



## ***Stress Coping Strategies***

*None of these coping strategies are new. They are common sense techniques for reducing stress that we all know, but sometimes like to be reminded of. Circle the ones you'd like to remember. Add your own to the list.*

- Say "no" when asked to do something you really don't want to do. Read a book on assertiveness if you have trouble doing this in a firm but kind way.
- When you're concerned about something, talk it over with someone you trust, or write down your feelings.
- Simplify your life! Begin to eliminate the trivia.
- Take time (you'll never "find" it) to be alone on a regular basis to listen to your heart, to reevaluate your goals, and to prioritize your activities.
- Plan to do something each day that gives you energy, something you love to do, something just for you.
- Take deep slow breaths often, especially while on the phone, in the car, or waiting for something or someone. Use this time to relax and revitalize yourself.
- Choose to not waste your precious present with guilt over the past or worry about the future, neither of which exists.
- Finish something
- Remember to use helpful clichés like, "In a hundred years who will know the difference," or "What doesn't kill us, makes us stronger," or "Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right!"
- Remember, it takes less energy to get an unpleasant task done "right now," than to worry about it all day.
- Take time to be with nature, nourishing people, music and children. Even cities, the sky, seasonal changes and noticing people's faces can be good harmonizers.
- Practice consciously doing one thing at a time, keeping your mind focused on the present. Do whatever you're doing more slowly, more intentionally and with more awareness and respect.
- Learn a variety of relaxation techniques and practice at least one, regularly.
- Carry a card with 4 or 5 personal affirmations written on it (e.g., I am calm and relaxed. I am confident and able to handle any situation, etc.)
- Organize your life including time for fun, spontaneity and empty spaces. Set a realistic schedule allowing some transition time between activities. Eliminate unnecessary commitments.
- Forgive yourself and those in your world.
- When you find yourself repeatedly angry in similar situations, ask yourself, "What can I learn from this?" Anyone or anything that can "make you angry," you are letting control you, or rather, you are being controlled by your own expectations of how someone or something "should" be. When we accept people, situations and ourselves the way they (we) are, we become more effective in influencing them to change in the direction we'd like.
- Practice basic communication skills, such as "I" statements, paraphrasing and active listening. Change the phrase "I need" into "I want" and "I have to" into "I choose to" (notice the difference in your body when you say, "I choose to" instead of "I have to"!).
- Develop skills in negotiating and compromise, and become more flexible at least in those areas that aren't so important.
- Become more aware of the demands you place on yourself, your environment and on others, to be different than they (you) are at any moment. Demands are tremendous sources of stress. Begin to release yourself at least from the unconscious ones.
- Take relaxation breaks.