Some Thoughts on Stress

The word stress conjures up many images and in some ways it implies an ailment that needs to be healed. Realistically there is both truth and uncertainty in this statement. Stress can cause symptoms of anxiety, depression, health issues, anger outbursts, memory problems, feeling overwhelmed and constantly worrying just to name a few. The uncertainty lies in acknowledging and entertaining the belief that stress can be helpful as a normal part of our everyday lives.

Regardless of whether stress is positive, negative or somewhere in between is not the issues. Stress exists and what we need to be mindful of is how our lives are being impacted and what we can do to help ourselves and others.

In the face of rising energy costs, fluctuating rates of employment, family responsibilities, the need for increasing technological expertise, and the intricacies of balancing work and life experiences we look for ways to deal with how we feel and one of these feelings is stress. How many times in the past week have you heard yourself say “I am so stressed” or “I feel stressed”?

A strategy is helpful for self-assessment based on a scale in which 1 - 3 means minimal stress that might not even be noticeable; 4 - 6 means there are feelings of stress that are impacting to some extent daily management; 7 - 10 means there is significant stress with strong psychological and physiological symptoms.

Helpful hints for tracking your stress is to keep a daily journal for a week noting where you are on the scale, what time of day it is, and what are the expectations placed on you by others or yourself. Once the week has passed ask yourself the following questions. Does it surprise you what you rated the highest? Is your weekly stress level higher or lower than what you thought it might be? What situations can you change?
Some other helpful suggestions for learning about stress include finding what works for you in terms of reducing the stress that feels overwhelming. It can be different for each individual. Meditation using mindfulness is found in some of the books listed below or there are usually meditation/mindfulness groups within community resources. For some people a yoga class helps while for others that can be going for a walk on your lunch hour or simply sitting quietly in the nearest park for the hour. Social interaction is also helpful in managing stress. Call a friend or start a group at work. Reading a book can reduce stress as can finding a favorite memory in your life and replaying this memory when feeling stressed.

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Suggestions for Reading
Wherever You Go There You Are - Jon Kabat-Zinn
The Mindful Brain - Dan Siegal
Who Moved My Cheese - Spencer Johnson

Healthy Living Education Seminars
Tuesday evenings 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Family Service Thames Valley
125 Woodward Avenue
Attend all sessions or just one at no cost.
Limited to 20 participants
Call 519-433-0700 x 8295 to register

Budget 101
October 7, 2014

De-Cluttering Your Life
October 21, 2014

Connections: Coping with Loneliness & Developing Social Supports
October 28, 2014

Communication Skills to Improve Relationships
November 4, 2014

Keeping Your Cool - Tips on Parenting
November 11, 2014 (New Date)

Transitions Through Job Loss
November 18, 2014

The Many Faces of Trauma: Symptoms, Services & Supports
December 2, 2014 (New Date)

FALL/WINTER GROUP COUNSELLING SESSIONS STARTING IN SEPTEMBER 2014
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FOR SCHEDULE & START DATES