

# **MAJOR PROGRAM POINTS**

## **"WORKPLACE STRESS"**

**Part of the "GENERAL SAFETY SERIES"**

**Quality Safety and Health Products, for Today...and Tomorrow**

# Outline of Major Points Covered in the "Workplace Stress" Course

The following outline summarizes the major points of information presented in the Course on Workplace Stress. The outline can be used to survey the Course before taking it on a computer, as well as to review the Course when a computer is not available.

- **Stress is something we encounter every day, from a number of sources.**
  - Money problems.
  - Job pressures.
  - Family illnesses.
  - And more.
- **Even when good things occur, like the arrival of a new baby, they can cause stress from:**
  - "Round the clock" feedings.
  - doctor's bills.
- **Most people know how stress feels.**
  - Your adrenaline rises.
  - Muscles tense up.
  - You start to perspire.
  - The heart starts beating faster (and blood pressure rises).
  - Your stomach can get "queasy".
- **Stress-related physical changes are short lived during "Positive Stress" situations.**
  - Positive stress gets us through an immediate challenge.
  - Then the body quickly returns to normal.
- **Positive stress is essential and automatic. It:**
  - Helps us concentrate.
  - Focuses our energy for a short time.

- **"Negative Stress" is what causes problems.**
  - At times of negative stress our physical responses are often magnified.
  - We can get shaky and nervous.
  - Nausea and indigestion can occur.
  
- **Negative stress generally does not go away quickly.**
  - Natural relaxation doesn't occur.
  - The body can't "recharge" itself to prepare for the next stressful situation.
  
- **Uncontrolled negative stress can have adverse physical effects, including:**
  - Migraines.
  - Ulcers.
  - High blood pressure.
  - Even heart attack.
  
- **There are several keys to combating negative stress.**
  - Becoming aware of what cause stress.
  - Working to eliminate these causes.
  - Practicing relaxation techniques.
  - Maintaining a positive attitude and lifestyle.
  
- **One technique for recognizing stressful situations focuses on their symptoms.**
  - Identify what situations causes your muscles to tense, your stomach to become upset, etc.?
  
- **As you become aware of stress-causing situations, you can work to eliminate them. For example, if rush hour traffic irritates you:**
  - Leave earlier for work.
  - Form a car pool.
  - Take public transportation.
  
- **If being rushed for appointments is a problem:**
  - Start getting ready earlier.
  - Focus more on "time management".

- **Major lifestyle changes can be even more stressful.**
  - They force us to adapt to unknown situations.
- **A job change in a new city is a good example.**
  - New housing must be found.
  - You need to become familiar with local geography and directions.
  - New friends must be made.
- **One technique for handling major lifestyle changes involves limiting changes in other areas.**
  - Don't completely revamp your lifestyle.
  - Continue to do routine things that are pleasurable.
  - Make time for yourself.
- **Sometimes stress can reach an unmanageable level.**
  - This often occurs in situations beyond your control.
  - You feel like you are being pulled in many directions at once.
- **There are several keys to coping with these situations.**
  - Remember that you can't control everything in your life.
  - Don't try to do more than you are capable of.
  - Don't take constructive criticism personally.
  - Don't berate yourself for mistakes (learn from them).
  - Take time to step back and examine problems from a distance (put them in perspective).
- **Relaxation exercises can also be helpful in decreasing stress.**

- **One of the simplest relaxation techniques is "Deep Breathing".**
  - Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight, your hands folded on your lap.
  - Inhale deeply through your nose (your stomach area should expand).
  - Exhale slowly through your mouth, pressing your lips to control the flow of air.
  - Perform this exercise three or four times a day, or whenever you feel stress.
  
- **Another method is to use a "mental relaxer" to clear your mind.**
  - Select a quiet space and a comfortable seat.
  - Loosen your clothing and kick off your shoes.
  - Practice deep breathing.
  - Focus on a peaceful thought.
  - Try and block out distractions.
  - Do this exercise five minutes each day.
  - Finish off with a "stretch".
  
- **"Positive Visualization" is another effective relaxation technique.**
  - Think of something relaxing.
  - Picture it in your mind.
  - Focus on this relaxed setting (such as a sunset from a summer vacation).
  - The key is visualizing something that makes you calm.
  
- **"Autogenics" is another way of inducing a more relaxed state.**
  - Begin with deep breathing.
  - Then clear your mind.
  - Focus on a specific area of the body (for instance your arm).
  - Say to yourself "My arm feels loose and heavy".
  - Once that body area relaxes, move on to other parts of the body.

- **Stretching exercises can help with the muscle tension that is a common sign of stress.**
- **The neck and shoulders are particularly susceptible to tenseness, but can be relaxed as follows:**
  - Slowly turn your head to the right... hold this position for 3 seconds.
  - Then turn the head to the left... hold this position 3 seconds.
  - Carefully lower your chin to your chest.
  - Pull your head as far back as possible.
  - Repeat this cycle 5 to 10 times.
- **Loosening up the muscles of the upper back can also be helpful.**
  - Grab the wrist of one raised arm.
  - Pull the arm towards the opposite shoulder.
  - Hold this position for 4 or 5 seconds.
  - Repeat with the other arm.
- **Learning to take physical and mental breaks helps to avoid "Stress Overload".**
  - It can re-energize and refresh you.
- **Maintaining a positive attitude and lifestyle is also important when dealing with stress.**
  - This requires building commitment to handling stressful changes.
  - It also involves learning to "control" stressful situations.
- **Using positive thinking is the key.**
  - Tell yourself you "can do it".
  - Anticipating challenging situations and approaching them positively is also important.
  - "Rehearse" for situations you feel may come up.
  - Preparation builds confidence.

- **Developing an action plan for major groups of activities can also be helpful.**
  - Assign priorities to each task.
  - Build in alternatives for areas that may change.
  - Address one task at a time.
  - Check off tasks as they are completed.
  
- **When activities involve other people, meetings can be helpful.**
  - They can be useful at work and at home.
  
- **If problems occur in your plans, getting advice from others can also help. Often someone else has encountered a similar situation.**
  - A coworker.
  - Friends.
  - Family members.
  - Even your boss.
  
- **Maintaining a positive physical lifestyle is also important.**
  - A healthy body can better cope with stress.
  
- **Aerobic exercise is key.**
  - Running, biking, basketball, etc.
  - It helps your body use oxygen more efficiently.
  - It also strengthens the heart and lungs.
  
- **You should have regular physical examinations.**
  - Some physical problems can cause stress.
  - Other problems can magnify existing symptoms.
  - Doctors are trained to spot symptoms of stress.
  
- **Maintaining a healthy diet helps your body cope with stress.**
  - Stay away from junk food.
  - Avoid too much sugar.
  - Eat balanced meals.

- **Sharing your feelings with others is also helpful.**
  - Many people have the same concerns and worries that you do.
  - Talking with friends and coworkers can be good.
  
- **Professional counseling can sometimes be beneficial.**
  - Some companies offer confidential counseling services.
  - Outside health professionals can also be consulted.
  - Many community service agencies have counselors on staff (look in your phone book).
  
- **Remember the keys in dealing with stress.**
  - Be aware of stress-causing situations.
  - Work to eliminate these situations.
  - Practice relaxation techniques.
  - Maintain a positive attitude and lifestyle.