

HELPING YOURSELF THROUGH STRESS

When stress occurs, it is important to recognize and deal with it. Here are a few suggestions for helping yourself. As you begin to understand more about how stress affects you, you can develop your own coping methods.



Get Moving. When you are nervous, angry or upset, release the pressure through physical activity or exercise. Running, walking, working in the garden, or playing sports can all help. Physical activities can relieve that “uptight” feeling, help relax you and help clear the mind of tension and worry.

Talk It Out. It often helps to talk to someone about your concerns and worries.

Others may be able to help you see things in a different light. If you feel your problems are serious, consider seeking professional support. Knowing when to ask for help may avoid more serious problems.

Know Your Limits. Don’t fight the situation. Know what you can do and what isn’t possible. Learn to accept what is, for now, until you can change it.

Take Care of Yourself. Get enough rest. Eat appropriately. Do not use alcohol, food or drugs as ways to mask stress or pain. It will only rebound into other difficulties later. Be realistic in what you expect from yourself.

Prioritize and Make Lists. Organize your life into priorities. No one can do everything! Lists help keep you from becoming overwhelmed and quitting before you have even started. Do one thing, celebrate it and move onto to the next item.

Participate. Get involved with life. Sitting alone and waiting for someone else to make you happy doesn’t work. Help yourself by helping others.

Cry If It Helps. Not everyone is a “crier”, but if you are, then you already know that a “good cry” helps relieve tension and stress. If you are not a “crier”, try taking several deep breaths; they also help release tension.

Compromise. Must you always be right? Not everyone will do things “your way”. Try cooperation instead of confrontation. Try a little “give and take”.

Create A Quiet Place. Designate a physical place in your life as a “quiet space”, complete with comfy pillows, soft lighting, perhaps a source of music, a calming view. Light a candle, play relaxing music...create a healing space for yourself. Now use it! Even if you cannot commit any physical space, you can create a “quiet haven” in your mind by imagining a calming place and taking a few long and slow deep breaths. Take a 5-minute “mental vacation” whenever necessary.

Avoid Self-Medication. You can use drugs to relieve stress temporarily, but they do not remove the conditions that caused the stress in the first place. Drugs can be habit forming and may mask underlying causes. Drugs can be useful “bridges” but should only be used with the supervision of your physician.

Count Your Blessings. Spend a quiet moment counting the blessings of your day. Perhaps you spent a few minutes talking with a friend or playing with a child or reading a favorite book. Perhaps you passed a park or heard a bird sing or found a penny. Whatever happens to you, happens to you and you can find the wonder and mystery of it or worry about why something happens. Count your blessings first and the worries will seem smaller by comparison.

Say Thank You. Acknowledge those who help you and those who support you often. A simple “thank you” can light up someone’s day and that light will remain in your life too.

The Art of Relaxation

Learning how to relax can be your best stress busting strategy. Unfortunately many people try to relax at the same pace that they lead the rest of their lives. Set a kitchen timer for 10 minutes and simply relax...clearing your mind of any thoughts that wander by. Let go of your worries about time, productivity and “doing it right”. Stop striving for those 10 minutes and allow yourself to “BE” instead of “DOING” something. Learning how to “BE” will renew, refresh and recharge your body and your mind. Even 10 minutes can make a difference! Focus on YOU for a few moments.

