

If you are having personal problems or trouble managing your life, you may contact a counselor by calling 301-766-7600. A professional counselor will discuss your problem with you and set up a counseling appointment as soon as possible. The process is simple, confidential and FREE.

Cigarettes, Caffeine and Sugar

They Increase Your Stress

Cigarettes, caffeine and sugar all increase your stress levels. Yet these substances are so much a part of our lives, we are often unaware of their effects. When you learn how each of these substances can affect stress, you may find that it's time to take a healthy step and kick the habit.

Cigarettes Stimulate You

When you smoke, you feel stimulated, as your heart rate, blood pressure and hormone levels increase. Your body needs more of certain vitamins and minerals to cope with this stimulation, which is a form of stress. Cigarettes are expensive, highly addictive, and cause major and minor illnesses. The costs of cigarettes (over \$2000 per year, plus extra medical, dental and cleaning costs) can add to your problems. Trying to quit is difficult for most people. All these factors add up to physical and emotional stress.

Caffeine Speeds You Up

Caffeine is also a physical stressor. It speeds you up for as long as 20 hours. Its effects are different in different people. For example, for some people it causes headaches, and for others, it relieves them. Caffeine can cause symptoms such as sleeplessness, upset stomach, increased blood pressure and heart rate, and in women, breast lumps. Many people become "hooked" on caffeine in coffee, chocolate, soft drinks and medicines such as painkillers. Withdrawal can include severe headaches, nervousness, grouchiness, and rapid heartbeat.

Sugar Gets You Nowhere

For most people, any kind of sugar (white, brown, honey or fructose) gives a quick boost of energy and then leaves you with less energy, which can make you feel depressed. Many sugary foods contain little food value; yet eating them leaves you less hungry for nutritious food. Then your body lacks important

vitamins and minerals. Sugary foods such as desserts, candy and soda can contribute to weight control problems. When you gain weight and don't want to, you can feel depressed, anxious or unhappy, adding to your stress level.

Take A Healthy Step

Cigarettes, caffeine and sugar increase your physical and emotional stress levels. The combination of any two or all three of these substances can make you feel unstable. If you decide to take the healthy step of quitting smoking or reducing your intake of caffeine and sugar, you'll probably discover that you can manage stress more easily and feel better all around.



Maintaining Weight Loss

Avoiding Weight Ups and Downs

Many people have had the experience of successfully depriving themselves long enough to lose weight. It is a heady experience until the scale shows that you have gained five pounds overnight even though you feel you have eaten sparingly. Such are the woes of the chronic dieter, but help is on the way to smooth these peaks and valleys.

How to Successfully “Diet”

“Dieting,” actually, is not the proper way to describe weight management. How to change your food habits and still love food that is good for you is more accurate. The diet you choose to follow the rest of your life needs to be balanced, varied, and likeable. You calmly choose foods that are nutritious most of the time and don't feel great guilt over consuming foods that you don't consider “diet” foods. Because you can have such foods you won't overindulge. You avoid thinking about food all the time by finding enjoyments outside of food. Worrying over the next meal, what will be served at the party and other food obsessions only makes you hungry. It makes you a restrained eater – one who tries to stay in tight control and fears “losing it.” Worrying so much over food takes its enjoyment away. If you have followed the diet over time to slowly lose weight, it is second nature by now. You didn't lose weight rapidly and so weight changes will be minimized. Don't weigh yourself daily; once a week is plenty to check your progress.



Exercise Tips

Exercise is the only way to get your body stoked to burn more calories. As you exercise, you will increase muscle and that alone will burn many more calories. Your metabolism will burn faster up to 24 hours after an exercise session. Exercise is for life too, so start slow, select activities that you really enjoy and stick with it. Remember, though, that the scale will appear to play “tricks” on you as you exercise more. You may actually gain weight, as you decrease fat and increase muscle, since muscle weights more than fat.

Up with Attitude

You can see that the diet and exercise plans are as much of an attitude as they are an activity. You need to love and accept yourself and praise yourself for your progress. It will take time to make a philosophical overhaul. You also need to consider the fact that you may have an unrealistic idea of what you should weigh. Chasing that last five pounds the rest of your life may not be worth it. For times of the year when you see your weight normally increase, like the holidays, you may need to make some slight adjustments. This does not mean dieting in January. Overeating one day and under eating another is all a part of the normal eating experience. Trust yourself to balance it out by following your appetite.