

The 50 Plus Crowd "Health Installment" articles are dedicated to the subject of health and they are centered on lifestyle adjustments that make your life less stressful. The bottom line is....

"Do every thing you can to avoid the need for lawyers and doctors!!!"

Installment #1

By far, the most important factor affecting your health is stress. Stress is a logical starting point to begin your quest toward a healthier, happier life. I look at stress as if it is an external pressure pushing down on me. Eventually, it really will push you into the ground unless you control it. Fighting stress is the topic of many books and they all have some excellent ideas, but wouldn't it be better to remove the causes of stress from your life instead of fighting it every day. Well, it is very difficult to eliminate an unseen foe. The first thing you must do is identify those things in your life that are causing the stress in the first place.

Find a quiet time. For some folks it is in the evening on a Friday or Saturday night. For others it is Sunday morning. Get serious about really making changes in your life. Get a note pad and pen or pencil, but forget about the computer for now. Make a hot cup of tea or coffee, or have the beverage that relaxes you best.

Give yourself at least 15 minutes to make a few notes and to think about your state of health. This will work even better if you have a very close friend that might share the interest in reducing stress in their life as well. Think out loud if you have to, but start by writing down a list of everything that annoys you. Use short phrases. Don't worry about putting your list in any order as you can do that later. Right now, just get as many things on paper as you can in the time you have to work on this project. Try to limit yourself to 15-30 minutes. You don't want this activity to become stressful! If necessary, you can stop at any time and continue later when you feel relaxed enough to continue.

It is a good idea to wait a couple of hours or more before reviewing your list. You probably won't even realize it, but as you go about your daily activities you will still be processing all of your thoughts from when you were creating your list.

After you have your list completed, review the list and place a number from one to ten next to each item. Use a "1" for those things that seem to be causing you the most aggravation. It is possible that you will end up with more than one item with the same number. After you have finished ranking the items in your list it should look something like this:

1. Driving to work every day
1. Dealing with Ted at work
1. Bob is abusive
2. Lousy pay
2. Cleaning up after everybody
3. Neighbor's dog
3. Neighbors trash on my property
4. Cost of car repairs
5. Ants in the kitchen
6. Amy's friends calling late
7. Junk mail
8. House repairs

You may not have realized just how many things were annoying you on a daily basis until you get a look at your list. I will touch on the issues listed, but it is not my intention to write a book. The most important thing to recognize is that you can eliminate many of the factors that are creating most of the stress in your life. In some cases, however, the best you can do is to reduce some of the stress caused by factors over which you have no direct control.

Let's attack the high stress items first. Why? Well certainly not because they are the easiest. It's all about the 80/20 rule. True or not, it goes something like this: "80% of the stress in your life is caused by 20% of the things that annoy you....." So, what can you do about the problems related to work? This is a sore point for many people so we will start with this one first.

Are you putting up with tons of aggravation because you feel you have no chance of improvement due to lack of a necessary education or experience. Don't feel alone! Many, many people are experiencing the same issues as you related to their work environment. We live in a very fast paced society where employers are, in many cases, forced to be greedy in order to survive. But that does not mean that you have to work for that employer!

A lot of people are simply afraid of change. This, in part, is also why many people stay in abusive relationships. I know first hand, as many divorced parents have learned, "Change is always difficult". The word difficult is not synonymous with bad, however. I recall an old medical cliché that goes something like..."If it doesn't kill you, it will only make you stronger!"

Wait, isn't this supposed to be about reducing stress? Well yes, but sometimes you have to be willing to give a little to get a lot in return. By the way, if you make a goal for yourself that in itself will improve your life, and if you really are true to yourself and committed to achieving that goal, then the stress involved in getting there, by definition, is good stress.

Good stress that leads to personal accomplishment makes a person stronger, more confident, happier, and generally healthier.

I will continue writing the Health Installments as time permits, so check back often. The next installment will discuss some options to remedy problems at work. You certainly do not have to suffer with a stressful work environment if you really don't want to! In the mean time, if you need help or information from a State or Federal agency, please see the 50 Plus Crowd links page by clicking www.50pluscrowd.com/, then click on the Links tab and scroll down to the State Links. You can access your local State agencies by visiting the official website for the State you live in. Take some time to learn all about your State website and how to access your local county government websites. The Links are there for you to use and the information is free.

Thank you for taking the time to read Health Installment #1 from the 50 Plus Crowd.