

TAKE IT EASY!

A review of Stress Rx: 103 Prescriptions for Overcoming Stress and Achieving Lifelong Happiness by Edwin Riley, Ph.D.

By Babs E. Keller

With the foreboding sense of uncertainty and fear generated in by the recession, many are stressed and face crises at work, home and in their relationships. Society is filled with stressed-out individuals and no one is immune: stress is an equal-opportunity condition. While some handle mental tension better than others, stress is still a part of most people's lives. In his newly released book, *Stress Rx: 103 Prescriptions for Overcoming Stress and Achieving Lifelong Happiness*, Dr. Edwin Riley offers remedies in an easy to understand and interactive format while guiding individuals to take personal responsibility for the stress in their lives. For those who don't know how deal with stress effectively, *Stress Rx* offers effective coping skills, relaxation techniques and breathing and meditation exercises helping to alleviate negative reactions to the mental and emotional strains of life.

The Buddha said, "Do not dwell in the past; do not dream of the future. Concentrate the mind on the present moment." In other words, yesterday is a cashed check; tomorrow is a promissory note; now is the only cash on hand. People beat themselves up thinking of all the poor choices they made because they are attached to and have difficulty letting go of the past. Regrets and guilt about things done or not done plague most people. It is almost impossible to move forward when mired with worry about what might happen in the future. There is nothing that can change the past and the future does not exist yet. The critical time is now.

In *Stress Rx*, Dr. Riley describes how constant anxiety and the cumulative effects of long term stress can severely affect our life. "Our stress response is triggered by the mind; fearful or worrisome thoughts that produce a chemical reaction in the body. When this *fight-or-flight* response is invoked by a situation we see as threatening, the hormones cortisol and epinephrine, also known as adrenaline, are released into the blood-stream. When this happens, the heart beats faster, blood pressure soars, the muscles tense and the extremities might feel cold and clammy," he says. Some symptoms of harboring stress are obsessive thought patterns; all kinds of compulsive behavior towards sex, drugs, eating and drinking; and panic attacks, which feel like heart attack symptoms such as chest pains, rapid heartbeat, throat constriction,

dizziness, trembling and shaking. These stress symptoms are often followed by feelings of despair, depression and fear that it might occur again. As Dr. Brian Clement states in the foreword to Dr. Riley's book, "there is no better way to devastate your immune system than to have gnawing, destructive thoughts pervade your consciousness."

Medical experts say that between 80-95% of illness today is stress related. Stress can cause nausea, migraines, insomnia, and if prolonged, serious illness and disease. *Stress Rx* contains many suggestions on how to better handle almost any life situation such as:

Know that it is okay to cry. Let the tears flow; don't keep stress bottled up.

Pay close attention to gut feelings and physical symptoms like sharp pain, twinges, constipation, and trembling eyelids, cheeks and hands.

Chronic colds, sinus infections and rashes are all signs that something is out of balance.

When feeling attacked with aggressive or hostile behavior, don't take it personally; instead practice patience and understanding. You are the target of someone else's anger. Their behavior is a reflection of their inability to handle the stress in their lives.

Be mindful of your thoughts and reactions. It is amazing how a smile and a positive attitude quickly diffuse **Cont'd on page 61**



BEYOND STRESS RX, cont'd from p. 55
a negative situation.

Stress triggers eating disorders and phobias for every kind of life situation such as fear of illness, rejection, accidents, death, unfaithfulness, success, failure, being alone – the list is endless.

Virtually any form of exercise can decrease the production of stress hormones and counteract the body's natural stress response. Lack of exercise creates all kinds of physical havoc in the body. The ancient art of Tai Chi and yoga are non-competitive exercises using gentle stretching and flowing movements to reduce stress and improve agility.

Research has shown that music has a profound healing effect on the body and psyche. Hospitals are beginning to use music therapy to help with pain management and to ward off depression and anxiety.

These and other tips in *Stress Rx* teach those feeling any level of stress how to release and overcome the accumulated effects which can be damaging to the body and mind. *Stress Rx* is now available at the Hippocrates Store and via mail-order.

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