

# ON TRACK WITH BARIX

Support to Keep You On Track With a Healthful Lifestyle

## Habit #4

# Stress Management

### ACHIEVING BALANCE THROUGH HEALTHY CHOICES

**F**ast-paced lives are filled with pressure and stress. But despite the bad rap it gets, not all stress is bad. The right level of stress can propel you to change a habit, complete a paper, write a story or create a work of art. The level of stress that promotes peak performance is different for everybody. We all know people who seem to thrive in chaos in contrast to those who go nuts at the slightest deviation in their world.

Outside of this optimal stress level are the two extremes. Stress levels that are too low can cause you to suffer from boredom, fatigue, frustration and dissatisfaction. And of course high stress levels over time can lead to health problems. The key is to balance and manage stress to best meet your personal needs.

We often think of negative situations causing stress, but change of any kind, positive or negative, can cause stress due to all sorts of emotions. These emotions can include perceived fears of the unknown, fears of rejection, uneasiness about risk taking, inability to cope with

new circumstances or feelings of insecurity or vulnerability. It's not the change itself that causes you to feel stressed, but your perception of the change. The good news is that you can actually change your stress level by changing your outlook. We've all experienced this.

For example, starting a new job, even a great job that you are thrilled about, brings with it a level of uncertainty, insecurity and vulnerability. Purposefully changing your focus from your fears to the positive aspects of the job can help to change your stress level.

Another example you can probably relate to is having a big project due within a tight time-frame. This situation can really stress you out, but often once you actually start working on the project, a sense of control takes over and you are able to proceed with a much lower stress level.

**Do you find that your appetite increases during times of stress?** Stress can lead to weight gain. Here's how it works:

When you encounter a stressful situation, your body responds by



The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.

William James

activating a series of hormones to fight the stressor. These hormones include adrenalin, which gives you instant energy, and cortisol. Cortisol's job is to replenish your body after the stress has passed, and can cause your appetite to increase. This system works fine when the stress promotes physical exertion, because calories are burned. But when the stress is from non-physical situations, like trying to balance the checkbook or deal with an angry customer, cortisol wants to replenish nutritional stores that were not used.

To further complicate the matter, insulin levels also increase, creating the perfect conditions for your body to store fat.



Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one.

Hans Selye

So, stress makes your body think you used energy when you didn't. And it's now telling you it is hungry when it really doesn't need the food. If you give in to the hunger, your body will store the calories as fat. The stressful situation hasn't changed – only your waistline has.

A healthy alternative is to understand that you can wait 10–15 minutes and the urge to eat will subside. Eating in response to stress is a learned habit that is encouraged by your brain chemistry. You have the wonderful ability to replace one learned habit with another one – a better one. You do not have to let the impulse win. You can create distractions by doing something that's not conducive to eating, like taking a shower, talking on the phone or going for a walk. In the end, as with all good choices, you're healthier.

### TIPS FOR REDUCING STRESS

- Plan ahead and get organized. Disorganization is a breeding ground for stress.
- Work to understand the situation. This will decrease the fear of the unknown, and better provide you with options to control, change or adjust to the situation.
- Set and accept limits. Say no to activities that you do not have time for. Say yes to achievable goals. You'll feel confidence in your ability and a sense of success when the goals are met.
- Find regular escapes from the pressures of life with a hobby or activities that you enjoy.
- Check your attitude. Replace those negative thoughts with powerful, positive thinking. Our outlook on life can affect our physical and emotional health.
- Get regular exercise. Exercise is unequalled for releasing the tension of stress from our bodies.
- Don't shortchange yourself on sleep. Stress hormones can rise when you become sleep deprived.
- Avoid caffeine, sugar and junk food.
- Talk it out. Expressing your anxieties or fears to a friend, therapist, or family member can be incredibly helpful.
- Stress isn't the event or situation; it's the reaction to that event or situation. Learn to react in ways that minimize the stress threat.
- Learn a relaxation method and take regular relaxation breaks throughout the day. See below.

