

# MANAGING STRESS

**Stress is a fact of life**, but it's how you manage it that counts. You'll find it more beneficial to respond positively to stress than to react in a kneejerk way. You need to be in control of your thoughts, emotions and actions. You can't take care of others unless you first take care of yourself. When you are stressed it's important to practice self-care.

- **Use your breaks at work to breathe and relax.** Get out and take a short walk, change the scenery. If you have a door to your office, close it and do a quick meditation exercise.
- **Take at least three to five minutes every hour to become aware of your breathing.** Let your mind settle and relax. Use this time to focus just on the present, rather than recent or expected stressors.
- **At the end of the day congratulate yourself for your accomplishments.** Acknowledge the work you've done and be proud.
- **Take time out to focus on the positive and relax.** Smile, whistle a tune, spend time with your pet, walk, hike, dance, sing. Keep a gratitude journal and write in it every day.
- **A simple smile can turn a bad day upside down.** Take time to give someone a compliment. And, do something for yourself – eat some chocolate, practice kindness, laugh out loud, watch a sunset, focus on your senses.
- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** You may look at this as a temporary fix to feel better, but in the long run drugs and alcohol can create more problems and add to your stress—instead of taking it away.
- **Find support.** Don't be afraid to ask for support. Seek help and support from positive people in your life, a family member or friend for example. Having someone with a sympathetic, listening ear and sharing your stress really can lighten the burden.
- **Connect socially.** After a stressful event, it is easy to isolate yourself. Make sure you are spending time with loved ones. Consider planning fun activities with your partner, children or friends.
- **Take care of yourself.**
  - Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
  - Exercise regularly.
  - Get plenty of sleep – six to eight hours a night.
  - Give yourself a break if you feel stressed out for example, treat yourself to a therapeutic massage.
  - Maintain a normal routine and a sense of humor.
  - Be optimistic. Engage in positive thinking.
- **Stay active.** You can take your mind off your problems with activities like helping a neighbor, volunteering in the community and taking the dog on a long walk. These can be positive ways to cope with stressful feelings.
- **Find ways to relax.** Become proficient in meditation or mindfulness or take a yoga class.

