

Marks Remarks by Mark Rowen Lincoln County Educator 3-25-08

Are you letting STRESS take charge of your life? When we are under too much stress, our body reacts by getting us ready for the fight or flight reaction. Heart rate goes up, blood pressure goes up, and muscles get tight ready for action. When the stress is over, our body goes back to normal function. If the cause of the stress is extended over a long period, our bodies do not get back to the normal, but stay in the stress response mode. Some of the signs of long term stress include: headaches, feeling tired all the time, trouble falling asleep, and getting sick often. These are just the physical effects; there are emotional, behavioral and relational symptoms as well. The emotional effects include: anger, sadness, irritability, worry or anxiety, trouble relaxing, and emptiness or loss of life direction. The behavioral symptoms include: use of alcohol or drugs, trouble concentrating, avoiding decisions, low productivity, forgetfulness, and boredom. The relational symptoms include: intolerance of others, fewer contacts with friends, nagging, loneliness and resentment.

There is no way to eliminate all stress in our lives, but we can manage the way stress keeps us from living better. Take some control by focusing on the important things like family and friends. These are the important buffers keeping stress at bay. Starting a regimen of personal health improvement can help protect us from the physical symptoms of stress. Reaching out to others in the community increases our own circle of support against stress. Choosing a time for relaxation and doing something we enjoy each week can provide relief from the emotional symptoms. Taking time to develop spiritual resources can strengthen our emotional wellness also. The most important aspect of dealing with the stress is to know there is help available for everyone.

Don't be afraid to talk to professionals, including your physician, about the physical and emotional symptoms you may experience. Just admitting the fact you're stressed out is an important step to realizing and managing stressors in your life.

For more information about this and other topics contact the Lincoln County Extension office at 764-2756.