

NEWS



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06-22-11 THIS WEEK IN ORANGE COUNTY BY EDWARD A. DIANA

Stress – the sleepless nights, upset stomach, and aching head. Or maybe it's the feeling like you're stuck on a wheel going 'round and 'round, never catching up, never getting where you're going. We've all been there at some point in our lives. In fact, 75% of the general population experiences at least "some stress" every two weeks according to the National Health Interview Survey.

The start of summer is not the time when we usually talk about stress, more often it's a conversation saved for the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. But lately it seems not a day goes by when I don't hear or read a reference to stress and the detrimental effect it can have on people's health and well-being. Stress is often a by-product of the highly-scheduled, over-extended lifestyle so many of us lead today, and unfortunately it's not confined to adults – children can also experience stress.

Stress is actually your body's natural reaction to threats from predators and aggressors. While they might be a little different from the threats early humans faced, each of us face numerous demands and challenges on a daily basis. How we manage our reaction to those threats is what will make a difference to our health. Unchecked, stress can put you at risk for a variety of health problems, including heart disease, sleep problems, digestive issues, depression, obesity, and memory impairment. That's why it's so important to learn healthy ways to cope with life's stresses.

Orange County Commissioner of Mental Health Chris Ashman reminds us that stressful events are a fact of life, no matter the time of year, but there are things you can do to manage the impact these events can have on you and your loved ones. He offers these tips to help you manage stress in your life:

- Plan your time and be prepared. Be realistic about how long things will take.
- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Foster healthy relationships.
- Have a sense of humor.
- Take time out for yourself – to enjoy your family and friends or a hobby that's important to you.
- Strive to manage an appropriate work/life balance.
- Eat a healthy diet; get regular exercise, and plenty of sleep.
- Seek professional counseling when needed; you don't need to go it alone.

To find out about services available in Orange County, contact the Department of Mental Health at 291-2600 or visit their pages on the County website at www.orangecountygov.com.

Don't underestimate the value that relaxation and exercise can play in managing stress. Take some time for yourself and get outside. Check out one of Orange County's great park and recreation sites, like the Heritage Trail that runs from Monroe to Goshen or the great exercise circuit course around the pond at Thomas Bull Memorial Park. Visit the Parks website at www.orangecountynyparks.com for a full list. Or, visit the Healthy Orange website at www.healthyorange.com for exercise, diet, and nutrition information.

Remember, the benefits of managing stress can be abundant, including peace of mind and a healthier body.

Until next week, wishing you good health and happiness,

Edward A. Diana
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