**THE RELAXATION RESPONSE\*** is a proven method for achieving a stress-free emotional state. These are the steps:

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Deeply relax all your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. Keep them relaxed.
4. Breathe in deeply and slowly through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say the word, "ONE," silently to yourself. For example, breathe IN...OUT, "ONE"; IN...OUT, "ONE," etc. Breathe easily and naturally.
5. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. When you finish, sit quietly for several minutes, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes opened. Do not stand up for a few minutes.
6. Do not worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Don't rush it. Permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. When distracting thoughts occur, ignore them by not dwelling upon them and return to repeating "ONE." With practice, the desired peaceful result should come with little effort. Practice the technique once or twice daily, but not within two hours after any meal, since the digestive processes affect the results.

\*The Relaxation Response, Benson, H., William Morrow and Company, Inc., New York, 1975

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## In the News

### STUDY: Distracted Eating Results in More Calories Consumed

**M**indful eating, staying focused on your meal or snack, can really make a difference when trying to reduce calorie intake. This is in contrast to eating while distracted (watching TV, using the computer, reading, etc), which can increase calorie intake by up to 50%.

A recent study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition pulled together data from numerous studies to come up with their conclusions. "Even though we make decisions about what and when to eat with apparent ease all the time, these decisions are actually very complex and can be easily disrupted," said Suzanne Higgs, a study co-author and psychologist at the University of Birmingham in the UK.

Eating while distracted not only increased the amount eaten at that sitting by an average of 10%, but it also increased the amount eaten at a later meal by more than 25%. In contrast, enhancing recollection of food consumed at the previous meal decreased the amount eaten by about 10%.

**Bottom line:** Don't multitask while eating. Keeping a food log is a proven technique for decreasing caloric intake. You are very aware of what you eat when you take the time to record it.



## REWARD YOURSELF

This month, you could earn a SPECIAL GIFT for your "It Worked For Me" tips or recipes! Just submit as many recipes and "It Worked For Me" tips as you like. The most original and creative will be awarded a special gift from our online store. Include your name and contact info with your entry—make sure your recipes follow Barix nutritional guidelines.

Tips must be submitted by May 31, 2013. Please send comments, ideas, recipes and "It Worked For Me" tips to Deb Hart, RD, LD at [dhart@foresthealth.com](mailto:dhart@foresthealth.com).

## Chicken Tortilla Soup

Submitted by Stacie H.

- 1 rotisserie chicken, removed from bones
- 2 cans black beans, organic
- 2 cans refried beans, fat-free, low-sodium
- 2 cans chicken broth, fat-free, low-sodium
- 2 cups Southwestern corn, frozen
- 2 cups fresh salsa (hot, medium or mild)
- ½ packet McCormick white chicken chili seasoning packet

Combine all ingredients in crock pot (no need to drain beans or corn). Cook on low for several hours or on medium high until heated through. Optional: serve with fat-free sour cream, low-fat cheese or tortilla strips if desired. Makes 12 servings.

**Note:** Using fresh, organic and low-sodium ingredients significantly reduces the sodium in this recipe.

### NUTRITION INFORMATION PER

**SERVING:** 187 calories, 11 grams protein, 2 grams fat, 30 grams carbohydrate, and 796 mg sodium.



## Broccoli Apple Salad

Submitted by Laurie L.

- 1 cup small broccoli florets
- 1 cup sugar snap peas
- 1 head butter lettuce
- 1 apple, sliced thin
- 1 Tbsp. sunflower seeds
- 2 Tbsp. dried cranberries
- 3 Tbsp. crumbled reduced fat goat cheese
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 Tbsp sugar-free maple syrup
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- salt and pepper to taste

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add the broccoli and sugar snap peas and blanch for 2 minutes. Immediately drain and rinse with cold water.

Whisk together the olive oil, sugar-free maple syrup, vinegar, salt and pepper.

Toss together all ingredients and serve. Makes 4 servings.

### NUTRITION INFORMATION PER

**SERVING:** 96 calories, 4 grams protein, 4 grams fat, 16 grams carbohydrate



## Apple Pie Smoothie

- 1 scoop Matrix 5.0™ Simply Vanilla
- ½ cup applesauce, no added sugar
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- ¼ tsp. nutmeg
- ¾ cup milk, skim
- 8 – 10 ice cubes

Blend all ingredients. Makes one serving.

### NUTRITION INFORMATION PER

**SERVING:** 237 calories, 28 grams protein, 1 gram fat, 25 grams carbohydrate, 197 mg sodium

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