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STARK COUNTY
Mental Health &
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STRESS

MANAGEMENT

POCKET PAL

WHAT IS STRESS?
Everybody experiences stress. It's the body's natural reaction to tension, pressure, and change. And a certain amount of stress helps to make life more challenging and less boring.

However, too much stress can be bad for you — both physically and mentally.

Prolonged, unrelieved stress can lead to accidental injury, as well as to serious illness. For the sake of your health, safety, and happiness, it's important to recognize and manage stress before it gets the best of you.

RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF

STRESS

- Headaches
- Upset stomach
- Feeling of being "uptight"
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Diarrhea
- Lack of energy
- Loss of hope
- Poor concentration
- Overeating or skipping meals
- Frequent colds
- Panic attacks
- Anger
- Feeling of powerlessness
- Forgetfulness
- Indigestion
- Muscle tension or soreness
- Grinding or gritting teeth
- Inability to make decisions
- Sadness or lack of interest
- Inability to sleep, sleepiness, or oversleeping
- New or increased use of tobacco products, alcohol, or other drugs

Many of these complaints can be caused by medical conditions, but often they are the body's and mind's reaction to poorly managed stress. See other side for ways to keep stress under control in your everyday life.

20 WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS

1. Think positively and surround yourself by others who think the same.
2. Avoid the trap of demanding too much of yourself. Get help if tasks are too big for you.
3. Accept that you can't control every situation and learn to be flexible.
4. At the start of each day, write down your list of things to do, then set reasonable priorities.
5. Divide big tasks into smaller, more manageable ones.
6. Eat a well-balanced diet, full of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Limit sugar.
7. Get plenty of sleep each night.
8. Include moderate exercise into each day to boost your energy level and improve your mood.
9. Make time for relaxation. Try listening to soothing music, meditating, gardening, playing with a pet, reading a good book, or doing whatever helps you relax.
10. Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. They only make matters worse.
11. Use mistakes and setbacks as opportunities to learn.
12. If possible, say "NO" to tasks that you know will be stressful for you.
13. Confide in at least one friend, and share your disappointments, as well as achievements, with him or her; talk things out so that minor frustrations don't build up.
14. Be ready to admit when you are wrong.
15. Eliminate everyday sources of stress such as loud music playing or clutter in your surroundings.
16. Laugh! Look for the humor in life and take time to have fun.
17. Remember, it's OK to cry.
18. Practice deep breathing. Get in a comfortable position. Take in a slow, deep breath through your nose to the count of 5. Hold your breath for another 5 count. Then exhale through your mouth to the count of 5.
19. Prolonged sitting contributes to stress, so add activity to your daily routine by doing such simple things as taking the stairs instead of the elevator, standing or walking while on the telephone, etc.
20. Make anti-stress stretches a part of your day.

SIX ANTI-STRESS STRETCHES



FINGER FAN:
Extend your arms straight in front of you with palms up. Spread your fingers as far apart as possible. Hold for 5 seconds.



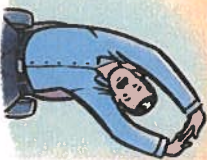
UPPER BACK STRETCH:
Sit up straight with your fingers interlaced behind your head. Lift your chest and bring your elbows back as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds.

EAR TO SHOULDER:
Lower your right ear to your right shoulder. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

OVERHEAD REACH:
Raise your arms over head and interlace your fingers with palms facing up. Keeping your shoulders down, stretch upwards. Hold for 20 seconds.



KNEE PULL:
While seated, bring one knee up toward your chest as high as possible. Hold with both hands for 10 seconds. Repeat for other knee.



WAIST BEND:
Reach arms over head with fingers laced together, facing forward with shoulders down, bend to one side from the waist. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat to other side.