

# Army *Safety* Gram

## Leading on the Edge for Safety *Excellence*

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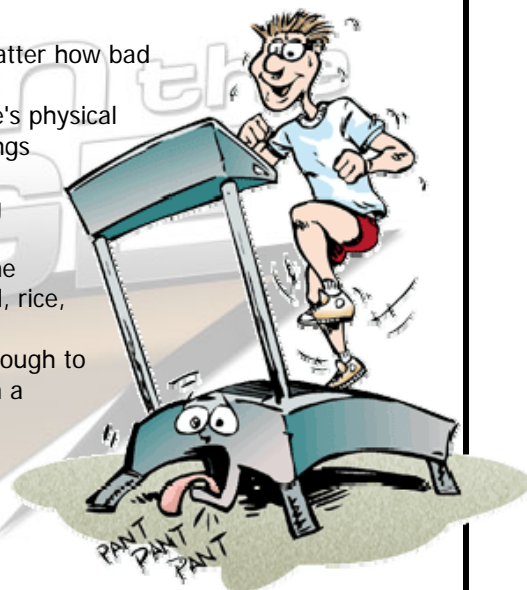
### Get a Handle on Stress!

We all experience stress over issues relating to our jobs. We wouldn't be human if we didn't. We may feel pressured to get the work done. We stew over conflicts and misunderstandings with team members. We might find the work too difficult or not challenging enough.

Stress is unavoidable. It's your natural response to the challenges and changes of life. In many cases, stress is the cause of personal unhappiness and much more. It is related to chronic health problems and risk of injury. You do have a choice in how you deal with stress, though. You can learn to relax physically and mentally. You can let off steam through physical exercise. You can reduce the causes of stress in your life.

#### Here are some healthy ways to deal with stress:

- ♦ **Keep your sense of humor.** There's usually something to laugh about no matter how bad things are.
- ♦ **Get regular exercise.** This will improve your fitness for dealing with all of life's physical and mental challenges. It is also a good way to shift your focus away from things which upset you or make you angry. A simple and effective response to an unhealthy stress problem is to rid you of the excess energy by doing something physical such as sports, running, or walking.
- ♦ **Eat right to maintain your health.** Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables, the fresher the better. Fill up on complex carbohydrates such as whole grain bread, rice, pasta, and potatoes. Skip the foods filled with fat and sugar.
- ♦ **Get enough sleep.** Individual sleep needs vary, but you should sleep long enough to wake up feeling rested and refreshed. Sleep patterns are often disrupted when a person is stressed.
- ♦ **Manage your vices.** Cigarettes, alcohol, and caffeine kick your body into high gear and can add to your stress level over the long run, so cut back or quit. If you need help in staying off alcohol or drugs, get help from a treatment program or self-help group.
- ♦ **Manage your time wisely.** Do the most important things first.
- ♦ **Talk about your problems.** The listener may not be able to offer solutions, but talking out helps put your problems in perspective.
- ♦ **Learn some relaxation techniques.** Here's a simple one: Close your eyes for a few moments and breath in and out deeply and slowly. Concentrate on the sensation of breathing. Obviously, you can't do this while you are doing something like driving or operating a drill press, but you can do it while you are taking a break.
- ♦ **Look on the bright side.** Optimism is a good antidote for stress.
- ♦ **Look out for each other.** Most people are well into unhealthy stress situations before they realize it. People around them can help by noting their symptoms and letting them know.



**When you are feeling worried, remember that most of the things we fear never actually happen. Save the heavy stress reactions for genuinely threatening situations. In the meantime, relax and try to enjoy your life today!**

