Your Health & Happiness

Don't Let Stress Make A Mess Of Work And Home Life

By Eugene Baker, Ph.D.

(NAPSA)—Statistics don't lie. The facts are in and research suggests that stress is making Americans sick. According to the National Institutes of Health, 80 to 90 percent of all illnesses are either directly or indirectly caused by stress.

In another study conducted by the Center for the New American Dream, researchers found that more than 50 percent of Americans would be willing to take a day off work without pay in an effort to feel less stressed and have more time with their families.

And ongoing public opinion research finds that the majority of stress that people feel is directly related to work issues such as time management, deadlines, and dealing with difficult co-workers. Fortunately, there are action steps that people can incorporate into their daily routines to help them regain control of their lives.

Here are some tips for relieving workplace stress.

• **Eat Right.** Avoid eating unhealthy snacks. Eating healthy food can increase your energy.

• **Drink Less Caffeine.** Drinking lots of coffee and sodas can increase your stress levels. If you can't cut out caffeine beverages completely, try to alternate your caffeine intake with healthier beverages or snacks.

• **Exercise.** Exercise is a great way to relieve stress, so try to take a brisk 10-minute walk during the day, even if it means a walk around the office or building. Walking will help to get your blood moving and give you a men-

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tal break from your tasks.

• **Stretch.** Stretching can help to relieve stiff muscles, which can hold tension and make you feel more stressed.

• **Simplify the Morning.** Getting up 15 minutes earlier, and packing lunches or laying out clothes the night before, can help create a routine and get you organized.

• **Think Positive.** Take a few minutes to reflect on the good things in life. Taking stock of what you have can instantly improve your mood and outlook.

• **Breathe.** When we are stressed, we have a tendency to take shallow breaths, which can result in feeling more tense. Start by inhaling deeply through the nose for a count of eight, then exhaling slowly for a count of 16. Concentrate on your counting and breath.

• **Rest.** Be sure you are getting enough sleep at night. Not feeling rested can add to your stress level and make you feel more overwhelmed. If you have

been experiencing recurring sleepless nights, consult your physician for guidance.

• **Do Things You Enjoy.** Try to do something you love every day to give yourself something to look forward to.

Most stress arises due to feelings of life being out of control. By taking time to get yourself organized, and taking care of yourself, you can begin to gain control and ensure that your workday is as relaxed as possible.

• **E-mail Stress-out.** E-mail has become one of the most common forms of communication but it can also be one of the most stressful. Opening a full e-mail box can be overwhelming, not to mention time consuming.

Learn how to use your e-mail software, so you can organize your in-box and file away all those important messages in a way that makes them easier to access. Also, don't forget to trash any spam or useless e-mails.

Change your habits so that instead of leaving a message in your in-box until it's completed, try placing the task from the e-mail on your task list along with the contact information, then filing the e-mail away until you are prepared to reply.

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