STAY HEALTHY!

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“Stress—The Other Killer”
Part II

Recognizing Stress….

Occasionally, these changes are so gradual that you or others around you may not recognize them until your health or relationships change. As with the physical symptoms described earlier, you may not recognize such emotional changes for what they really are, signals of increased stress. Many people find themselves perplexed by the changes and often feel guilty or propone

to blaming others.

The term “burnout” often is used to describe a combination of physical and psychological limit responses to stress.

DEALING WITH STRESS:

In the course of daily events, we develop various ways of dealing with stress. We work hard to decrease the newness of the changes we face, we talk about the experience, and we use things that we can count on already in our lives as “safe havens “ from the new or adaptive changes.

Much of this we do without really thinking about it. However, some of these changes are monumental, such as switching jobs or moving to another part of the country. Others are routine, such as turning in reports, taking a test, meeting a new client, interviewing a baby-sitter, meeting a new teacher, or dealing with a child’s temper tantrum. Mostly, we do pretty well in getting through fairly major as well as minor crisis. Sometimes, we could do better.

The first step in learning to manage our stress-related reactions better is to become more aware of the things that may be particularly stressful for us individually. Not everyone responds to the same life event with the same amount of distress. For instance, a so-called workaholic may be thought by others to be working into an early grave, but he or she may have found that taking on extra challenges in a work related environment helps him or her to feel more in control. For this Person, the work itself may be a form of stress management, and unstructured time of a vacation without goals or “relaxation “at home may be much greater stress.

We must learn to recognize in ourselves those things that cause the most stress. We may not be able to avoid them, but, when we encounter them, it may reassure us to know they are the source of our extra discomfort. Just recognizing such elements helps to make us feel more in control. Understanding the real cause of discomfort also can minimize anxiety about the total manifestations of stress we experience.

Another important step involves actually dealing with stress. Most of the people want to do

something when we are distressed so that they can feel as if they are making an active choice to reassume control in their lives, the very thing we feel we have lost to some degree in facing life's challenges. Over the years, most of us have found techniques that help us feel more comfortable. These vary from Person to Person and from Personality to Personality, so there is no way to provide a list of things everyone should do. Each person needs several tools, or techniques, at His or Her disposal.

To be continued

(Editor's Note: Dr Cordova lives full time at Lakeside. He is an Internal Medicine & Geriatrics Specialist and Lakeside Chapala Medical College President.)