



UNDRESSING DISABILITY

enhance the uk

April 2021

How Stress Impacts Your Libido and General Health

April is stress awareness month. So, we thought we'd take a look at how stress impacts your libido and general health.

What is Stress?

When we're feeling stressed, our body has a physical reaction which triggers the release of cortisol and adrenalin. These stress hormones send us into what is known as 'fight or flight' mode. Instead of being relaxed we are on edge or anxious. Different people have different things that trigger stress but for the majority of people stress impacts your libido, your mental health, and your physical wellbeing.

Stress and Libido

Stress can affect both men's and women's libido. The stress hormone cortisol disrupts your testosterone levels, which is responsible for men and women's sex drives. It can also narrow your arteries, meaning men may experience erectile dysfunction and it may take you longer to become aroused and reach orgasm. When you are stressed and have worries and thoughts running through your head it's not surprising that your libido might decrease.

If stress is impacting your libido, trust that this can change. It doesn't mean your sex drive will be low forever. It can fluctuate at any time and for many reasons. Intimacy may help reduce your stress too. So kisses, a loving cuddle or massage can alleviate your tension and stress. And with time, this may help your libido increase.

Masturbation can be a big stress reliever too, so it's not just a partner that can make you feel good!

What can we do to manage stress?

When you feel stressed and are aware of the physiological changes, try and take control back by refocusing your thoughts. Ask yourself:

1 - What is really going on in this moment?

2 - How can I reasonably respond to the situation?

This isn't easy and will take much practice to regain control of your thoughts.

Slow down your breathing and breathe through your nose, deep into your belly, expanding your diaphragm. Release the breath slowly and forcefully, emptying the lungs.

You can use mindfulness with your breathing too. Notice the air flowing through your nostrils and how your chest and belly rises. How does it feel? This exercise of thought focus will divert the panic response of fight or flight.

Managing relationships whilst stressed

If you recognise that you're being snappy and impatient with your loved ones, don't be too proud to admit it's happening.

When you've got time to collect your thoughts, be honest with them. Say 'I'm stressed at the moment and know I'm being irritable. Bear with me'.

This will help dissipate their bad feelings towards you, rather than you not admitting it, feeling guilty yet still displaying the unhelpful behaviours! Also just being open and chatting the problem over with them may help you. The old adage 'a problem shared is a problem halved' is so true.

Always remember - talk, reach out, use techniques, seek support! It's out there.

Speak to your doctor if stress is impacting your day to day life.

Useful Resources

The Stress Management Society – 30 Day Challenge

<https://www.stress.org.uk/30daychallenge/>

Mental Health Foundation – How to Manage Stress

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-manage-and-reduce-stress>

NHS – 10 Stress Busters

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/tips-to-reduce-stress/>



About us

'Undressing Disability' is a global campaign which aims to raise standards in sexual health and sexual awareness for disabled people. Issues around sexuality and sexual frustration are frequently raised by disabled people who feel that they have less opportunity and ability to explore their sexuality than others. Through a lack of understanding, education and a general lack of services, disabled people frequently cannot access the support that would make it possible for them to make the sorts of choices about their lifestyles that most of us take for granted. As part of our campaign we run the Love Lounge, an online forum providing free advice on all things sex, love and disability. We also have free downloadable resources. As a user-led charity, our aim is to change the way people view disability, which often involves removing the 'fear factor' that so often surrounds the subject. We support businesses to be more inclusive by providing disability awareness training, British Sign Language workshops and accessibility audits, amongst other things.

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CHANGING SOCIETY'S VIEWS ON DISABILITY