

ARE YOU COPING WELL? By Dr. Frank S. Caprio

Answer Yes or No to each of the following questions:

1. Do you have a feeling of continuous anxiety and sometimes of panic?
2. Do you feel tired all the time and find that you complain more and more often that you are not getting enough sleep?
3. Are you always worrying about your health? Do you feel your work is suffering on account of it?
4. Do you often feel depressed for no good reason?
5. Are you tense and restless and unable to relax?
6. Do you get sudden tremors - "the shake"?
7. Are you afraid of being alone?
8. Do you ever want to end it all?
9. Do you sometimes wonder if you are losing your mind?
10. Do you take other people's criticisms as personal threats or rejections?
11. Do you lose your temper more often and find it harder to get along with people?
12. Do you find it hard to concentrate these days?
13. Do you feel remote from people who were close to you and things you used to like- your family, friends, sports, books?
14. Have you started to let your appearance run down- are you careless about cleanliness, your hair, your clothes?
15. Are you worrying a great deal, taking life more seriously, enjoying it less?
16. Are you dependent on tranquilizers to carry you through a day?
17. Is it becoming harder for you to make small decisions, such as what to wear, what to have for dinner, what to do next?
18. Do you dread ordinary everyday situations- caring for your children or playing with them, going to parties, or even to the store?
19. Has your attitude toward food changed--do you find it tasteless, hard to swallow so that you don't care if you eat or not?
20. Do you find yourself living more and more in the past?

If you answered YES to three or four questions, you are not coping as well as you should and may be headed for trouble. If you answered YES to six or more questions, you would be wise to check with your naturopathic physician, minister, psychiatrist, or other healthcare provider.

When your body shows signs of anxiety such as tension in your neck muscles, or the other symptoms we have discussed, seek the cause and do something about it. Something positive and realistic. Dr. Hans Seyle, author of "Stress Without Distress," points out that over-ambitious goals and objectives, beyond our experience and skills are a frequent cause of stress. Dr. Seyle suggests you be really sure that stress is worth it. Do the do-able, and avoid the undo-able. In effect, don't waste your time trying to befriend a mad dog.

We need to take time out to think about stress, to plan strategies to deal with it. Studies have shown that the average executive working 50 hours a week allots less than 19 minutes per week for thinking. Just 19 minutes a day- or better, three times that would help wipe out a lot of stress. Limit stress to a scheduled time when possible and avoid stress you don't have to deal with. There are many ways to deal with the unavoidable stresses that everyone faces. Seyle recommends regular diversions or outside interests and time set aside for rest and relaxation.