The Link Between Psoriasis and Stress

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Is There a Relationship Between Psoriasis and Stress?

When dealing with psoriasis, stress equates to more frequent, or more intense, flares. This, of course, works in the other direction as well, since an increase in flares leads to more stress for many.

So in theory, there is only one thing to do to limit your number of flares: reduce stress. Wouldn't it be nice if it was just that simple? If you could wave a wand, snap your fingers, or take a pill causing the stress to melt right out of your body?

Unfortunately, that is not the case as stress reduction is a serious task — one that requires effort and diligence. Though the road will be tough, the outcome will make the process a fruitful one.

Don't Pass on Relaxation

Many tips that aim towards reducing stress focus on relaxation, and this is appropriate course of action. Relaxation is a much-needed skill that can reduce your current level of stress while increasing your resilience for stress that is likely to present in the future. For anyone battling high levels of stress or expecting stress in the future, relaxation techniques are a must.

People frequently use deep breathing, guided imagery, muscle relaxation, and other techniques to lessen their stress, and you can to. The skills take practice but are always worthwhile.

The Weight of Opinions

If you have psoriasis, you face other challenges too. Due to the nature of the condition and the outward presentation of symptoms, you must face the opinions and reactions of others.

In addition, you have to manage your own opinions and views. Undesirable opinions, reactions and views lead to undesirable results — like increased stress and anxiety.

To limit stress, you must target the opinions of others and yourself. In this situation, dealing with your own opinions will be the easier task since you have more control over yourself than you do over others. Additionally, the skills learn here will prepare you for the opinions of others.

To begin, work to identify your thoughts regarding psoriasis. What do you think about it? How does it make you feel? How do your behaviors change when symptoms are high compared to when they are low?

The likely response to these queries is that psoriasis is a problem. It makes your thoughts, feelings and behaviors more negative and less desirable. It harms your self-esteem. When this is the result, your task is to bring your opinions to a more helpful stance.

You do not have to convince yourself that psoriasis is a great addition to your life — that would be too far from your current state to believe — but if you can start finding positives associated with the condition, you can retrain and influence your opinions. Even if finding positives seems too challenging, try moving to less negative thoughts.

Modifying your own opinions is needed because you will always be faced with the opinions of others. Some of these opinions will be stated clearly and directly. Some of these opinions will be spoken vaguely or kept silent altogether.

This lack of information creates a void, and if your own opinions of your psoriasis are still overly negative, you will fill the void with your negativity, which will persuade you into thinking that others are passing judgment on you.

Next page: working to remove stress from your life.

The Weight of Opinions

Consider this example: You leave the house with the awareness that your psoriasis has been flaring for some time. It is uncomfortable and undesirable for you, and your opinion is very negative. You are certain that someone is going to react to you, and you're not sure you will be able to tolerate this. As you pass others on the street or in a store, you notice several bystanders looking at you with puzzled expressions.

Your stress and anxiety begin to gather this information and distort it. The presentation of the other people is a very subjective aspect, but your stress has you convinced that they were judging you or even disgusted by your appearance. This process ends with many problematic outcomes including:

- Increased stress.
- Increased anxiety.
- Decreased desire to leave the house.
- More negative views of other people.
- Increased anger and frustration towards psoriasis.

All of these unwanted effects are triggered by the combination of your negative opinion of psoriasis paired with the feedback of others. This is why your own opinion is so pivotal. You can never avoid all unwanted feedback, but you can modify the impact.

Another example: You leave the house with the awareness that your psoriasis has been flaring for some time. As you leave, you tell yourself that you are okay. Though you may encounter some glances and stares during your outing, it will not take away from the positivity of your day. As you pass others on the street or in a store, you notice several people looking at you with puzzled expressions.

Since you were expecting these responses, you are better able to manage your reactions. You note that the majority of people had no reaction to you. You can imagine why people would be looking at you this way with explanations like:

- They have never seen someone with psoriasis before.
- They were curious about your condition.
- They weren't actually looking at you. Your condition is making you more self-conscious.
- They were looking at you, but it was for a positive reason. Maybe they like your outfit or your haircut.

These explanations work to avoid any negative views of yourself or the people that are looking at you, and they are more based in reality. For some reason, people find it easier to believe that someone is thinking negatively about them rather than positively.

It will be more comfortable to think that someone is sickened by your flare than it is to think they like your hat. This is an unfortunate part of human nature that is common for most people.

As example one leads to feelings of increased stress, anxiety, hopelessness, example two leads to optimism and lower levels of stress. As stated previously, less stress leads to fewer psoriasis flares. Moving to example two takes work, but your body will thank you.