

Chasing the stress monster

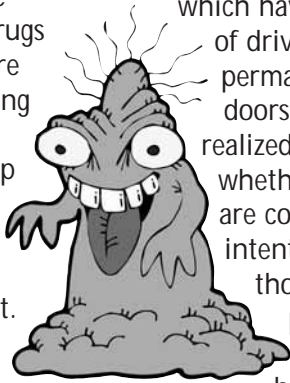
Advice
Line

by Dr. Betty Phillips

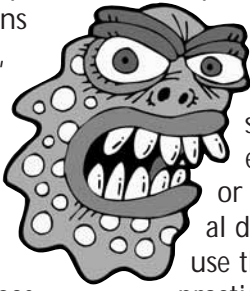


Does counseling actually help us cope with stress?

Yes. Take a look at studies such as the recent article that popped up in my inbox, "Talking cure works better than drugs for anxiety." The glow has come off the "pop a pill" remedy for stress as more short-term and long-term negative side effects are discovered for drugs and more positive results are found for effective counseling strategies such as cognitive behavioral therapy. Self-help advice is a great place to start, such as the advice in my columns, in books and other places on the Internet. When you really need to develop an individual stress management plan for yourself, however, friendly guidance from an experienced therapist or life coach can help you really chase the stress monster away from your doorstep.



Symptom relief can certainly be obtained with therapeutic techniques. For example, I've found that panic attacks are increasing these days but can be chased away with counseling. Therapeutic strategies can also be used to help cope with physical manifestations of stress such as insomnia, over-eating or over-cafeinating to help restore wellness. Most interesting to me are life improvement strategies such as positivity and optimism which have the best chance



of driving the stress monster permanently away from your doorstep. You may not have realized that your thoughts, whether positive or negative, are constantly transmitting your intentions to yourself and those around you. The new positive psychology movement has developed self-help and therapy strategies to assist you in increasing your personal power so you'll experience more happiness and joy as the stress monster slinks away from your house.

insurance and most secondary insurers fully fund therapy services provided by qualified Medicare providers. When insurance or financial resources are more limited, sessions can be spaced out when therapist and client work together to focus goals and use homework action plans or other resources between office sessions. My website has a page entitled "Affordable Therapy or Life Coaching" with additional details about these ideas. I do use this information in my own practice, but most therapists are flexible enough to help you develop affordable plans for therapy.

What does your stress monster look like?

Children know. The monster is very big, hairy, with red eyes, big teeth and big claws and loves to chase them in nightmares. Sometimes the monsters can also be found in closets or under the stairs. I used to be a therapist for children and I delighted in helping girls and boys achieve victory as they found the courage to stand up to these terrifying figures. As adults our stress monsters look different but can be even more formidable and dangerous. Teaming up with a counselor or life coach may turn the tide for you and help you vanquish your stress monsters!

Why does anyone need counseling anyway? Just neurotics and wimps?

It's not just the current economic recession, it's really the fact that our bodies and minds were designed for a more pastoral existence and are now subjected to continued onslaught from stress monsters such as electronic overstimulation, constant bad news, long commutes and work hours. And then we come home to chemicals and toxins in our food with the ubiquitous television programs and other noises blaring in the background. During every stressful day your body actually reacts as if you are in physical danger, releasing potent stress hormones to fight non-existent lions and tigers at your cave door. The constant release of these supercharged hormones actually causes depletion and exhaustion, depression and anxiety, as well as a multitude of increasingly serious health problems. Previous articles have explained this sympathetic nervous system "flight or fight" response more fully. So the answer is that we all need relief from stress. The "stiff upper lip" and "stuff your feelings" approach has resulted only in escalating stress levels in the population.

How can you use counseling to cope with stress?

I'll mention several general approaches which a good therapist can use to assist you in improving your life. The relaxation response can be integrated into your daily life to help the parasympathetic nervous system cope with this sympathetic nervous system overactivation.

Can you afford counseling?

Most likely you can if you take the time and energy to think through the issues and investigate your resources. You will eventually want to determine a plan to access a few focused sessions or a longer period of counseling depending upon your insurance, your pocketbook and your interests/needs. Did you know that counseling is sometimes even free to you, free in that it can be fully covered by insurance? For example, original Medicare

Need advice?

Send Dr. Betty Phillips questions about individual, relationship, marriage or family issues to BettyPhillips@BellSouth.net or 466 Eagle Point Road, Pittsboro 27312. Questions can be anonymous. Betty looks forward to hearing from you!



Pam Herndon, Agent
919-240-0155
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