



This is our weekly talk about how you can succeed with a kidney diet, brought to you by RenalDietHQ.com, a website whose mission is to be the most valued resource on kidney disease that people can use to improve their health.

Hi, this is Mathea Ford with the Renal Diet Headquarters podcast and this week we are on podcast number 16 being released on April 9th, 2014. You can find the information and the links that I talk about at

www.renaldietHQ.com/016. That is where you will find more information on the things I talk about.

Okay, this week we are going to talk about two things. I will remind you that the Caregiver guide is coming out soon, so if you are interested in more information, you can go to www.renaldietHQ.com/go/caregiver and you can find out more information, but it is a product made for people who are caregivers of people with chronic kidney disease.

This week we are going to talk about stress and this month we are dealing with stress management and handling stress. So first thing we will talk about stress management and keeping stress at bay, and mainly we are going to talk about dealing with other people's stress and not letting it get to you. I know a lot of people have to deal with other people that are stressful or other people's stress. So I will give you some ideas today. Then # 2 I am going to talk about exercise, how much you should exercise, how often and if it helps at all with stress. Those are the two things we are going to talk about today.

#1) Stress Management. How to keep the contagious stress, which is other people's stress that gets into your own stress away. It is hard enough to manage your own stress, but if you have someone in your life that can't handle theirs, and they like to lean on you and bring you down to their stressed out life, it can be equally as harmful to you, as it is to them. Stress that is not stemming from your own life, but from someone else's life is very difficult to recognize sometimes. What happens, is because the stressed out

person is in your life, you catch their stress easily and it makes it contagious and many times you will become just as stressed. There is a second hand stress affect. Second hand stress can affect you the same way your own stress does. In small doses it is really manageable, but when you are around someone quite a bit who is constantly stressed out, it becomes overwhelming. Stress has both a physical and mental response in your body. You might even be able to recognize this stress the moment you get around this person because your body kind of reacts to them being around, it may become conditioned to respond to them.

Depression and anxiety may be the first thing you feel when you get around that person who is always stressed. Their tale is always one of chaos and frustration, never about being relaxed and calm, it might make you nervous to talk to them because you are going to hear something and you think, 'OMG, I can't believe I have to listen to this'. You might start to feel angry more often; this is especially true if the situation is something that causes you to be angry too. Every crisis they have suddenly becomes your crisis too.

Physically your body will become upset every time you come into contact with this person. You might feel a headache coming on when you are talking to them. Sometimes you might wake up with one because you couldn't sleep well thinking about everything that they told you, so they tell you stressful things. Your blood pressure might rise when you are in a conversation with this person, and if you already have blood pressure issues then that is not a good thing. So when dealing with their stress makes your blood pressure rise also.

Diabetes and heart disease are often associated with stress levels and if you already have one of those conditions, then being around even stressed out people can be harmful to you.

Skin conditions can become an issue. You might break out in hives when dealing with other peoples stress. You might have an acne outbreak or psoriasis or rosacea. Those are all issues that can happen when you have your own stress. The problem is everybody experiences stress. But when you surround yourself with highly stressed individuals that like to share it with you, you are overdosing and it won't be healthy.

People like this can be leaches not only do they come to you in order to sooth their frustrations and get it of their chest, but they use you to feed off of and get them through their tough times. Unfortunately, by doing this, they drain you of your own good mood. Should something stressful happen to you in your life, you won't be able to handle it well, because now your positivity has been removed. So, if you were feeling positive today, when you see them and they kind of drain you, that makes it hard to be positive for the day. Not only will their foul mood sway you to becoming more negative in your

life and in life in general, it can also be a domino effect, and you will then put stress on people in your life. Like your spouse or kids.

What kinds of “contagious stress” is there? Any stress that is truly part of your own responsibility should not be ignored, even if someone else is one the situation is affecting more. For example: your child’s stress. As a parent if you have a little one or a teenager who is enduring a lot of stress with friends or school work or sports, you need to take it upon yourself to shoulder that burden and help them get through that tough situation. The financial stress of your household is part of your responsibility, if your spouse is suffering with their career or not bringing in enough money or a lot of things have changed then you can help them find ways to grow in their contributions in the household earnings, you can help with your contribution you can do things to help with that, but you can only take on the burden so much. You can’t help it if someone is continually miserable with his or her job and they keep complaining about it day after day without ever taking steps to remedy the situation. I think that is one of the most frustration things about people when they are being stressful to you, is that, if they don’t take any steps to remedy the situation, it is difficult for you because you don’t want to listen to them anymore, at some point your like ‘you are not doing anything about it, I am not helping you anymore’.

