

Taking Care of Yourself

Though taking care of yourself seems like a luxury, it's actually essential to your health and well-being. When you're preoccupied by stress or grief, your immune system can become compromised, leading to a greater likelihood of illness. An essential component in taking care of yourself involves exercising control over your own life. You do have control over your actions, your activities and your choices. By consciously exercising that control, you gain a sense of mastery and confidence.

Use these tips to get you started in taking care of yourself:

- **Laugh.** Laughter, as they say, is the best medicine. It makes you forget for a while and produces endorphins, which are your body's natural way of producing pleasure.
- **Get adequate rest,** food and nutrition. Keeping your body energized is an important stress-buster and provides healthful benefits as well. You'll feel better physically, and soon that will translate into how you feel emotionally.
- **Choose relaxing activities** such as massage, yoga or meditation. Ten minutes of quiet moments can help clear your mind. Stretching your muscles through yoga will give you a sense of peace, and a massage can leave you intensely relaxed.
- **Make time** to do something that gives you pleasure. It doesn't have to be expensive or time-consuming to produce benefits you can feel. Listening to music, gardening, shopping, walking with a friend, or seeing a movie all provide you with the same effect.
- **Join a support group.** Sharing with a group of peers can help you talk through your stressful times. For some, the support from others is all they need.
- **Start a journal.** Writing down your feelings can be very therapeutic. It's a private venue where you can really open up.
- **Consider how your faith or spirituality** can provide inspiration and enlightenment. If it's important to you, going to church, even if you haven't been in awhile, may provide solace. If taking a walk on the beach gives your life meaning, then make your way to the shoreline, even if it does involve climbing a few mounds of snow to get there.
- **Buy books** on change, stress-relievers or self-help.
- **Seek and accept help.** When people offer assistance, accept it. They might offer a suggestion that worked for them that you may have overlooked.

Every little bit helps. These tips and suggestions won't eliminate the stress but they will help reduce the negative repercussions. Some stress and anxiety is normal and it's not a bad thing, but when it starts to get progressive, that's when you should seek help. The power of time alone can motivate and clear your mind, making room for the sense of balance that so many of us desire within our demanding lifestyles.