



MCFARLAND RADAR (Relevant Alcohol & Drug Awareness Resources) COALITION

AODA PREVENTION

SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2022

April is Stress Awareness Month

April has been recognized as Stress Awareness Month since 1992. Stress is a widespread feeling that almost everyone will experience at one time or another in their lives. As such, millions of individuals around the world are likely to struggle with it and have their lives impacted negatively by it.

What is Stress?

Since everyone experiences stress in various different ways, there is no single definition for stress but American Institute of Stress states that most common explanation is a “physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension.”

In a 2017 study found that the most common sources of stress reported among Americans were:

- The future
- Money
- Work
- Political Climate
- Violence/Crime



Effects of Stress on Your Brain:

Chronic stress can impair brain function in multiple ways:

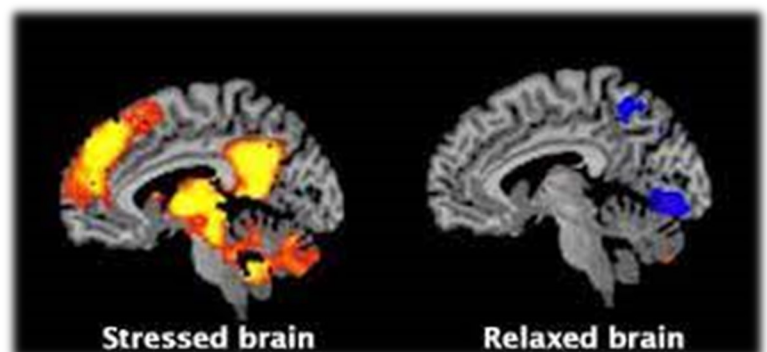
- Disrupt synapse regulation which can result in the loss of sociability and the avoidance of interactions with others.
- Kill brain cells and even reduce the size of the brain. Chronic stress has a shrinking effect on the prefrontal cortex, which is the area of the brain responsible for memory and learning.

Effects of Stress on Your Body:

When someone is placed in a stressful situation, specific stress hormones rush into a person’s bloodstream leading to an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and glucose. This can be helpful in a emergency situations, but having this “rush” for extended periods of time can be dangerous and can make someone susceptible to strokes and heart disease.

Physical Symptoms of Stress:

- Headaches
- Upset Stomach
- High Blood Pressure
- Chest Pain
- Problems with sleep



Stress and Substance Use

Often times when people are under a great deal of stress they try to find ways to cope. And often times people turn to substances as a way to handle whatever stressful situation they are facing.

- **Alcohol and Stress:** Drinking alcohol tends to be the common practice for relieving stress. Despite the anecdotal suggestion that drinking can help a person unwind, it is an ineffective way to deal with stress and can actually make stress worse. Since alcohol is a depressant, regularly drinking to deal with feelings of stress can interfere with what your brain needs for good mental health as well as disrupt sleep, making stress harder to deal with.
- **Marijuana and Stress:** Someone who uses marijuana may report that they feel a decrease in stress and anxiety. While this outcome may be true for some people, the relationship between marijuana and stress is more complex. When the effects of marijuana wear off, a rebound effect of increased anxiety is likely. Many long-term marijuana users report feeling unable to handle routine stressors.
- **Stress and Smoking (Tobacco):** Stress smoking is common. Many people feel that smoking a cigarette is a stress reliever. While this may seem true to a person who has already developed nicotine dependence, beginning an association of smoking and stress may increase the risk of becoming addicted in people not yet dependent on nicotine. Repeatedly turning to a substance such as nicotine in times of stress creates an association of needing that substance to cope.
- **Stress and Stimulants:** When overwhelmed with stress, the thought of taking a drug and suddenly having the energy to be able to complete more tasks in less time may seem appealing. The hopes of reducing workload often motivate people to use stimulants, especially prescription stimulants. One of the largest problems with the stress and stimulant connection is the high risk of developing an addiction.

Stress can cause changes in the brain like those caused by addictive drugs. This suggests that some people who experience stress may be more vulnerable to drug addiction or drug relapse.

