

Recognizing Stressors

Can you tell by the sound of your car's engine that your car is in need of repair? Can you tell when you are developing a cold? Knowing how to recognize our stress response is similar to paying attention to the cues your car or your nose is giving! We can prevent major stress reactions by paying attention to the symptoms that our bodies give us.

Try this exercise. Watch an exciting television show (if you can find one!) Pay attention to your heartbeat. Can you feel it pounding? Take your pulse. How fast is it? Are your muscles tense? Do feel butterflies in your stomach? By monitoring your body's reaction to stress, you can learn to recognize the habit of being "uptight." You can then lower your stress level by incorporating stress management techniques.

How have you managed stress in the past? Do you keep it to your self, cry, or become inward. Do you blame others, become angry, and turn it outward? Do you procrastinate by putting things off, refusing to think about it? Do you strew over it, seeking out others to share in your misery. Do you try to look at the situation realistically and identify alternatives for managing the problem? Our management of stress may be adaptive in that we use effective problem solving strategies to reduce the stressor. It might be maladaptive in that the source of stress is not dealt with effectively. It crosses over into other areas of our lives making us less than pleasant and non-productive.

Try this.....There is a chart attached labeled as a stress chart. List 3 major stressors, which you have experienced over the last 6 months. For each stressor describe how you responded. In other words, describe how it was managed and indicate whether your response was effective for you. For those you find to be maladaptive, describe how you could have more effectively managed a response.

List your stressors in the column called stressor. Next to each stressor, quantify the stress level from 0-10, with 0 being no stress and 10 being the maximum amount of stress that you feel you have experienced.

The stress score goes in the column labeled: score." An example might be an exam scheduled within the next few weeks. You give it a score of "8". Ways to reduce the stress might be studying 3 hours each day, arranging baby sitting for your children, joining a study group, or canceling volunteer activities.

If you have ideas for the Give it a SHOT sessions on Wednesdays from 2pm-3 pm send them to me. And know you are not alone. There are resources to help you---and YOU are your own best asset!

