

Increasing Happiness, Decreasing Stress

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With all the talk of gloom and doom, redundancies, business downturn and global recession, no wonder many of us feel under stress at work – but what do we actually mean by this?

Quite simply, it is when the normal pressure we all need to motivate us to get out of bed in the morning becomes too high for maintaining a healthy balance. Interestingly, the DWP have outlawed the use of the word stress. They now refer to it as “Abnormal Work Pressure”.

The challenge is that we all respond to different levels of stress. As an ex hospital doctor I used to thrive on the cut and thrust of the emergency room; for others this environment was just too much.

The one thing we do recognise is that when this pressure becomes too great, we can suffer from a range of symptoms that can have a significant health impact on us, both in the short and longer term.

Having worked with our clients in many crisis situations, I have observed a range of responses to the high levels of stress these situations invariably create. Some people seem to cope better than others and it has always fascinated me to observe the different coping strategies that people adopt.

Here are my top tips which I have divided into the physical and psychological. Whilst for many, tackling everything all at once would be a great challenge, you can start on one area in your life and make changes, and you will start reaping the rewards quickly.

Physical

- Eat healthily. Research shows there is a strong link to the amount of meat and dairy produce we eat and a whole host of diseases (as a third time Weight-watchers attendee I still love all the wrong foods)
- If overweight, work on reducing weight. Why not join a weight loss group?
- Exercise – 3 times a week of moderate exercise is good. Some sources now even advocate exercising for 30 minutes, 5 times a week
- If you smoke, try cutting down, even better stop.
- Don't turn to drugs and drink – if you are using these to excess try and cut down – if necessary, seek professional help

Psychological/emotional

- Accept responsibility for your own actions
- Remember in life we can't control the events that happen all around us, but we do have a choice on how we react to these events, and our reactions have a major impact on our psychological well-being
- If you've had a disagreement with someone, try a little introspection and reflection. Can you try and see the other person's point of view? How do you know you are right? Ultimately, it is about perceptions. We all see things in our own way, based on our own life experiences.
- Try some relaxation techniques - learn to meditate or learn how to do self – hypnosis
- Take time out for yourself, indulge in a little of what you fancy (preferably if it does not involve any of the above sins!)

The sad fact is that the more stressed we are, the harder many of these recommendations become to follow. So now is the best time to start, before the storm hits. The good news is that you can play a major role in determining your own wellbeing.

Top tips:

Exercise regularly

Eat less meat and dairy

Decrease alcohol and stop smoking

Learn to relax

Take responsibility for your actions

Don't take yourself too seriously

Give unconditionally

Dr. David Perl, ex medic and company director, has been giving keynote talks internationally on the subject of “How to increase happiness and decrease stress”.

He takes an educational, enlightening and humorous approach. He has a unique perspective as a result of life as a doctor and running a crisis management business for the past 10 years. Here's what people have said about his talks:

- The points raised were extremely relevant and I saw this as 'the' presentation to which many others should aspire
- From the very start of this presentation the audience was engaged and made to feel very much at home
- This was a fabulous presentation looking at health and wellbeing in the workplace