

## Stress Less, Live More

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### Recognizing early warning signs

- ◆ Physical:
  - Fatigue, aching muscles, cramps, shortness of breath.
- ◆ Behavioral:
  - Insomnia, forgetfulness, nail biting, nervousness.
- ◆ Emotional:
  - Anxiety, irritable, depression, no emotional control.



### Techniques to Control Stress

- ◆ Control Events
  - Plan ahead, don't be afraid to say "no", set priorities.
- ◆ Control Attitudes
  - List accomplishments, set realistic daily goals, turn crises into challenges.
- ◆ Control Responses
  - Take care of your body, think positive, take breaks, unwind before bed.

### Healthy Living Can Reduce Stress

- ◆ Maintain a healthy diet
  - A healthy body works better
- ◆ Balance work and recreation
  - Don't try to be so serious all of the time
- ◆ Exercise 20 minutes a day
  - This helps your body relieve stress



## Stress Relieving Exercises

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An activity that allows your muscles to relax, using energy that will make you feel less stressed

- ◆ Deep Breathing
  - Take 10 deep breaths, breathe in and hold it for a few seconds then release slowly. Repeat.
- ◆ Neck Rolls
  - These reduce the amount of tension that gets built up in your neck muscles. Keeping your shoulders level drop your chin to your chest and slowly roll your head in circles, you can switch directions at any time.
- ◆ Stand up and Stretch
  - Stand up and reach your hands high above your head, then reach down to your toes (knees bent to prevent strain).
- ◆ Unknot Your Back
  - Sit on the edge of your chair with your feet flat on the floor. Lean forward and put your chest onto your knees, hand and head hanging loosely. Breathe deeply. Slowly roll your back, vertebrae by vertebrae until you feel relief in your back.
- ◆ Relax Completely
  - Lie on the floor or sit in a comfortable chair. Keep your hands at your side or on the arms of the chair. Beginning with your toes and going all the way up to your scalp, visualize each part of your body and tell it to relax. Take your time. Go back over any area that becomes tense again until finally your whole body is relaxed.

# Check Your Stress Level

Self-assess how much stress you are currently dealing with.

Go through the list of life events and place a check mark next to those events that have happened to you during the last 12 months. Then, total the points beside each event you checked. Finally, compare their score to the stress level score ranges.

- \_\_\_ Death of a close family member - 100 points
- \_\_\_ Jail term - 80 points
- \_\_\_ Lost your job - 75 points
- \_\_\_ Car wreck/damage to your vehicle - 55 points
- \_\_\_ Severe personal illness or injury - 53 points
- \_\_\_ Marriage - 50 points
- \_\_\_ Had a child - 50 points
- \_\_\_ Financial difficulties - 40 points
- \_\_\_ Death of a close friend - 40 points
- \_\_\_ Arguments with your spouse (more than every other day) - 40 points
- \_\_\_ Major disagreements with your family - 40 points
- \_\_\_ Major change in personal habits - 30 points
- \_\_\_ Moved - 30 points
- \_\_\_ Problems with your boss or co-worker- 25 points
- \_\_\_ Changes in working conditions - 20 points
- \_\_\_ Change in your sleeping habits - 18 points
- \_\_\_ Several-day vacation - 15 points
- \_\_\_ Change in eating habits - 15 points
- \_\_\_ Family reunion - 15 points
- \_\_\_ Change in recreational activities - 15 points
- \_\_\_ Minor illness or injury - 15 points
- \_\_\_ Minor violations of the law - 11 points
  
- \_\_\_ **TOTAL**

## Interpreting your score

### Score

- 0 - 149 points
- 150 - 300 points
- 301 or more points

### Stress Level

- Relatively low stress level in relation to life events
- Borderline range
- High stress in relation to life events