FEBRUARY
SAFETY TALK

HEALTHY HABITS
FOR MENTAL FITNESS

We all know that work deadlines, situations, and relationships can add to the stress we feel from our already stressful lives.

What is stress? Is it all bad? What can we do about it?

Stress is a reaction to a situation. It can occur as a result of a single incident, or it can build up over time. Stress is what we feel when our bodies feel the need for "fight or flight" syndrome. We have all heard about that: our bodies are pre-conditioned to either fight or to flee. In the workplace, neither one of these is possible and we feel stress as a result.

Stress is not necessarily bad. Some stress may be considered simply a "challenge" in one person, while in another, it could be life-altering. For instance, are you comfortable presenting in public? No? Then that would be a stressful situation for you. Other people may thrive in that situation and not feel anything but "good" stress.

Too much stress can make us unable to complete everyday tasks, and mental and physical changes can occur in our bodies,

including lack of concentration, inability to make decisions, and physical changes such as sweating and "the shakes" can occur. That's our body still trying for fight or flight!

Stress can also prevent us from sleeping well – and we need sleep in order to deal with stress!

So, what can we do about it?

We can't remove all stress from our lives – at home or at work. What we can do is learn a few ways that we can muffle the "fight or flight" needs that our bodies have had for millennia. The following are just a FEW ways you can train your body to effectively deal with stress.

1. Give and accept help from friends and family. We all need support from time to time.

2. Laugh! Share a laugh with a co-worker, watch a funny movie, try to see the humour in situations.

3. Identify your strengths and expand on them – this will help build your confidence.

4. Identify your weaknesses and take steps to overcome them; training, coaching, counselling may all help.

5. Maintain a healthy diet and healthy lifestyle. Eating well and exercising regularly improve your body's ability to deal with stress.

6. Be organized. Take time each day to plan what you will be doing that day. Do one thing at a time, and remember to leave time for interruptions!

7. Talk to a counsellor. Your organization will have an Employee and Family Assistance Program. Use it!

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