

Dealing with Stress in a Relationship

Couples often go through periods of change, everyday hassles and emotional issues that cause stress in their relationships. This can challenge your marital relationship.

It is important to understand how stressful events affect your marriage. Since you cannot avoid stress, you have to be able to recognize and manage it. Here are some tips on how to handle stress when it arises in your relationship.

Figure Out What is Bothering You

Stress is tricky. We often say "I am so stressed out," but we may have trouble figuring out the trigger. Take the time to find out what the problem is, and then share it with your spouse. Your partner may be able to help you deal with this stress. With increased awareness of what you are worried about, they can think of ways to reduce your stress.

Bear in mind that your partner may not think you have any reason to be stressed. Help them understand why you are anyway. Respect each other's values, and find ways to work together on the challenges. Your partner can give you a different point of view, and together, you can brainstorm ways to solve the issue that is causing your stress.

Recognize that not every problem (or stressor) has a solution, but openly discussing it and sharing your feelings can help you manage it. Understand that if you do not figure out how to successfully handle stress with your partner, problems in your marriage may eventually emerge.

Stay Connected

Sometimes couples spend more time talking with their friends about their stressors rather than their spouses because they feel their partner might not understand them.

Turning away from your partner during stressful events can be one of the most damaging behaviors in a relationship. This can lead to feelings of rejection. Silence leads to greater frustration and increased anger, which can drive the two of you apart.

Try to strengthen your relationship by turning to each other often. You can do this by simply talking about everyday events, like the news, a good movie you saw or the accomplishments of your children. This can help you build the confidence and trust you both need to discuss heavier and potentially stressful topics when they arise.

Maintain Intimacy

Intimacy is an important part of any successful marriage. While many people think intimacy pertains only to sex, it is much more than that.

Being intimate with your partner means that you reveal your thoughts and your feelings (even though it may be embarrassing to do so at times), demonstrate affection and work together to solve problems.

By being open and honest, we develop emotional intimacy. When we are stressed, intimacy is especially important. Intimacy gives your partner a chance to support you, and, in return, you are more likely to support them when they are stressed.

Couples might avoid becoming intimate with their partner during stressful times because they are too tired or emotionally drained, but this can be a mistake. Being intimate may actually help to relieve tension and anxiety.

Find Balance

You can become overwhelmed with activities that you really do not have time for. This can cause problems within your relationship and the entire family. The more time spent on other things, the less time there is for family.

Research has shown that work-related stress is linked to unhappiness in marriage. Avoid being a "workaholic" by choosing to stay connected to work via cell phones, emails and other technology, unless required by your job. This can cause your partner to feel lonely and may hurt your relationship.

Parents can feel like keeping up with each family member's schedule is a full-time job. Scheduling the children's activities and taking them to practices, games, recitals and events can become overwhelming at times. To avoid family burnout, keep an eye out for signs of stress and cut back on activities as needed.

If you are feeling overwhelmed and do not know how to get back on track to a healthy marriage, it is a good idea to take a relationship education course. Marriage education can give you the skills, information and resources you need to help manage your stress and improve the quality of your relationship. Make time to enjoy each other's company and work on your relationship.

Be watchful of long periods of loneliness, depression or mood swings in yourself or in your partner. If you notice or experience these signs, be willing to help or try to ask for help.

Try to be aware of your and your partner's emotions every day. Focus on changing the things in your life and relationship that you can control, and accept the things you cannot change.

Stress can come in many forms. The one thing you can count on is that it will always be in your life in some form. Try to remember that everyone handles stress differently. In other words, what causes one person to be stressed may be something that another person can easily handle, and vice versa.

There is no cure-all for the stress that occurs in our lives, but we can choose how we react to and handle it. You and your spouse can make an effort together to control your thoughts and behaviors.

Choose to lessen the effects of stress by communicating with each other. Honest and frequent communication also keeps one partner from feeling lonely, builds trust, shows commitment and can release

the heavy burdens you may be experiencing. Be kind, caring and show affection often. Be aware of life's stressors, and avoid letting them drive you and your partner apart.

Resources

- National Healthy Marriage Resource Center: www.twoofus.org
- National Institute of Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-5465

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: LivingME

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