

COMMUNITY COMING TOGETHER (CCT)

May, 2013

This month's theme is *Stress & Fitness*



WORK OUT YOUR STRESS!

by Nicole o'Reilly

Stress; one of life's inevitable emotions that we all experience, regardless of our age. Stress is our body's way of reacting to situations, experiences or tasks deemed as "challenging" to us. Often the situations that cause the most amount of stress are also situations, experiences and/or people that are out of our control; they're situations that life hands us that we are left to deal with. If we leave our stress unmanaged, it can have major impacts on our mental health and wellbeing.

What kind of things might ignite our stress levels?

- Exams and school work
- Conflicts with friends or family
- Traffic
- Issues with money
- Loss/death of a loved one
- Loss of job

Stress often gets a bad-wrap for being a negative emotion that we try to manage through avoidance. However, not all stress is "bad stress". Stress has a way of motivating us for a big exam, pushing us to excel at what we are doing, and encourages us to spend time and energy on the things that are important to us.

If we don't cope with our stress effectively, we often find our stress levels become overwhelming and unbearable. "If left unchecked your stress can become a crisis leaving you physically, mentally and spiritually depleted" (AlbertaHealthServices, 2013). We may begin to notice certain physical symptoms due to our stress levels,



including increased heart rate, headaches, inability to sleep or oversleeping, and feeling easily agitated. This can lead to the use of unhelpful coping mechanisms in order to escape or numb the overwhelming stress, such as excessive alcohol, drug and tobacco use or taking unusual risks that may have negative consequences.

In order to cope with stress effectively, it can be helpful to look at different coping mechanisms to help manage our stress levels, such as:

- Physical activity
- Deep breathing exercises
- Talking it out with a friend or family member
- Make a to-do list
- Spend time on yourself with your choice of self-care activity

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Matthew 11:28



Upcoming Events

May 5-11: Mental Health Awareness Week

Self Care Fairs: various stations of fun and useful stress-reduction techniques!

During the lunch hour at Notre Dame (May 6), St. Mary's (May 7), and McCoy (May 9).

Hats On! For Mental Health: wear your favorite hat to bring awareness of the importance of good mental health.

<http://www.canwetalk.ca/#/Home>

St. Mary's (May 8), NDA (May 9), McCoy (May 10)

May 8: CCT Advisory Committee Meeting

1:30 pm, Medicine Hat Public Library

Summer Program: we will once again be running a summer program from July 8-August 17 for students from any of our CCT Project schools. Further details to follow or contact the CCT Team member from your school for more information.

OUR WEBSITE IS LIVE!!

Please check us out at

www.communitycomingtogether.weebly.com

WORK OUT YOUR STRESS! Continued...

Using physical activity in particular - whether in the form of walking, bike riding, weight lifting or playing sports - working on our fitness has a way of dissolving stress while enhancing our physical health, as well as our mental health. Engaging in physical activity has many benefits to stress reduction. Not only does it release “endorphins” (the body’s “feel-good” hormones”) into the body, but it also increases our self-confidence and helps to alleviate many physical symptoms associated with stress, helping us to sleep and temporarily freeing our mind of our stressors while concentrating on our physical fitness.

Are your stress levels causing you concern?

Sometimes life’s stressors can be too much to handle on our own. For further questions or concerns regarding your stress levels, connect with a CCT member at your school, or call the Mental Health Help Line: 1-877-303-2642

Reference:

Alberta Health Services.(2013). Retrieved from <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/4956.asp>