



Serene Scene

Transitional Sober Living Magazine

LONG BEACH®
SERENE CENTER

www.serenecenter.com

May, 2011 Issue

MANAGING STRESS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II, SAP

REFLECTIONS ON A JOURNEY THROUGH MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

Dr. Martin Nieland

PARENTAL ALERT!

Jose D. Aragon III, BA, CADC II, ICADC, SAP

THE TRUTH ABOUT DENIAL

Captain Larry Smith,, CAS
Author of The Daily Life Plan Journal

PRACTICE RADICALLY

Tom Catton

POINT OF RETURN MONTHLY STORY

Swinging Between Extremes,
Jenni Schafer

SOBERINFO.COM

12 STEP TREK

Step #7: Humbly Asked Him....
12 Step Worksheet Series
Courtesy of Serene Center Long Beach

SPOTLIGHT: THREE POTENTIAL ATTITUDES AS CLIENTS LEAVE REHAB

Dr. Shannon Hanrahan

MANAGING STRESS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II, SAP



When crisis strikes, it is natural for our body and mind to react with a stress response. Not only is stress caused by physical stimulus such as getting hit or hearing a loud siren, but stress is also caused by emotional stimulus within our own brain. The part of the brain that responds to stress is called the hypothalamus which is assisted by the sympathetic division of the nervous system.

When severely stressed, our sympathetic division causes a fight, flight, freeze response within our body. Our body prepares for this response by acting swiftly to reduce blood flow to areas of the body not critically needed for survival, and increase levels of glucose, cortisol and adrenaline in our body. There is little we can do about this type of reaction as the body does all of this automatically.

What is important to understand, is that there is much we can do to reduce the stress in our lives, and there is much we can do to help dissipate the effects of stress should our body go into a stress response mode.

URGENCIES

If our body enters into a fight, flight, freeze response (distress) it is important to calm our body and mind down as quickly as possible in order to discover and implement a possible solution for the stressor event. The best way to de-escalate the fight, flight, freeze response is physical exercise that expends a lot of energy, such as running, speed-walking or jumping rope. Once the body and mind are calmed down, then we can work on the underlying causes.



May, 2011

SereneScene

MANAGING STRESS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II, SAP

SYMPTOMS

Short of the fight, flight, freeze response are many symptoms of stress in our lives:

Distraction	Not able to pay attention or concentrate Lack of interest in the subject matter Intense interest in something other than the subject Overwhelming emotions Fantasies, urges, strong thoughts
Exhaustion	Muscle weakness Decreased wakefulness (somnolence) Decreased level of consciousness
Health Impact	High blood pressure Acid reflux, Gastritis, Ulcer Fatigue, chronic fatigue syndrome Sexual dysfunction Irritable bowel syndrome Mental health disorders
Irritability	Over reaction Under reaction Anxiety Distraction from conscious thinking Annoyance
Resistance	Stuck, unable to change Lack of self-will Denial, aversion Confusion
Tension	Backache Headache Restlessness Muscle spasm Insomnia

MANAGING STRESS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II, SAP

When we encounter these symptoms, it means that we are significantly stressed. If we cannot find a method to reduce the stress, we begin to encounter chronic stress which is simply a prolonged stress response in the brain over a significant period of time, combined with the belief that nothing can be done to change the situation. This thought process is a cognitive distortion brought on by the chronic stress, and it quickly becomes paralyzing for us.

SOLUTIONS

When we are feeling stressed, the best thing to do is to try to regain a sense of self-control and presence. This can be accomplished in many different ways and effectiveness will vary from person to person. Here is a list of possibilities:

- Schedule your day in writing
- Do not watch the news or read the newspaper
- Avoid gossip amongst your friends and in the workplace
- Write everything down so you do not have to worry about forgetting something
- Follow a strong daily routine
- Exercise
- Share
- Allow yourself to experience your emotions and know they will pass
- Do not make any life-changing decisions if you can avoid it
- Create a budget and stick to it
- Write a gratitude list
- Socialize with people you enjoy
- Plan
- Breathe
- If you need to do something unpleasant, do it now
- Sleep and rest
- Practice self-affirmations daily
- Eliminate caffeine from your diet
- Eat healthy and balanced
- Do not drink alcohol or take any mood altering addictive substance
- Change up your day so you may mental and physical activity throughout
- Say no if you are too busy
- Laugh
- Try to keep a positive attitude
- Would you rather be right, or rather be happy? Decide how you want to live
- Pray
- Stretch


MANAGING STRESS IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Andrew Martin, MBA, CADC II, SAP

- Journal
- Be rational
- Ground yourself
- Remove yourself from the stressful situation
- Let go, turn it over
- See a counselor

SELF-AWARENESS

Most people encounter chronic stress when multiple stressors build up in their lives. While the individual stressors do not seem unmanageable on their own, the combination of stressors can be intense. That is why it is so important to be self-aware of one's stress level on an ongoing basis. Here is a simple gauge to measure one's stress level at any given time:

10 = Unmanageable Stress		Stress Thermometer
7 = Stress is Affecting Function		Periodically, throughout the day, stop for a few seconds and ask yourself how much stress you are feeling in the moment. Rate your stress from 1 to 10 on the stress thermometer. If you are above level 5, participate in a stress reduction exercise. If you are above level 7, take swift action to distress immediately. If you are above level 9, seek the help of a clinician immediately.
5 = Noticeable Stress		
3 = Ordinary Stress		
0 = No Stress Whatsoever		

SS

