

Stress and Distress

It may be hard to believe, but stress is a necessary part of life and success. Ever heard of the fight or flight mechanism? It's just another term for stress. But there is a fine line between stress and its counterpart-distress. Finding that line is easy with a few simple guidelines.

How stress works you

Stress drives us all. It motivates and entices us to move forward. But remember, there is a difference between being driven to succeed, and being driven to distress. Distress occurs when worrying leads to physical symptoms like headaches, back pain, and high blood pressure. If you experience these symptoms when under pressure, you're letting stress get the best of you.

Putting stress to work

Stress can work for you. The key is in recognizing your limits. If you know when your body has had enough stress, you can give it a break by relaxing. When you are rejuvenated, you can plow through any obstacle. However, if you ignore your body's cry for a break, you are only hurting yourself in the long run. Just a few minutes of stretching or walking can give you an extra boost of energy that will help you make it through the day.

Beating distress

The most dangerous thing you can do is to let stress build up. Here are a few guidelines to help avoid the frustrations of distress:

- Exercise. This is a guaranteed way to blow off steam. And it doesn't have to mean pumping iron in a gym every morning. Tennis, golf - even gardening - works your lungs and muscles, improving your health and body image while reducing stress.
- Share your stress. Talking about what worries you is often the surest way to minimize your anxiety.
- Get involved. Whether it's joining a community-bowling league or helping the homeless, getting involved allows you to focus on something other than your problems.