Stress management

**Practice good nutrition.** Limit caffeine, nicotine and sugar because they are central

nervous system stimulants that can aggravate anxiety. Avoid excess alcohol and food intake, especially during demanding times.

**Exercise moderately.** Appropriate exercise (e.g., even 30 minute walks daily)

facilitates the exit of the body's stress hormones and stimulates well-being. Highly

competitive exercise adds more strain.

**Learn a formalized relaxation method.** Meditation, breathing techniques,

progressive muscle relaxation and self-hypnosis can positively affect blood pressure,

metabolic rate and immune function when practiced over time.

**Eliminate stressors from your physical environment.** Noise, pollution,

uncomfortable room temperature and poor lighting are subtle stressors and can affect

your ability to concentrate.

**Manage your time.** Establish priorities based on your primary goals and schedule time for those pursuits as well as time for relaxation. Job loss can suddenly leave you with time on your hands. Try joining an organized activity through a church or community center. You may find great satisfaction volunteering for a charitable organization.

**Set realistic expectations.** Are you putting unrealistic demands on yourself? Don't

expect to be able to do everything and please everybody. Learn to speak up and set

necessary limits.

**Know when you need to ask others for help.** Accept the fact that you are not

responsible for everything and everyone.

**Recognize anxiety messages.** Don't burden yourself with messages like "Always be strong..." "Be perfect…" and "Everyone else seems to be coping better."

**Accept the full spectrum of feelings.** Be aware of pressure to feel only joy and

happiness without acknowledging the complexities of human experience. Sadness, anger and disappointment may be present alongside hope and other positive feelings.

**Learn new ways to express feelings.** Talk honestly with friends. Begin a journal of thoughts, ideas and feelings to giveyourself an open forum. Learn to use art or music to express yourself.

**Allow recollections.** Recent or even old losses may emerge more poignantly during times of stress. Permit memories to co-exist with the present.

**Return to basic values.** Quiet time with friends or family, showing appreciation

through thoughtful gestures rather than material tokens can help you focus on the

meaningful aspects of your life and enjoy the warmth and caring of human relationships.

**Enjoy simple pleasures.** We all need to refuel regularly with some pleasure and

relaxation. It might be as simple as taking a walk or a hot bath, calling a friend, or turning on some music.

**Seek self-help materials.** Many useful books and tapes are available such as *The*

*Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook* by Davis, McKay, and Eshelman.