Tuesday’s Tidbits

Don’t Let Stress Distress You

We all know what stress is and how it makes us feel. As nurses you know that “the body’s autonomic nervous system has a built-in stress response that causes physiological changes to allow the body to combat stressful situations. This stress response, also known as the ‘fight or flight response,’ is activated in case of an emergency. ... Prolonged activation of the stress response causes wear and tear on the body – both physical and emotional” (Cleveland Clinic, 2015, para. 2). Adding tests, grades, and studying to your already busy schedules with work, home, and family makes it necessary for you to add stress relief to your “To Do” list.

Nurses should also know that living with constant stress can lead to a negative stress reaction condition called distress. Distress can cause physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach problems, sleeplessness, changes in appetite, high blood pressure, chest pain, and sexual dysfunction. Emotional problems like depression, panic attacks, or other forms of anxiety and worry can also occur (Cleveland Clinic, 2015). So, it’s best not to get “stressed out.”

You need to make some changes when you feel like the stress in your life is out of control; stress management can teach you healthier ways to cope with stress. According to Robinson, Smith and Segal (2017) some stress management strategies you may want to try to help lessen your stress include:

1) Avoiding unnecessary stress
   - Avoid people who stress you out.
   - Learn how to say “no”.
   - Trim your to-do list.

2) Altering the situation
   - Adjust your attitude.
   - Manage your time better.
   - Express your feelings instead of bottling them up inside.

3) Adapting to the stressor
   - Look at the big picture and ask yourself how important it will be in the long run.
   - Focus on the positive.
   - Adjust your standards; perfection is not possible.

4) Accepting the things you can’t change
   - Don’t try to control the uncontrollable.
   - Try to look at major challenges as opportunities for personal growth.
   - Share your feelings; talk or write about what you’re going through even if there’s nothing you can do to change the situation.

5) Making time for fun and relaxation
   - Set aside time for relaxation.
   - Do something you enjoy every day.
   - Spend time with positive, supportive people.
   - Keep your sense of humor—laughter is the best medicine.

6) Adopting a healthy lifestyle
   - Reduce caffeine and sugar intake.
   - Get enough sleep.
   - Exercise regularly.
   - Eat a healthy diet.
   - Avoid alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes.

References: