



COPING with STRESS

STRESS is a twofold problem when trying to quit using/abusing substances. First it is a major trigger for using again. Failure to effectively cope with stress leads to more stress, which may eventually lead to relapse. Second, the change process often brings with it new challenges that can be stressful. Both of these points emphasize the need for learning new coping skills for stressful situations.

POOR COPING MECHANISMS (Do not work in the long run):

- Drug/alcohol use
- Suppression
- Passivity (Simply waiting for others to help you)
- Acting Out (Revenge, Abuse, Destruction of Property)
- Blaming/Complaining

EFFECTIVE COPING MECHANISMS:

1. Know your stressors and avoid **UNNECESSARY STRESS** if possible (i.e traffic, long lines, certain people, etc.)
 - **RECOGNIZE** – Are you aware of when you are getting stressed out? Do you know the warning signs?
 - Know your limits (time, money, etc.)
 - Be **ASSERTIVE** – Know when to say “NO!!”
 - Avoid procrastination
 - **PREPARE** – Be Proactive, When you know stress may be coming, get ready ahead of time
 - **PREVENT** – Are there steps you can take to prevent a potentially stressful situation?
 - Seek help/support
 - **Simplify** – Can you simplify your life to reduce stress?
 - **Re-organize** – Can you rearrange your life to make it less stressful?
 - **Re-prioritize** - Are you putting first things first?
2. **RELAXATION:**
 - Counting
 - Deep Breaths
 - Stress Ball
 - Relaxation Audio/Video
 - Scheduled relaxing activities: bath, walk, hobbies, etc. (“Me” time)
 - Learn to take one minute vacations
 - Visual Imagery (i.e beach)
 - **HUMOR**
 - **COMMUNICATE**



3. POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE (PMA)

- Be GRATEFUL for what you have
- Enjoy your achievements
- Plan good things for your future – Set Positive GOALS
- ACCEPTANCE – Accept the things you cannot change
- Practice EMPATHY – Try to understand where others are coming from
- Put things in perspective – COGNITIVE REFRAMING – (Is it really that bad?)
- POSITIVE SELF TALK – Change your negative self-messages to positive ones
- Resolve Cognitive Dissonance – (Do you need to clear your conscience?)
- Conflict Resolution/Letting go – Holding on to resentments is STRESSFUL – Forgive
- Anger management

4. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Balance work, recreation, and rest
- Diet
- Exercise
- Sleep
- Avoid Caffeine and Nicotine
- Creativity – Music and Art
- Positive Recreation
- Reward Yourself

5. OTHER IDEAS? – What else has worked for you or someone you know with positive long term results?

WHICH OF THE ABOVE ARE YOU GOING TO WORK ON?