



Kinship Link

Volume 14, Issue 11

November 2018

Pro Kinship for Kids

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Pro Kinship for Kids
Lower level Our Saviors
Lutheran Church
1400 S. State Street
P.O. Box 666
New Ulm, MN 56073
Phone 359-2445 or
1-800-642-5779
Website:
www.prokinship.org

Newsletter by
Kari Beran, Director



Stress Coping Methods

What is stress? Stress is the response to a perceived demand, internal or external, on our mind, body, or emotions. Stress may also be defined as the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change.

Importance of Coping with Stress

Not all stress is bad stress, as the reactions in our bodies created by stress can help save us from dangerous or negative situations. Chronic stress or stress that results when a stressful situation persists for a long time, can have negative consequences on mental, physical, and emotional health. Some of the consequences of chronic stress may be short-term ailments or conditions such as headaches, digestive issues, sleeplessness, or irritability. Also, people under stress may be more prone to viral infections like the common cold or the flu. Other consequences of chronic stress may be long-term, serious health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, or anxiety disorder.

Methods of Coping with Stress

The first step in coping with stress is recognizing

the signs that you may be experiencing stress. Signs that you may be stressed include difficulty sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, poor concentration, being easily angered, feeling depressed, and having low energy.

In order to help your body control stress, practice general healthy habits every day such as:

- * Eating a healthy diet
- * Getting enough sleep each night
- * Getting at least thirty minutes of exercise on five different days each week
- * Moderating caffeine intake
- * Keeping in touch with friends or loved ones who are sources of emotional support
- * Obtaining proper healthcare

Specific coping techniques that may help you during times of greater stress.

- **Time-out your worries** - When you are feeling overwhelmed and you cannot seem to focus, call a time-out for yourself. Set a timer for 5, 10, or 15 minutes and write down everything that you are worried about. When the buzzer sounds, put

away your worries and allow yourself to move on. By setting aside time, you are able to address your worries and they will not take over your day!

- **Make a worry box** - Find any box, decorate it however you like, and keep it in a handy place. As a worry occurs write it down on a piece of paper and drop it into the box. Once your worry is deposited in the box, try to turn your attention to other matters. At the end of the week or month, you can throw out the notes without looking at them again or review them to see if they are as much of an issue as they once were. Putting your worries in the worry box symbolizes mentally letting go of your worries.
- **Recognize your accomplishments at the end of each day** - Try a journaling exercise at the end of the day in which you list what you have accomplished that day. This will remind you that amidst the stress of your day, you still are making progress towards your goals.

Stress Coping Methods continued

- **Manage priorities** - Decide what must be done and what can wait. Learn to say no to new tasks until you feel you are no longer overloaded.
- **Schedule regular times for relaxing activities** - If your schedule only includes the things you have to do, make it a point to include things that you want to do. If you include things that you enjoy in your schedule, you can take a break from the activities that may produce stress.
- **Mindfulness in meditation** - Includes sitting comfortably, focusing on your breathing, and then bringing your mind's attention to the present without drifting into concerns about the past or future.
- **Yoga and Thai Chi** - These graceful forms of exercise use gentle, flowing movements and can help reduce stress levels. Sometimes called "meditation in motion", these non-competitive forms of exercise promote serenity.
- **Surround yourself with humor** - Be open to humor and allow yourself to laugh in pleasant and tough times. Laughing can aid in our body's natural defense system, the immune system, by allowing the release of our negative thoughts and feelings including stress.
- **Immerse yourself in nature** - Our environment can play a big role in our stress level. Exposure to nature not only makes you feel better emotionally, it contributes to your physical wellbeing, reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and promotes the production of stress hormones.
- **Massage** - Massage therapy has been shown to reduce perceived levels of stress among people. Even short five-minute hand or foot massages can help.

Water - The Body's Most Valuable Liquid Asset

It is easy to ignore water most of the time. Unless we are thirsty, we probably take water for granted. Maybe we think about drinking water when the weather is hot, or when we are exercising. No matter what the weather or situation, it is time for us to give water - one of the body's most essential nutrients - some well-earned attention.

We all know that water is vital to life. It is the most abundant substance in our bodies. An average adult's body weight is 55 - 75% water. Each of us contains about 10 - 12 gallons of water. Males carry a higher percentage of water than females. Muscle tissue is about 73% water, while body fat is about 25% water. Even bones are 22% water.

Water plays a number of important roles in the body. It regulates body temperature, carries nutrients and oxygen to cells, removes waste, cushions joints, and protects organs and tissues. Since the brain is 70% water, blood is 82% water, and the

lungs are nearly 90% water, it is easy to see how even mild dehydration can cause problems.

It doesn't have to be hot, humid weather outside for our bodies to need water. We don't need to have just completed a grueling gym workout to need hydration. In fact, cold weather leads to an increased need for fluids. Why? When the temperature drops, the body works even harder to maintain a normal temperature. In addition, heated room air can cause skin to lose moisture. It is important to note that thirst is actually a symptom of dehydration. To avoid problems brought about by dehydration, experts encourage drinking water before, during, and after working out, and before we experience thirst.

Not only is water a necessary part of every system in the body, and in all weather conditions, but the water we do have is also lost from the body in a variety of ways. Water is expelled from the body by

the skin as perspiration, by the lungs as water vapor exhaled, by the kidneys as urine, and by the intestine in feces. We need 8 to 12 glasses of water a day to maintain healthy, adequate hydration.

The average American only consumes 4.6 servings of water a day. Another concern noted is that many of the popular beverages Americans drink are somewhat dehydrating. These drinks, including coffee, carbonated soda with caffeine, tea, beer and wine, may actually have a diuretic effect on the body.

