

## Strategies for Coping with Stress

We can develop stress toughness or stress hardiness by using a variety of preventive methods and by responding in an appropriate manner when stressful situations arise. Stress Hardiness is all about prevention which is the best way to handle your stress.

- A. Effective Work Skills – planning, organizing, and time management will go a long way toward helping you manage stress at work
- B. Assertive Communication – stating your thoughts, feelings, and needs in a reasonable manner. It is an honest expression that can help others to respond honestly, too.
- C. Physical Activities – deep breathing exercises, Tai Chi, yoga, aerobic exercise, stretching & toning, team & individual sports, and dancing
- D. Healthy Habits – drinking pure water, eating fresh fruits & vegetables, and getting adequate rest
- E. Hobbies give you another area on which to focus, help keep things in perspective, and they can deliver a great sense of accomplishment; you may also make new friends with common interests and enter a different world away from work
- F. Quiet Pursuits – reading, prayer, meditation, or quietly communing with nature
- G. Humor and Creativity – fun ways to recharge your batteries, have actual physical benefits as they encourage your body to produce serotonin, giving a sense of well-being
- H. Social Relationships – having a support system of family and friends gives you confidence & comfort. When you participate in social organizations, religious groups, and clubs, you also gain a sense of contribution to your community.
- I. Pets – add a special dimension to the idea of social relationships by keeping us mindful of the present moment. There is documented evidence that petting your cat or dog can help to lower your blood pressure and relax you.
- J. Expressing Emotions – far better than holding them in and allowing resentments and hurts to accumulate. This aspect of stress management keeps us living securely in the present and able to deal with difficult situations as they arise.
- K. Positive Thinking – allows us to maintain the proper perspective. This can keep us from viewing every event as a catastrophe. It's your choice.

What's the worst thing that can happen?  
What's the best thing that can happen?  
Can you live with the worst thing?  
What will you do if the best thing happens?

## **More Strategies for Coping with Stress**

### **During a Stressful Encounter**

1. Breathe!
2. Use positive self-talk. "I can handle this."
3. Count to 10 (or higher if you wish).
4. Use active listening. Reflect back to the other person. Keep your voice tone neutral. *"So, you are saying that my report was not what was needed. " "When I talked to you earlier, you thought that I sounded rude."*
5. Ask for guidance and clarification. "How can I make it better?"
6. Stand back and assess the situation. Slow down even though your inclination is to speed up and get through it.
7. Ask questions of the other person. "First seek to understand."
8. Identify what you can control about the situation. Identify what you can't control and do your best to let go of those uncontrollable factors.
9. Talk to the other person about your common goals. "We both want to achieve the best possible care for our clients."
10. State your commitment to a mutually agreeable solution.

### **After a Stressful Encounter**

1. Change your physical location. Go for a mindful walk, noticing your surroundings.
2. Talk to yourself out loud! This can help you get the situation in perspective.
3. Ask, "How serious is this?"
4. Write down what happened. Keep writing! Often as you do this, your mind becomes clearer and you can see your way to a solution.
5. Do some kind of vigorous exercise, even for a few minutes. The endorphins you create will boost your mood.
6. Ask someone else for advice. Be careful not to wallow in the awfulness of what is happening. Focus on solutions.
7. Give yourself a pep talk! "I have been successful at this before, and I can do it again."
8. Go back and read the notes you have placed in your kudos file. (You do keep a file of compliments and thanks you have received, don't you?)
9. Ask yourself how important the current situation will be in a year, a month, next week.
10. Give the stressful situation a rating on a scale from 1 to 10.
11. Definitely record some notes about what you have learned from the experience.
12. Acknowledge the progress you have made in dealing with the stressful experience.

## Take a Look at Your Stress

List a few stressors in your life. Then answer the questions for each one.

Stressor =

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1. What is your fear? What is the worst thing that could happen? What are your options if your fear plays out and becomes real?
2. What language are you using to describe the stressful situation and its effect on you? Step back from the situation and find a different way to describe it.
3. What control do you have in this situation?
4. What is outside of your control?
5. What have you experienced in the past that was a similar situation? How did you handle it? What evidence do you have that you can cope with this type of stressor again?

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## Using All Your Senses

Treating all of your senses is a great way to manage stress. If you keep certain sense-stimulating influences in your work and home environment, you are more likely to feel calm and strong in the face of a stress-provoking event. What are methods you can use to maintain life balance through these senses? The point of this exercise is that you will treat yourself on a regular basis to what makes you happy. Just do it! Yes, you deserve it.

		
		