sometimes

4) How often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

0=never      3=fairly often

1=almost    4=very often

2=sometimes

5) How often have you felt that things were going your way?

0=never      3=fairly often

1=almost    4=very often

2=sometimes

6) How often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

0=never      3=fairly often

1=almost    4=very often

2=sometimes

7) How often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?

0=never      3=fairly often

1=almost    4=very often

2=sometimes

8) How often have you felt that you were on top of things?

0=never      3=fairly often

1=almost    4=very often

2=sometimes

9) How often have you been angered because of things that were outside your control?

0=never      3=fairly often

1=almost    4=very often

2=sometimes

10) How often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

0=never      3=fairly often

1=almost    4=very often

2=sometimes

Stress levels vary among individuals. Compare your total score to the averaged below"

Age	Gender	Marital Status
18-29 ----- 14.2	Men -----12.1	Widowed -----12.6
30-44 -----13.0	Women---13.7	Married or living -----12.4 with someone
45-54 -----12.6		Single or never wed---14.1
55-64 -----11.9		Divorced -----14.7
65 & over -12.0		Separated -----16.6

Stress test found in Newsweek June 14, 1999, page 63.

**Tips for reducing and managing stress:**

1. Decrease or discontinue use of caffeine. Caffeine is a strong stimulant that creates a stress response in your body.
2. Exercise regularly. Exercise can help to "burn off" the energy generated by stress.
3. Pace yourself through the day. Give yourself a break every 2-3 hours. Take a time out and go for a walk, listen to music or sit quietly.
4. Realize that we all have limits. Learn to work within your limits and set realistic expectations for yourself and others. Learn how to communicate your limits and expectations effectively to others.
5. Get a good night sleep.
6. Plan leisure activities to break up your day/week.
7. Learn to reframe situations to see the positive aspects as well.
8. Recognize and challenge beliefs that are no longer accurate and cause you distress. For example "You should never be late."
9. Allow time to ventilate and get support from friends or family.
10. Finally, learn to laugh and find humor in your life. Humor is a great tension reducer.

## Resources

### **Individual Help**

Individual Stress Management Consultations: Individual consultations are available for University of Michigan patients, their families, and community members who wish to be personally instructed in stress management skills such as mindfulness meditation, guided imagery, bodyscan, breathing techniques, progressive muscle relaxation, and yoga. This is a good option for people who are more comfortable working in a one-on-one format and want a program tailored to their individual preferences and needs. Individual stress management sessions are 1 hour in length and can be scheduled through the Preventive Cardiology at 734-998-7400. Cost: \$70 for 1-hour session

### **Classes**

**Beginning Meditation:** This 4-week training is designed for people new to meditation. This is a technique that can be practiced alone, without equipment or expense. It is an amazing mind/body tool that has proven to be effective in managing high blood pressure, sleep disorders, lifestyle changes, habit management, and physical or emotional pain. For more information please call 734-998-5679. (Ann Arbor)

**Deepening Meditation:** This 5-week series is for meditators who have finished the first training (Beginning Meditation) and/or those who have had a personal meditation practice for at least several months. The sessions are designed to help those who are sincerely trying to make meditation a part of their everyday lives. It introduces new strategies and provides participants with the support of a community of other practicing meditators. For more information please call 734-998-5679. (Ann Arbor)

**Restoring Balance:** Tools for Stress Management: Learn ways to feel an increased sense of control and calm. In this course, participants learn to manage stress from the inside out using techniques that bring a sense of well-being, insight and a positive attitude. A supportive group atmosphere makes this a relaxing and insightful experience. For more information please call 734-998-5679 (Ann Arbor)

### **Websites**

<http://www.ivf.com/stress.html> Useful information on stress.

<http://www.optimalhealthconcepts.com/>  
For a comprehensive list of sites related to stress management.

<http://www.unl.edu/stress/mgmt/>  
Educational information about stress and stress management.

<http://www.hws.edu/studentlife/resources/counseling/relax.asp>

This link provides a guided progressive muscle relaxation session.

[http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN\\_HTE.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_HTE.htm)

This site has information about time management that can be downloaded for a fee and also has information about stress management.

<http://www.studyqs.net/timman.htm> Useful scheduling information for time management.

[http://counseling.uchicago.edu/resources/virtualpamphlets/time\\_management.shtml](http://counseling.uchicago.edu/resources/virtualpamphlets/time_management.shtml) Useful information on time management.

## **Books**

The Everything Stress Management Book: Practical Ways to Relax, Be Healthy, and Maintain Your Sanity (Everything Series) (Paperback)

by [Eve Adamson](#)

Stress Management for Dummies (Paperback)

by [Allen Elkin](#)

### **Disclaimer:**

This written information is not intended as a substitute for medical or mental health care advice. Please be sure to discuss any questions or concerns you may have with a professional person.