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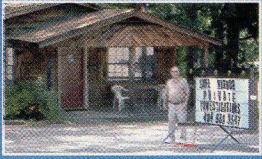
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Keeping Stress from Destroying You

By David Hansey, 404-514-1896, NASM Certified Performance Enhancement Specialist, NASM Certified Sports Fitness Specialist, NASM Certified Personal Trainer. www.4fitbodies.com.



I write a lot about sports and fitness, but there is something that seriously affects every American and it leads to a multitude of health problems. So for July, I am going to focus on stress.

Are you completely frazzled? Is the idea of adding anything more to your life overwhelming? Already overwhelmed? Many of us run on frazzled and it is not a good thing or a badge of honor to tell people how little sleep you get, how much travel you have to do or how many hours you are at the office. If you are feeling stressed, there is often nothing you can do to remove some of the stressors. It is hard to reduce work stress, debt, family obligations. These are facts of life.

But that said, here are some things you can do to reduce the effects. These things will keep you healthier and will also help to prevent the weight gain and other health complications that are part of a stressful lifestyle. First you must eliminate some of the things that make it worse. Psychologists call the following three things "avoidance coping" which means that you are using them to cope but basically, they offer no help because you are not confronting your actual stress issues. So, while it may be difficult, ditch the following three things from your life:

- Alcohol – Ditch booze from your diet. It is a depressant and while stress increases the desire to drink, alcohol will do more harm than good leaving you sluggish and depressed.
- Tobacco - Need I actually say it? Tobacco HAS TO GO. The "stress relief" is temporary, stop smoking!!
- Junk Food and Comfort Food - While these make you feel better very temporarily, they make you FAT and they do nothing to eliminate or reduce stress.

Now it is time to think of ways to DE-STRESS, now that you have taken away those bad things that were doing nothing for you. While a little bit of TV time (like an hour) might be relaxing, sitting in front of the TV or Internet for hours on end is not and it is a MAJOR waste of time. Exercise is a natural way to reduce your stress and you need to find a way to make it a part of your life. Shifting a couple of hours away from the TV into activities such as walking with your family or dog or hitting the gym can make dramatic changes in not only your stress level but your health.

There are lots of different exercise techniques that help to relax you, the key is to finding the one that works for you. So if you are new to working out, try a variety of things. Breaking a sweat EVERY DAY significantly helps to not only lower your stress level but it also makes you feel like you are working toward a healthier you, taking away that helpless feeling that being over stressed can do to you.