

[IMAGE]

Don't Lose Your Cool

By Editorial Staff

There are two aspects to stress: the event and the response. The latter may be the most pivotal in terms of your health. After all, stress rears its ugly head all the time in our hectic lives. What you do when it appears determines how it impacts your day.

Think stress doesn't matter? Wrong. An ever-growing body of research suggests chronic stress elevates the risk of depression, weight gain, digestive issues, sleep problems, heart disease and more. Here are a few ways to deal with stressful moments without losing your cool:

- *Think It Through:* Step one in diffusing a stressful event is avoiding the knee-jerk reaction – the anger, the frustration, the tirade that can ruin your entire day. It doesn't mean you won't feel all those emotions and more welling up inside you; it does mean you use logic to understand what's going on and gain insight into what you need to do about it. Why did the stressful event happen? Is it really that significant? Could you have prevented it from happening? If not, what can you do now to "fix it"?
- *Take a Time Out:* If step one isn't working and your brain continues to swirl with stress, take a time out – they're not just for your kids. Distance yourself from the situation, take a few deep, long breaths, and calm down. A mere five-minute walk could prove to be all you need to render the stressful event completely harmless. In fact, you might not even remember why you felt stressed in the first place.
- *Wear the Other Shoe:* A great deal of what stresses people out these days is based on misperception. Someone cuts you off in traffic and you track them down to voice your displeasure. A friend is 10 minutes late for lunch and you can't believe they've let you down. Instead of boiling over with stress, ponder the reasons first. Does that erratic driver have a "Baby on Board" sticker (and thus could be dealing with a fussy child)? Did they have to change lanes quickly to avoid hitting an object on the road? Instead of becoming instantly stressed and insulted by others' actions, try to understand their context. You may find that in many cases, determining the true cause is half the battle in finding the peaceful, non-stressful solution.
- *See the Big Picture:* Three points are key here. First, it's very natural to experience stress. Appreciating that fact in and of itself may help. Second, there are ways to avoid / prevent stress that involve better

organization, proper planning, etc. Third, your life is much more than a cascade of stressful events. Why let those moments dictate your entire day, week, month or year?

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