If someone you love is not handling their stress well, to the point that their life is in danger, then it is natural to take that on to some degree, but if you sense there is a danger like suicide, then you need to get the person professional help and remove yourself from the situation.

Job stress is one common form of stress that your friends and family might come to you and complain about. It is one thing to get quick advice about how to approach a situation, but another if they are not interested in change and just want to gripe about it.

Find out if the person wants or needs your input. If you are just a sounding board and never ends, you will have to use on of the methods I talk about later to get you some relief, but a lot of people out there just really want to get it off their chest, and sometimes it becomes too much for you and you get tired of hearing it.

Relationship stress is sometimes at the root of someone’s unhappiness. A friend might confide in you about their life behind closed doors, if they are in danger, seek help for them, if it is simply a case of allowing themselves to be a doormat for someone else, that is when it can become a stress issue for you, even though you yourself are not part of the relationship. If you want to help them and give them advice but they won’t listen, then it is frustrating. Money stress is a common stress for many people, sometimes friends and family might be venting and sharing while others might be telling you to get

you to bail them out of a money mess. Some people never have enough money and always expect you to help them.

Health stress is one situation where you can help a friend or a loved one by shouldering the burden. If a friend needs to talk about their battle with cancer, for instance, then it is helpful if you are there for them. Even offering to run errands or go to appointments with them.

To help you deal with this stress, you can practice stress relieving measures yourself. That might mean aromatherapy like we talked about last week, counseling or exercise. If you can, take your friend who is in a precarious health situation and create a day out for the two of you to enjoy, like a spa day or a lunch and a movie. With health stress, if it is short term, it probably won't be an issue. But if you know someone is dealing with long term, or terminal illness, it can be something that is taken to the next level.

Major life change stress is another area where friends and family might reach out to you for your help. These are things like marriage, birth of a child, death in the family, moving and divorce. When you care about someone, obviously, their pain is going to be your pain. This is normal and it shows in the deep bonds you have created with the other individuals. There is a big difference in a friend that reaches out to you because she is battling breast cancer and a friend who stays in a bad job and does not make any effort to make herself get better career. You have to gauge which type of stress your friend or family member is presenting. Is it something where you should be there for them unconditionally, or is it a situation where you are exposing yourself to someone who refuses to take responsibility and merely wants another person to feel the pain with them? Do they just want to complain?

So, since it is contagious, let's talk about vaccinating yourself from other peoples stress. It's these types of people we have to be careful of. The ones so mired in their own pity party that they can't breathe and they want you there with them so they don't feel so alone. Instead of being inspired by your positive outlook and using it to improve their own lives, they prefer to drag you down with them. They want to not feel so alone, and if you allow them to, they will chain you to their problems. There are some individuals who we have to or want to continue being around. For those individuals you have to have plan in place so you can manage their stress so it does not affect you as much.

This is a situation where you know ahead of time what you are getting into and yet you are able to prevent their troubles from affecting your life. There are three ways you can achieve this.

#1) You can try steering the conversation away from the repeat stress topics. For example, let's say your friend continually gripes about their spouse every time you are around them. You just have to acknowledge what they say offer them condolences and

then perk the conversation up to something more positive. Here is an example conversation for you to see how it works.

Your friend says:

“I’m so annoyed with my husband, he never spends time with me anymore, he is always out with his friends”

Then you would say:

“I understand that must hurt your feelings, hey why don’t we together next week and have a little fun. Have you ever been to one of those paint and wine parties at the art store?”

So you let the friend know that you heard what they said. You offered condolences and you tried to present a positive spin on the conversation. If they try to drag you back into the conversation, just nod and say I’m sorry and change the topic again. Never give them more ammunition than that. If you start asking questions and trying to be a relationship counselor then it will just frustrate you. You might also want to get the business card of a relationship counselor and say something like “I’m so sorry, I thought about you and picked this up the other day, since I am not equipped to let you deal with it, I hope this helps” and then lead the conversation on to a different topic.