Youth Stress and Substance Use

A national survey found that one of the top reasons why teens start to use alcohol/drugs underage is due to the experience of high stress. The number one source of the stress for the teens in this survey was academic pressure including the pressure to do well in school and to get into college.

Compared to teens who say their stress is low, teens who experience high stress are:

- Nearly three times more likely to use marijuana
- Twice as likely to use alcohol
- Almost twice as likely to use tobacco

Beyond academic pressures, a teen's life includes many other anxiety triggers. Social stress, family discord, world events, traumatic events, and significant life changes can all play a part.

Healthy Ways to Reduce Stress

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media:
 - It's good to be informed but hearing about the traumatic event constantly can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple of times a day and disconnecting from phone, TV, and computer screens for a while.
- Take care of yourself:
 - Eat healthy, exercise, get plenty of sleep, and give yourself a break if you feel stressed out.
- Take care of your body:
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
 - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
 - Exercise regularly.
 - Get plenty of sleep.
 - Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use.
 - Continue with routine preventive measures (such as vaccinations, cancer screenings, etc.) as recommended by your healthcare provider.
- Re-balance work and home:
 - All work and no play? If you're spending too much time at the office, intentionally put more dates in your calendar to enjoy time for fun, either alone or with others
- Make time to unwind:
 - Try to do some other activities you enjoy
- Talk to others:
 - Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling. Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a parent, friend, counselor, or doctor
- Avoid drugs and alcohol:
 - These may seem to help, but they can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- Recognize when you need more help:
 - If problems continue or you are thinking about suicide, talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counselor.



How Youth Can Manage Stress

- Sleep well:
 - Experts recommend nine to 12 hours of sleep a night for 6- to 12-year olds. Teens need eight to 10 hours a night. Sleep needs to be a priority to keep stress in check. To protect shut-eye, limit screen use at night and avoid keeping digital devices in the bedroom.
- Exercise:
 - Physical activity is an essential stress reliever for people of all ages. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 60 minutes a day of activity for children ages 6 to 17.
- Talk it out:
 - Talking about stressful situations with a trusted adult can help kids and teens put things in perspective and find solutions.
- Make time for fun — and quiet:
 - Just like adults, kids and teens need time to do what brings them joy, whether that's unstructured time to play with building bricks or uninterrupted hours to practice music or art. Also, while some children thrive bouncing from one activity to the next, others need more down time. Find a healthy balance between favorite activities and free time.
- Get outside:
 - Spending time in nature is an effective way to relieve stress and improve overall well-being. Researchers have found that people who live in areas with more green space have less depression, anxiety and stress.
- Write about it:
 - Research has found that expressing oneself in writing can help reduce mental distress and improve well-being. Some research has found, for example, that writing about positive feelings—such as the things you're grateful for or proud of — can ease symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Learn mindfulness:
 - In a study of a five-week mindfulness training program for 13- to 18-year-olds, researchers found that teens who learned mindfulness experienced significantly less mental distress than teens who did not.



McFarland is a small community south of Madison in Dane County. In January of 2017, a group of concerned citizens came together to discuss substance abuse problems in the McFarland area. The McFarland RADAR is a result of these meetings

We are comprised of local representatives from schools, businesses, churches, village administration as well as parents, and youth—all working together to promote healthy lifestyles

For more information go to: <https://www.radarmc.com/>



For time, day and place of meetings, please contact Cathy Kalina at CathyK@fsmad.org

The McFarland RADAR (RADAR stands for Relevant Alcohol & Drug Awareness Resources) Coalition works to develop, implement and support environmental strategies to reduce substance abuse.

We believe by working together, we can nurture social and environmental changes to make the McFarland area a safer and healthier place, brightening the future of our children, youth and families.

McFarland RADAR Mission Statement

“The mission of McFarland’s RADAR Coalition is to promote healthy lifestyles in the McFarland area through alcohol and drug abuse prevention and education efforts.”

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

We are asking you to give the gift of time. Make a difference in the lives of our youth and our community by

1. Working with us in providing support for planning, project management and awareness campaigns
2. Helping with coalition events, conferences, workshops, and fairs held throughout the year.
3. Being a voice for change in our community, it is time to come together and be that force for change in the McFarland area.