

FEELING GOOD ABOUT YOU

THE JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY
THAT LEADS TO SELF-ESTEEM



Module 5 – Worksheet 1

Stress, Change and Transitions

“If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself but to your own estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment.” Marcus Aurelius

Stress

Stress is an inescapable part of life. Although it's often looked upon as negative, it can also be positive. When experienced intermittently, stress can provide motivation that helps you accomplish a goal or meet a deadline.

However, when experienced continually over a long period of time, it can become deadly! What is important is for you to be aware of your mental and physical reactions to stress. It is also important to know that stress can temporarily cloud your perceptions and self-esteem.

When your body is under stress it experiences physiological changes that prepare it for "flight or fight," even though the actual need to fight or flee is not often necessary. Nevertheless, the body still prepares itself by tensing muscles, releasing adrenaline, and sharpening senses. For a short duration this bodily response can be used positively to deal with whatever the stressor may be. If prolonged, as is often the case where every day is filled with a wide variety of loud noises, stagnant air, and demands and deadlines, the body system can be fatigued to the point of malfunctioning. When this happens you may experience physical symptoms such as tightening of the jaw, stomachaches, clenched fists, tense shoulders, tension headaches, backaches, sore muscles, mental confusion, eczema and a wide variety of other "stress-related illness."

"Burnout" is a relatively new term used to describe what happens to a person experiencing long-term stress. An executive, who continually deals with angry employees, demanding customers, and government regulations, may eventually become so stressed that his/her body and mind "shut down," and the physiological symptoms of stress simply take over. Burnout occurs when a person ignores the warning signs along the way, and does nothing to relieve the mental, emotional, and physical strains on his/her body.

There are many effective ways to deal with the stress of daily life. Relaxation exercises, positive self-talk, meditation/quieting the mind, physical exercise,

listening to music or sitting under a tree can all effectively calm the stress reaction and relieve the tension in your mind and body. Only you know which ways are effective for you.

Exercise: My Stress

In the space below, list several things that cause you to feel stress, and how your body lets you know it is stressed. Then list how you deal with these stressors and symptoms, and if you achieve the desired relief. Also list other ways you might cope with this stress in the future.

Stressors:

How my body shows me I am stressed:

Coping skills I have used:

How my coping skills have worked for me:

Alternate, new ways I might cope:

Reflections on Stress

- Stress can be both positive and negative
- Stress is inescapable in daily life
- When stressed, your body prepares itself to fight or flee
- Prolonged stress can cause stress-related illness
- You are in charge of how you choose to perceive a situation and can decide if you'll let it cause you stress and anxiety
- Burnout occurs when the body and mind are overwhelmed with stress
- You can establish effective ways to deal with stress and avoid illness