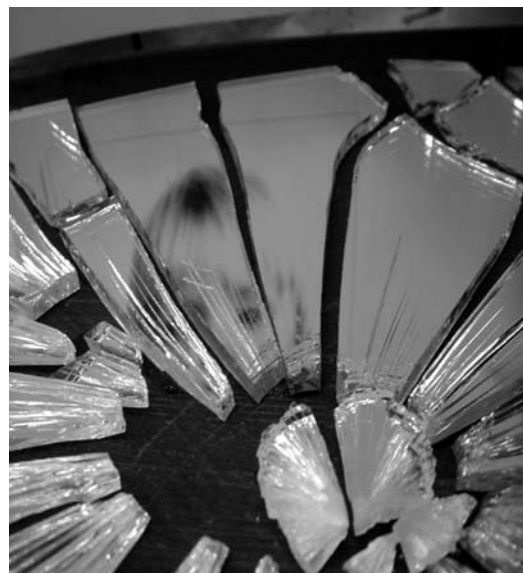


## Stress and Coping Mechanisms.

Most people, no matter how well adjusted, will suffer at least short-term distress while they negotiate periods of transition, trauma and loss.

Stress may cause raised blood pressure and alter the metabolism of fats, which contribute to heart disease. Also, high levels of stress increase secretion of noradrenaline, the 'aggression hormone,' which may cause disturbances of heart rhythms.

Ongoing stress also increases the prevalence of other risk factors for heart disease, such as smoking lack of physical activity and over eating.



Our body cannot distinguish between stress and fear. When put under stress, it adopts the flight or fight mode. If unable to do either, it remains in abortive overload. Typical physical symptoms of stress are sweating, palpitations, flushing, muscle tension, chest tightness, headache, frequent urination.

Other symptoms include apprehension, anxiety, disturbed sleep, panic attacks, breathlessness, tiredness, and feelings of foreboding.

### **COPING WITH STRESS**

Identify ways in which you put yourself under stress -- such as taking on too much, or leaving things till the last minute.

Counteract these habits by learning to say 'no' and planning ahead.

Make a list of daily tasks and tick them off as they're done.

Take time to be physically active. This will reduce stress levels and give a feeling of relaxation and well-being.

Get adequate rest. Find the best way to help you sleep -- such as taking the dog for a walk, having a hot milky drink, winding down with music, TV, radio or a good book.

Allow time to enjoy at least one meal a day in a relaxed atmosphere.

Find non-competitive hobbies such as gardening, fishing, photography, walking and swimming.

Pamper yourself from time to time.

Talk worries over with partner, trusted friend or relation.

Smile, and react positively to people. This will affect how they will be with you.

### **Physical Activity - A Stress Buster**

- Stretching, part of many activities, including the warm-up and cool-down, helps relieve muscle tension.
- Physical activity leads to a feeling of being energised and reduces anxiety and depression.
- Physical activity stimulates the release of endorphins, a natural pain killer in the body, which leads to a natural 'high' or the so called 'feel good' factor
- Regular physical activity helps people to clear the mind and work off frustrations.

Other benefits of physical activity are that it:

- Helps maintain healthy levels of blood pressure
- Helps to manage weight
- Strengthens muscles and bones
- Keeps joints mobile
- Reduces risk of heart disease