

## Online Stress Management Workshop

### Suggestions for Reducing Stress

- 1. Find a support system.** Find someone to talk to about your feelings and experiences. Speak to friends, family, a teacher, a minister, or a counselor. Sometimes we just need to "vent" or get something "off our chest." Expressing our feelings can be relieving, we can feel supported by others, and it can help us work out our problems.
- 2. Change your attitude.** Find other ways to think about stressful situations. "Life is 10% what happens to us, and 90% how we react to it. Talk to yourself positively. Remember, "I can handle it, " "this will be over soon," or "I have handled difficult things before, and I can do it again." Also, practice acceptance. We need to learn to accept things we cannot change without trying to exert more control over them.
- 3. Be realistic.** Set practical goals for dealing with situations and solving problems. Develop realistic expectations of yourself and others. Setting our expectations or goals high may seem like a useful way to push ourselves and get things done, but we may also set ourselves up for disappointment and continued stress. Find the courage to recognize your limits
- 4. Get organized and take charge.** Being unorganized or engaging in poor planning often leads to frustrating or crisis situations, which most always leads to feeling stressed. Plan your time, make a schedule, establish your priorities. Do this regularly until it becomes a productive habit. Take responsibility for your life. Be proactive. Problem solve and look for solutions rather than worry.
- 5. Take breaks, give yourself "me time."** Learn that taking time to yourself for rejuvenation and relaxation is just as important as giving time to other activities. At minimum, take short breaks during your busy day. You might purposely schedule time in your day planner just for yourself so that you can recharge for all the other things you need to do. Learn your "red flags" for stress, and be willing to take time to do something about it.
- 6. Take good care of yourself.** Eat properly, get regular rest, keep a routine. Allow yourself to do something you enjoy each day. Paradoxically, the time we need to take care of ourselves the most, when we are stressed, is the time we do it the least. When we feel overwhelmed we tend to eat poorly, sleep less, stop exercising, and generally push ourselves harder. This can tax the immune system and cause us to become ill more easily. If we take good care of ourselves to begin with, we will be better prepared to manage stress and accomplish our tasks in the long run.

**7. Learn to say "no."** Learn to pick and choose which things you will say "yes" to and which things you will not. Protect yourself by not allowing yourself to take on every request or opportunity that comes your way. It is okay to decline a request for a favor. Saying "no" does not mean you are bad, self-centered, or uncaring. Learn skills of assertiveness so that you can feel more confident and have effective ways of saying "no."

**8. Get regular exercise.** Exercising regularly can help relieve some symptoms of depression and stress, and help us to maintain our health. Exercise can build confidence, self-esteem, and self-image. It is also a great way to take time for yourself, blow off steam, and release physical tension.

**9. Get a hobby, do something different.** For a balanced lifestyle, play is as important as work. Leisure activities and hobbies can be very enjoyable and inspiring, and they can offer an added sense of accomplishment to our lives. For ideas on new hobbies, browse through a bookstore or a crafts store, surf the internet, look up local organizations, see what classes or courses are available in your community or from a nearby college or university. Don't quickly dismiss new opportunities.

**10. Slow down.** Know your limits and cut down on the number of things you try to do each day, particularly if you do not have enough time for them or for yourself. Be realistic about what you can accomplish effectively each day. Also, monitor your pace. Rushing through things can lead to mistakes or poor performance. Take the time you need to do a good job. Poorly done tasks can lead to added stress.

**11. Laugh, use humor.** Do something fun and enjoyable such as seeing a funny movie, laughing with friends, reading a humorous book, or going to a comedy show.

**12. Learn to relax.** Learn some relaxation exercises such as those discussed later on in this workshop. Develop a regular relaxation routine. Try yoga, meditation, or some simple quiet time. Relaxation techniques are skills that need to be developed with patience and practice so that we can use them effectively during difficult times of stress later on.