



STRESSED ANYONE???

Gender Differences, Coping Skills, Your Health

For most of us, stress is an ugly word. We hear “stress” and automatically go to a negative definition. The truth is Stress can also be very positive. It can help us work harder, strive better and generally be more successful in many aspects of our lives, but I’m not here to talk about how good some stress can be, but more why it just plain stinks! Many of us will complain that work deadlines, family situations, or just every day life surprises can cause a great deal of stress. Very often I will hear that situations are just too stressful to exercise regularly, or eat better, etc. We project our lack of commitment to the stress like it is “out of our hands”. Truth is, and you may not like it, WE are in control of our stress. We may not be in control of the stressors, ie; work, family, relationships, but we are in control of how we respond to them. So..... if you are feeling stressed do your best to stop it. There are several behaviors: adapt, avoid, adjust, accept, to name a few, that we can practice to reduce how we respond to stress. Remember, stressors are always going to exist which are out of our control, but how we respond to them is not.

Now that we know we can control how we respond to stress do men and women respond differently? Answer, yes! And it may all be linked to the Y chromosome and hormones. When it comes to responding to stress, men tend to be more “fight or flight” where women tend to be more “tend and befriend”. Men will have spikes in cortisol and adrenaline. Women will also release more cortisol, and adrenaline, but also oxytocin, a chemical that promotes bonding and affection for others. Men very often will experience hypertension, sweaty palms, conditions associated with the “fight or flight” response. Women however tend to feel more, anxiety, depression, digestion issues. [Research](#). Part of this could be because society has “allowed” men to express their stress outwardly, where women tend to internalize it. Especially if they are the care givers of young children and don’t want to upset or worry them.

As mentioned previously, daily stress can be beneficial if well controlled, and the body returns to normal once the trigger is removed, but when stress continues the body will begin to suffer. Depression, anxiety, heart, digestive and respiratory problems, including increase aging can all be a result of excessive stress. [Research](#) So how to control it? Adapt to the stressor, change your mindset as to how you think about it, avoid the stressor all together if possible, adjust, or accept it and deal with it as well as you can. In the meantime, do the things that help you reduce the effect of stress on your health. Exercise, take classes, be with friends. Don’t try to be superhuman and feel as though feeling stressed is a sign of weakness. In fact, dealing with the stress and trying to control it is a sign of strength. You can not be everything to everybody, so just be everything to you!