

## Helpful Hints for De-Stressing

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It is normal for everyone to experience stress at one time or another. How we deal with stress is important for our health, and the happiness of our families. Little stressful events can add on to other events to create a lot of tension, therefore it is a good idea to deal with stress as it comes along rather than let it build up. Children watch how their parents handle stress, so you want to be a model for them in finding ways to relax. The following are some ideas for coping with stress. Try out a few and see what works best for you.

- **Deep Breathing:** People take shallow, rapid breaths when they're tense. When your body feels tight, it will be hard to relax. Stop, lie down or sit in a comfortable seat, and take several deep breaths. Put your hand just under your ribs and feel your abdomen move up and down to make sure you're breaths are deep.
- **Take a Mental Vacation:** Get to a quiet area, close your eyes and think of a calming place. You may want to picture yourself in a vacation spot or somewhere that has been relaxing to you in the past. The important point is to make sure it's somewhere that is soothing to you. Think about what it is about the place that is calming, what you would do if you were there, etc. When you open your eyes, remember what it was that was relaxing. This may help you be able to focus on positive ideas.
- **Muscle Relaxation:** When you're stressed, your muscles are tight. This is a way to relax your muscles, which can decrease your overall level of tension. Sit in a comfortable chair in a quiet area. Beginning with your toes, tighten your muscles and hold for 5 seconds. Pretend like you're squeezing something. Then release the muscles. Notice how different the muscles feel when you're relaxed. Do the same thing for many areas of your body such as your hands, shoulders, neck, jaw, legs, arms, etc. If you don't have time to do it all, just work on the area that feels tightest to you (often the shoulders, neck, or hands).
- **Take A Walk:** Take time out to exercise. People find that different activities are relaxing. Find what works best for you. Some find that running, bike riding, or skating are relaxing. Others just need a few minutes to walk around the block to relax.
- **Read A Book:** Reading can be very relaxing. Find something that's interesting to you and take time to sit in a quiet spot to read.
- **Listen to Music:** Find a type of music that's calming to you, then sit down, close your eyes, and listen for a while.

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- **Play a Game:** Sometimes people need to just forget about a problem for a short while. Playing a game with your child may be a way for you to relax while giving your child attention.
- **Do Something With a Friend:** Talking with friends is often a great way to relax. This may give you a little time to stop worrying about your stress and make it easier for you to look at problems in a positive light when you do get back (And yes, you do have to face those problems eventually!).
- **Find Your Own Activity:** What relaxes people varies. Find something that calms you down and take a few minutes to do it. Even if you don't have a lot of time, a minute or two of something that gets you to stop and think in a quiet area may help you get through the stressful times.

These are some basic guidelines for decreasing stress. If you feel that you need help coping with stress, a variety of self-help books can be found in libraries or book stores that go into more detail about some of these techniques. Counselors in the community are also trained to help people deal with stress.