



WellMASS Monthly Newsletter

December 2014

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Our lives are fed by a constant stream of positive and negative stressors. Stress is the body's natural response to something it perceives as a threat. Sometimes stress can be useful or constructive. For example, it can give us the motivation to perform at our best to meet challenging work-related goals. Stress also naturally causes our heart rates to increase, blood pressure and blood sugar to rise, and hormone levels to change, all of which can act together to give us the energy we need to push through obstacles and accomplish tasks. However, frequent and uncontrolled stress can take a serious toll on our well-being. In those instances, the same physical mechanisms that worked to help us perform effectively might become exacerbated to the degree that they hinder our effectiveness. In fact, uncontrolled stress can limit concentration, make us more prone to accidents, and undermine our physical and mental health. While it is not always feasible to control or anticipate the stressors that arise in our lives, we can always control our reactions to these situations. By practicing stress relieving tips and coping skills during periods of distress, we can turn negative stress into positive energy as well as keep negativity at bay to protect our health.

Using Stress to Fuel Energy:

- **Be prepared.** When you're expecting a stressful event, prepare yourself with the knowledge, skills, and tools you will need to handle it.
- **Write down the stressful situation.** Break it out into parts and analyze how you will react to each part. This will help you see the whole picture as more manageable.
- **Give yourself a pep talk.** Tell yourself that you can handle the situation and talk yourself through the process.
- **Visualize the solution.** Walk yourself through the steps you would take to solve the problem.
- **Give the stressor a positive name.** For example, if your boss corrects your performance, think of it as constructive and helpful, not as a reprimand.
- **Look at the whole problem from both sides.** Try to understand the other person's point of view.
- **See the situation as an opportunity for growth and learning.**
- **Learn from your stress.** How do you react to your stressors? What can you do to turn stress into positive energy?

RECIPE OF THE MONTH: SPICED SQUASH WITH YOGURT DRESSING

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small winter squash, peeled, seeded and cut into 1 ½-inch-thick pieces
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon ground allspice
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup low-fat plain yogurt
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup pomegranate seeds
- ¼ cup roughly chopped fresh cilantro

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Toss the squash, 1 tablespoon olive oil, the allspice, cayenne, and black pepper to taste in a shallow baking dish. Roast until tender, stirring once, 15 to 20 minutes. Let cool slightly.

Whisk the yogurt, lime juice, 1 tablespoon water, the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil and a pinch of salt in a bowl. Transfer the squash to a serving dish and drizzle with the yogurt dressing. Sprinkle with the pomegranate seeds and cilantro.

Recipe courtesy of [Food Network Kitchens](#).

DECEMBER CHALLENGE: MANAGE YOUR STRESS

Throughout the month of December, challenge yourself to try coping skills and relaxation techniques to relieve stress. Below are some items to try throughout the month to make small, but achievable changes that will help you manage anticipated and unanticipated stressful events in your life.

Complete a minimum of one tip per day for 20 days. As you finish a healthy tip, fill in a circle to track your progress. Remember, you can use these tips more than once.

- OOOOO I made a stressful event feel more manageable by writing it down and analyzing it in smaller parts.
- OOOOO I gave myself a pep talk when I felt discouraged or overwhelmed by stress in my life.
- OOOOO I visualized my desired outcome of a stressful situation and walked myself through the steps to get there.
- OOOOO I renamed a perceived negative stressor with a more positive, constructive name.
- OOOOO I looked at a stressful situation from the perspective of an objective third party or a person with a different point of view.
- OOOOO I took a deep, relaxing breath before reacting to a stressor.
- OOOOO I took time to reflect upon what I learned from a stressful event.
- OOOOO I planned for anticipated stressors at work by preparing myself with the knowledge, skills, and tools I would need to get the job done.
- OOOOO I shared my feelings with a close network of family and friends to gain their support.
- OOOOO I developed other aspects of my life outside of my source of stress to achieve personal growth and a sense of life satisfaction.
- OOOOO I took care of myself by eating healthfully, exercising, avoiding alcohol and smoking, and getting adequate sleep so that I felt physically and mentally capable of coping with stress.
- OOOOO I accepted that some stressors in life are unavoidable or uncontrollable and have resolved to cope with them rather than avoid them.

DECEMBER WEBINAR: STRESS MANAGEMENT

Tuesday, December 9
10:00-10:30 AM and 1:00-1:30 PM

To participate, call (866) 740-1260 and log on to
<http://lifemasters.readytalk.com>, and enter access
code 7243537.



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