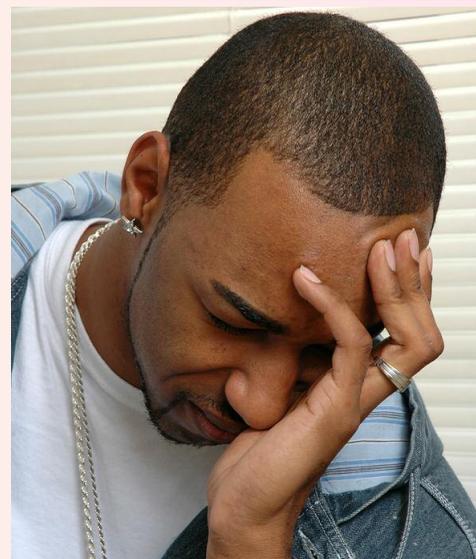


Coping with stress



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WHAT IS STRESS?

WHEN WE ARE EXPOSED to demands, change and threats our bodies respond with many physical changes collectively referred to as the Stress Response. Sometimes this experience can be exciting and pleasurable, and other times it can be frightening and worrying.

We all need a certain amount of stress, or else our lives would be boring and empty. However, when excessive amounts of stress are experienced for prolonged periods of time (Chronic Stress) our bodies become exhausted by constant activity. If we don't manage stress it can damage us both physically and emotionally.

How does stress affect my heart?

Some of the physical changes included in the stress response are increased blood pressure and the release of fatty acids and glucose into the blood stream. These changes take place in order to help us fuel the muscles so that we can take action to protect ourselves.

But when we are under chronic stress the levels of fats and cholesterol circulating in the blood stream increase and our blood is likely to clot more quickly. These conditions are potentially dangerous for our hearts.

Furthermore, in an attempt to cope with chronic stress, we may smoke, drink alcohol, overeat or become more sedentary. All of these behaviours are risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

How can I tell when I am under chronic stress?

It is often difficult to take an

objective view of yourself to see how stressed you really are. However, some common signs of stress may be easier to spot. Do you:

- Easily snap and shout at those around you?
- Often feel close to tears?
- Have reduced sex drive?
- Sleep badly?
- Fidget, pace, bite your nails or fiddle with your hair?
- Find it hard to concentrate and impossible to make decisions?
- Find it increasingly difficult just to talk to people?
- Eat when you are not hungry or skip meals altogether?
- Feel tired most of the time?
- Feel suspicious of others?
- Drink alcohol or smoke to help you through your day?
- Feel that you just cannot cope?

If you answer "yes" to four or

more of these questions, then you may be suffering the effects of chronic stress. Of course, there are a wide range of other physical, emotional and behavioural symptoms of stress exhaustion.

How can I manage stress?

Create a Balanced Lifestyle . . . that includes everything you need on a regular basis:

Occupation: Be involved in an activity that gives us a sense of purpose and satisfaction.

Recreation: Be sure to schedule "fun" on a regular basis. Also make time for hobbies and quiet activities which will absorb your attention away from your worries, for example: gardening, playing a sport, listening to soothing music, painting, craft activities, and so on.

Exercise: Getting physically active helps you to release the tied up energy of stress while also strengthening your body. Furthermore, exercise helps you to

clear the fat from your blood stream.

Nutrition: Eating a balanced and healthy diet gives your body the basic tools for coping with increased demands.

Support System: Interaction with people fills a human need for companionship and sharing. You need people who will listen to your problems, understand and support you. You need people who will challenge you to be more than you think you can be. You need people with whom you can let down your guard and have a good time.

Make changes that would reduce your exposure to stressful experiences

- Know your limitations and learn to say "no" to excessive requests or demands.
- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Make changes that would enable you to avoid unpleasant

conditions.

- Take regular holidays.
- Face your work or relationship problems and find solutions.
- Be aware of those tasks, situations or demands that are particularly stressful for you so that you can purposely intersperse pleasant experiences among them.

- Schedule in 'down time'. Rather than working through lunch every day, plan at least one outing a week where you meet with friends other than your work colleagues. Learn to plan a completely work-free weekend every other weekend. Your attitude will be refreshed and your energy replenished.

Utilise positive self-talk Replace negative and overly demanding self-statements with those that are more flexible, accepting and positive.

Provide your body with regular intervals for relaxation.

Give your body the opportunity to truly relax by following structured exercises for a few minutes several times a week. These activities enable you to release your worries and bring your body into a state of true restfulness. They may include Progressive Muscle Relaxation, Deep-Breathing, Imagery or Meditation.

Highs and lows of sodium

SODIUM is a mineral. The main dietary source of sodium is common table salt (sodium chloride), which is 40 per cent sodium and 60 per cent chloride, but regular unprocessed foods contain natural sodium as well. Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk and cheese all contribute sodium. The Dietary Guidelines for healthy adults recommends limiting dietary intake to less than 2 400 milligrams (mg) per day.

How to choose low salt foods when eating out

It requires greater effort to avoid sodium when eating out, because you can't always tell by looking at the menu which items are high in sodium. It often depends on how the restaurant prepares the meal, what ingredients they use, and how much sodium they add. Here are some ways to avoid sodium when dining out.

- Try to choose restaurants where the food is made to order.
- Ask for the nutrition information and choose lower sodium foods.
- Ethnic foods such as Asian or Mexican often have lots of sodium. Ask the server to help you make lower sodium choices.
- When you eat out, try to eat very low sodium items the rest of the day.

Tips on low salt diet

- Salt is also called sodium on food labels. Read food labels to find sodium content
- Try to buy reduced sodium and sodium free foods
- Limit the salt you add to dishes at the table
- Snack on fruits and vegetables which are almost salt free

These foods are high in salt

- Meat products: bacon, ham, burgers, hotdogs
- Canned fish: tuna, salmon, sardine in brine, salted water or oil
- Sauces: cooking sauces, pasta sauce, curry, stir fry sauces
- Pizza toppings and sandwich fillings: cured meats, olives
- Condiments: tomato ketchup, salad dressing, mayonnaise
- Soups: tinned, instant
- Instant mashed potato products, chips with coating, potato waffles, potato wedges,

Some better choices are:

- Fresh lean cuts of meat
- Canned fish in spring water, fresh fish
- Fresh and dried herbs, garlic, ginger, fresh lemon, salt free seasonings
- Home-made soup with no added salt
- Fresh potatoes no added salt
- Unsalted potato crisps, unsalted nuts, plain popcorn.

Looking for the Right Fit?

Chief Executive Officer for an NGO

Our client, the **Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB)**, is seeking to recruit a dynamic individual with strong principles, business acumen and commitment to national/community development to join their team as **Chief Executive Officer**.

The successful candidate will be responsible for the operations of the HSFB and the leadership of staff. This individual will be responsible for the development and implementation of the operational and marketing plans and the annual budget for the HSFB. This individual will report to the Board of the HSFB.

The ideal candidate should have an undergraduate degree and/or equivalent qualification with a solid background in business financial management, administration or public affairs, and be au fait with typical business computer applications. The candidate is required to have a thorough understanding of and experience in marketing, human resources, planning and organisational development. Experience in working with charitable organisations and volunteer boards is preferred. Knowledge and understanding of some or all of the following – advocacy, research, health promotion and fund development would be a definite asset.

Remuneration: A package commensurate with the successful candidate's qualifications and experience is being offered.

Applications from individuals who feel that they possess the technical competencies as well as the drive and enthusiasm required, should be forwarded to the address below to reach us no later than February 16, 2009. All applications must be accompanied by a detailed Curriculum Vitae with current salary details and the names, addresses and telephone numbers of two business references.



- ▶ "Career Path", Caribbean Catalyst Inc., P.O.Box 152, Bridgetown, St. Michael, Barbados
- ▶ Tel: (246) 426-0821 ▶ Fax: (246) 426-3971
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