**Stress Management**

**Part 1 … What is Stress?**

A. Stress is the adjustment process we have to make to any situation. Two major factors that contribute to stress are control and predictability.

B. Stresses can be good or bad events.

C. All stress is additive.

**Part 2 … Symptoms of stress**

A. Anxiety  
B. Nervousness  
C. Can’t sleep  
D. Irritation  
E. Over eating  
F. Headaches  
G. Upset stomach  
H. Depressed  
I. Fatigue  
J. Anger  
K. Guilt  
L. Wanting to escape  
M. Avoidance  
N. Feeling rejected  
O. Jealously  
P. Feeling “used”  
Q. Feeling unappreciated  
R. Feeling “left out”

**Part 3 … Stress Management is dependent upon the types of adjustments we make to circumstances, situations, or people.**

A. Some unhealthy adjustments (defense mechanisms)

1. Denial - refusing to perceive reality
2. Rationalization - justifying behavior by giving false reasons
3. Fantasy - fulfilling unmet desires through imagination or framing unrealistic concepts through gossip groups.

4. Intellectualization - dealing with personal issues in an impersonal way. (Blaming the system)

5. Projection - attributing one’s own problems or motivations to others

6. Repression - preventing painful thoughts from enter consciousness

7. Avoidance – looking the other way, defining a situation as something else, acting like a problem doesn’t exist, justifying inaction because of possible outcomes.

B. Healthy adjustments

1. First recognize the stress for what it is rather than labeling a person or circumstance as “the problem”. (If its your stress, it’s your problem.)

2. Own the stress. (I feel …)

3. Be realistic
   1. Know that your feelings (stress) all begin with your expectations. How realistic are your expectations?
   2. Are your expectations communicated. Communicate, communicate, communicate. This means “talk with” not “talk to”.
   3. If you feel you expectations are realistic and fair, address an issue directly and openly. Keep in mind the expectations of others may be realistic also, but in conflict or at least different from yours.
   4. Know the difference between how you feel and how you behave. Feelings will always influence behavior, but should not dictate behavior. Also, feelings to do not justify behavior.
   5. Know that behaviors will influence feelings also. If you do what is right you will more than likely begin to feel “right”.
   6. Know that if you blame someone else for your feelings, you will probably waist a lot of time trying to correct them. This
often does not work and will likely cause you more stress.

7. Identify things that must be done and things that you would prefer to be done. Remember when you get in high levels of stress these two lists look alike.

**Part 4 … Problem Solving**

A. **Identify the problem**

   1. Do not be trapped into identifying a situation, circumstance or other person as the problem.

   2. The problem is your stress and how it is affecting you.

B. **Identify possible solutions to the problem**

   1. It is OK to address situations, circumstances, or other people and this is called external adjustments.

   2. It is more important to address internal adjustments, your expectations. You cannot effectively control your feelings or switch these on or off, but you can adjust the expectations that is the real source of the feelings. You can also control your behaviors.

C. **Evaluate the pros and cons of the possible solutions you have come up with.**

   1. Seek council.
   2. Do a paper/pencil list

D. **Select what you believe is the best possible course of action to solve the problem.**

E. **Implement the plan of action.**

F. **Evaluate the results of the actions taken. Don’t expect perfection.**

G. **If necessary start the process over again. You may have learned you have attacked the wrong problem.**