

Relieving Stress

With all of these unhealthy reactions to stress, making sure that you have tools to reduce stress is very important. There are several different techniques that can help reduce stress while promoting health and happiness.

Here are some things that can help reduce stress:

- *Exercise: working out, especially running, will help remove cortisol (a stress hormone that hurts the body if it stays there for a long time).*
- *Meditation/relaxation techniques: by finding tools that help combat stress (such as deep breathing or meditating), will help think about stress differently.*
- *Massages/acupuncture: it is believed that massage and acupuncture can help reduce stress by affecting pressure points that can be affected by stress.*
- *Set boundaries and find ways to say no when you find too much stress in your life. It is important to find a balance, and boundaries can help you feel better and do so.*
- *Playing with your children and/or a pet can relieve stress and make you feel happier!*
- *Doing something for yourself, like taking a bath, drinking a cup of coffee or tea, or reading a book can reduce stress.*
- *Eating food, drinking or other unhealthy habits can help at the time, but generally increase stress in the long run.*



**For More Information, Call:
Nicoletti-Flater Associates**

303-989-1617

References:

Mayo Clinic Staff. (n.d.). Healthy Lifestyle: Stress management. MayoClinic.org. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/basics/stress-basics/hlv-20049495>

Smith, M. & Segal, R. (2015). Stress Management: How to Reduce, Prevent, and Cope with Stress. HelpGuide.org. Retrieved from <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-management.htm>

Vorvick, L. (2014). Learn to Manage Stress. U.S. National Library of Medicine. NIH. Retrieved from <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/001942.htm>

Additional Readings

Emptying the Bucket, by Evan Axelrod

Full Catastrophe Living (Revised Edition): Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness, by Jon Kabat-Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh

Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers, by Robert M. Sapolsky

Stress Management

Nicoletti-Flater Associates

Specialists in Police and Public Safety
Psychology

Emptying the Bucket.

Tel: 303-989-1617

Understanding Stress

Stress is a normal physical and psychological reaction to everyday personal and professional frustrations and worries.

Stress can be a very positive thing: it can provide awareness of danger (and how to get out of it), or can help complete tasks. The danger is when long-term stress occurs, or when stress is extreme.

We can only handle so much stress before becoming overwhelmed. Each person can manage different amounts. Think of it as a bucket- the more stressed you are, the more full your bucket becomes. We can only handle so much stress before becoming overwhelmed. You must continually empty your bucket (via coping skills), or you risk it overflowing (burnout, overwhelmed, sickness, etc). By finding new tools to cope, we can increase our bucket's load, or remove some of that stress in our daily lives.

Stress and the Body

Our body can react dramatically to stress, physically and emotionally.

There are certain symptoms of stress that can indicate when you are stressed:

- Increased heart rate
- Headache
- Stiff neck or tight shoulders
- Increased breathing

- Back pain
- Upset stomach, nausea, or diarrhea

Physical reactions to long term stress:

- Immune system: with long term stress, you are more likely to get sick or feel unwell. Chronic illnesses may get worse with long-term stress.
- Heart: long-term stress can worsen any present heart problems, and increase chances of having heart attacks, high blood pressure, blood clots, heart arrhythmias (irregular heartbeat), hardening of arteries, and heart failure.
- Muscles: muscle tension can get worsened, and rheumatoid arthritis can worsen.
- Stomach: any gastrointestinal problems can worsen with long-term stress.
- Reproductive organs: low fertility, painful menstrual periods, and problems with pregnancy can happen for women. Men may experience erection problems and low fertility.

Internal reactions to long-term stress:

- Feeling cranky or frustrated.
- Feeling as if unable to deal with big or small problems.
- Difficulty with focusing on tasks.
- Losing temper more often.
- Worrying often about things.
- Believe that bad things are going to happen or have happened.

Officers and Stress

Protecting people can be a very rewarding, yet stressful job. Officers can have an increase in stress, as their job can often be unpredictable. There is also a component of danger attached to the job. Being aware of stress levels is an important task for officers, and is something that should be kept in mind for officers and their health.

Ways to reduce stress, for officers in particular, would be to find a hobby not related to the field. Yes- that means hobbies with guns may be fun, but not the most relaxing. Finding another hobby away from those activities that remind you of policing may help reduce stress, so try to find other activities that you enjoy.

