**Healthy Stress vs. Unhealthy Stress**

The phrase "healthy stress" may seem like an oxymoron, but it's actually a reality. Stress is inescapable; everyone feels some stress at some points throughout their lives. Our bodies are therefore equipped to handle certain types and amounts of stress. We can even benefit from it.

So what is the difference between healthy and unhealthy stress? What makes stress healthy? Here are some things to think about regarding stress and its role in your health.

**Healthy Stress**

*-The Great Motivator*

Without stress, not very much would get done. Stress is what drives you to teach your kids proper behavior, to earn money, and to pay your bills on time. It is what keeps you on your toes in a football game or when catching your tumbling toddler. A certain amount of stress about traffic accidents motivates you to drive safely.

*-Reaction Time*

Did you feel stress when that person cut you off in traffic? The stress response was partially responsible for your quick pressure on the brakes! Stress can motivate us into quick, sometimes life-saving action.

In the case of an emergency, one of your stress hormones - adrenaline - kicks in, and prompts you to act quickly and sometimes with remarkable strength.

*-Endorphins*

Endorphins are the "feel good" neurotransmitters. When the body is stressed or in pain, its natural pain relievers are released in the form of endorphins. Exercise is a healthy way to bring this kind of endorphin-releasing stress onto your body.

While you should not exercise to the point of unbearable pain, it's okay to "feel the burn" and push yourself a little. Massage therapy and acupuncture can also stimulate the release of endorphins.

-Other Health Benefits

Experts are finding anti-tumor activity in people who undergo healthy stress, indicating that healthy stress stimulates the immune system.

**Unhealthy Stress**

*-Constant*

The unhealthy type of stress is constant. You do not return to a normal energy level after it has passed. Unhealthy stress can take the form of constant worry, depression, and exhaustion. It can cause weight gain as well due to the release of cortisol, the "stress hormone."

*-Immunity*

Continual stress weakens the immune system. That can leave you more susceptible to everyday illnesses and more serious problems such as cancer.

*-Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*

People who are chronically stressed usually worry about common, everyday things over which they have no control. These are the kinds of things that are not going to go away, such as paying bills, keeping the house clean, and so forth.

Once one set of worries is tackled, another set comes along. Accepting these annoyances as part of life can go a long way in helping you cope with unhealthy stress.