#2) The second thing you can do is fortify your own outlook by not taking on their problems. If you are able to do this your friend can mutter on about their woes and you will be just find nodding your head sympathizing and never let it invade your emotional wellbeing. You have to understand that not every problem is fixable, not every person truly wants to fix their problems either. Some just love to have things to gripe about. Call them Negative Nellie’s, Debbie Downers or whatever you want, but the truth is they don’t care about anything other than unhappiness and you will never break through. So you can listen, but refuse to fix it for them.

#3) You can help as much as possible without hindering yourself. What if a friend came to you complaining about her career? If she was struggling to pay the bills month after month and yet you enjoy a great deal of wealth. Would you feel obligated to lend money all the time? Instead offer advice about resources they can use to change their life. But don’t make their problems your problems, and don’t start lending them money. Setting uncomfortable boundaries that offer you a better life. Sometimes when you are unable to distance yourself in one way, like becoming emotional invested in their issues, you have to distance yourself a different way physically. It does not mean you have to cut all ties with someone, although in extreme cases that might be what has to happen depending on how bad it is affecting you and your family.

Set a limit on your phone conversations. If your friend has a habit of calling you after work and going on and on for two hours about their horrible life, make it point to end the conversation in a certain amount of time, about 15 or 20 minutes. In fact, you might tell the person when they first call that you can't talk that long. What I use to do is my grandma use to like to tell me about how she had some stressful things in her life and it always made me more stressed. I would say, "You know what? I really love hearing about what you're doing, I don't like to hear about what other people are doing, other family members, so I would love to hear about you, about how bowling went or whatever this week." I would just try that and maybe after a couple times they don't figure out that "Oh, yeah, they don't really want to hear about that stressful stuff". And it helps to get them out because then they know you care about them and you called to talk to them about what they are doing.

Meet with them in settings where other people and distractions are present. These kinds of stress people usually want the entire attention on themselves; they don't want to share the spotlight. So by forcing it to be in a place where your attention is divided, they will feel less like sharing, or if they do, it will be easier to get out of the conversation and seek relief.

Be honest with them about how their stress is affecting your life. Some people just aren't aware of it. In a loving way let them know that you care about them and sympathize with them and their situation, but you have to alleviate stress in your own life, for your own reasons, so you will need to keep the conversation light.

So that is my advice on dealing with other peoples stress.

The second thing I said I wanted to talk about was exercise. The question was, how much should I exercise, and the answer is, you should exercise about 150 minutes per week or about 30 minutes 5 days a week. That is the healthy level. If you have difficulty walking, you can get a chair aerobics DVD or walk in a swimming pool. I have seen people who are without legs do the swimming pool with some help. Walking is one of the best forms of exercise and just being consistent. So try to be consistent, don't push yourself to hard and hurt yourself. What I am worried about is if you think, 'oh, 30 minutes is good, I should do 60 minutes' and you can do that, as long as you know you are not going to wear yourself out for the next day. Keep it steady and do what you can. If you can't do the 30 minutes when you first start, start with what you can do and build. Ask your doctor obviously if you have any questions about what you can exercise.

As for helping with stress, the answer is yes, it really can help with stress. Studies have shown that it helps you cope stress by helping your body learn to react when the fight or flight stress comes on. Let me explain. When you get stressed, your body reacts by

increasing your heart rate and releasing endorphins or hormones, that allow your body to prepare to either stay and fight, or to run, also known as flight, this is a relic of our caveman ancestry. But none the less, it happens whether or not the stress is emotional or physical. So whether someone is yelling at you or physically offering to fight you, the stress response is the same, even though it is really meant for a physical manifestation. Exercise really does the same thing, so it helps your body to recover from the smaller daily stressors. So each time you get stressed, your body says 'Do I need to get ready to fight or flight?' and then it needs to calm down. Exercise gives it that opportunity and teaches it the best way possible, so that you react to that stress differently, your body is better at recovering. Exercise causes your heart rate to increase and your endorphins to increase on a more measured level and then you recover from it on a daily basis. So this is better for your heart and your body.

So exercise by doing what you can, for about 150 minutes per week and see how much better you can handle those stressful days and those stressful people. I find that when I exercise regularly, stress doesn't seem as difficult to handle, it really does seem to be just like water off a ducks back.

Thanks for listening today, remember you can go back to our website at www.renaldietHQ.com/016 for all the information and more. Thank you very much.

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