

## FIT/UCE Employee Assistance Program

### Tips For Coping With Stress

- 1) Remember that stress is inevitable! If we live, we experience stress! Stress is not necessarily a bad thing. It can be growth producing and provide new challenges! What can be “bad” is when we let stress control us, rather than learning how to control it.
- 2) Acknowledge to yourself what your true feelings are. Remember it can be more stressful to try to repress or deny what you are truly feeling and experiencing.
- 3) Learn to identify your own particular stress signals. Begin to familiarize yourself with your own internal and external cues. What people or situations tend to cause you the most stress? Ask yourself, what is it about these people or situations that makes you anxious?
- 4) Often individuals react to present situations based on unresolved conflicts and relationships from our past. For example, if we have been raised to think that we should be able to “handle everything” by ourselves and it is a sign of weakness to ask for help or to express feelings, then chances are, that we will carry that over into our work and social lives. If we have had a critical parent, we might be more affected by a critical boss. Ask yourself, whom or what am I really reacting to? Start to separate past conflicts from present ones. Adults have more control over their lives, and options to choose from, than children do.
- 5) Once you’ve identified the sources of your stress you can learn to deal with it more effectively. You can alter it, accept it, bypass it, or eliminate it.
- 6) Take a self inventory; are your values realistic or are you trying to meet unrealistic and impossible demands? Unrealistic thinking is:
  - a. You should be able to do everything.
  - b. It is a sign of weakness to have to ask for help.
  - c. You must be unfailingly competent and almost perfect in all you undertake.
  - d. You are helpless and have no control over what you experience or feel.
  - e. People are fragile and should never be hurt.

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- f. When people disapprove of you, it invariably means you are wrong or bad.
  - g. Your worth as a person depends on how much you achieve or produce.
  - h. Anger is automatically bad and destructive.
  - i. It is bad or wrong to be selfish.
- 7) Determine priorities. Do what is important. Ask yourself, "Am I doing what I really want to do now?" If no, ask yourself why.
  - 8) Break large goals into their parts and make a plan of action, one step at a time, geared to the long term goal.
  - 9) Plan your tasks. Don't take on more than you can handle. Refusing tasks is less stressful than having a number of unfinished ones hanging over your head. Unfinished tasks are very stressful.
  - 10) Reward yourself. Do an easy task if you need a stroke for achievement. Allow yourself a small reward for a job well done. Being internally motivated is less stressful than depending on someone else for positive strokes.
  - 11) Stay loose. The game isn't always played according to the plan. Plan in detail but always be prepared to chuck it and go with whatever feels right at the time.
  - 12) Maintain good health – good nutrition and an exercise plan.
  - 13) Schedule time for leisure time/recreational pursuits. Remember stress related problems (i.e., hypertension) can be more time consuming and costly than preventive care.
  - 14) Have a support base. Find someone with whom you can mutually share thoughts and feelings. Don't be surprised if this turns out to be someone other than your spouse. Holding problems in only makes it more difficult to deal with them. In some cases, it may be preferable to talk to someone outside your family and friendship circle, and in this case, a professional counselor may be helpful.
  - 15) Help is available! Call Robin Zarel, LCSW, EAP Coordinator, at x7-7167, to arrange a confidential appointment to discuss your concerns.