

# **COPING WITH STRESS & ANXIETY**



**Michigan State University  
Counseling Center**

**[www.counseling.msu.edu](http://www.counseling.msu.edu)**

*Division of Student Affairs and Services*

FULLY ACCESSIBLE

## 21 Self-Help Suggestions

### ✓ *Take on a Coping Attitude*

Although you are unlikely to change all of the problem areas of your life, you will always be able to control how you cope with them. A coping attitude focuses on the choices we have available to us, even if we choose to do nothing at all.

### ✓ *Learn to Learn*

Understand that productive living is achieved through the application of living skills, and all skills can be learned. Concentrate your efforts on learning new, positive skills.

### ✓ *Hear What Your Body is Telling You*

Physical symptoms such as headaches, back pain, and stomach irritation can be signs of chronic stress. Let your body be an HMO for good emotional and physical health.

### ✓ *Learn How To Use Relaxation Techniques*

Meditation, imagery, and muscular relaxation can all help to reduce the stress of a fast-paced lifestyle. Choose a technique that fits you and be aware of its importance to your healthy existence.

### ✓ *Respect Your Feelings*

Feelings can help guide and motivate us to change problem areas. Feelings deserve attention and validation.

### ✓ *Benefit from Your Thoughts*

Thinking guides your behavior. Thinking things out helps us decide if and how we shall act on our feelings. Thinking is a skill which can be developed.

### ✓ *Practice Assertion*

Just be yourself. Begin to recognize your thoughts and feelings, pay attention to what they are telling you. Express yourself in an open and straightforward fashion. This will increase the likelihood of others understanding you as well as your feeling understood.

### ✓ *Confide in a Friend*

Let yourself share your thoughts and feelings with others whom you trust. If it is difficult for you to share feelings, tell them. Friendship and social support can be very helpful during life crisis.

### ✓ *Give Change a Chance*

Express your real feelings. Allow yourself to experience some anxiety—it motivates change. Trust your counselor—he/she is there to help you.

✓ *Come Face to Face With Your Problems*

As difficult as it might seem, confronting problems can provide opportunities for change and greater awareness. Try to view your problems as challenges which will ultimately improve your life.

✓ *Attempt to Solve Your Problems*

Answers to life problems require consideration and the weighing of alternate solutions. There is seldom one simple, correct answer. Observe how valued others solve their problems. Remember to assume a “coping” attitude. Solving problems is a skill that improves with practice.

✓ *Act on Your Solutions*

Decide what action you are going to take even if you aren't sure about the results. Consider coming to some resolution of your dreams as well as your problems.

✓ *Make Mistakes*

Attempt to learn from your mistakes. Remember that mistakes reflect behaviors not your personality, so just because you make a mistake doesn't mean you are one. Allow yourself to take risks and realize that making mistakes is a normal part of life.

✓ *Employ a Self-Help*

Develop a list of things to do which will help you feel better when feeling disturbed or helpless. Consider things which have been helpful in similar situations. Some suggestions are exercising, a soothing shower or bath, talking with a trusted friend, watching a movie, etc. Be sure to keep the list with you in case you need to use it. Maintain and upgrade the list as you begin to explore new ways of helping yourself cope with adversity.

✓ *Concentrate On Yourself*

Know what your needs are and respect them. Allow yourself space to be creative. Try new

things to make life exciting. Make a point to indulge yourself on occasion. Even little things like getting a massage or going out to dinner can make you feel better.

✓ *Respect Others*

Recognize and pay attention to the needs of others. Kindness breeds kindness. It is likely that if you show love to others they will reciprocate. Caring sometimes involves taking risks.

✓ *Plan Goals for Your Future*

Know where you are going. Develop a list of objectives and create a general time line for their achievement. Imagine what your life will be like after accomplishing these goals.

✓ *Recognize the Importance of Time Management*

Prioritize your daily activities so that the most important steps toward your future are taken first. Understand that people do not find time, they make it. Take time to make time.

✓ *Have Fun*

Set aside time for open spontaneous, and imaginative play. Explore new activities. Engage in practiced activities which are gratifying.

✓ *Seek Assistance*

Getting help is a healthy choice if things are going badly and you believe you could benefit from it. Realize that we can't always do it alone—we all get help sometimes.

✓ *Realize that Anxiety is Normal*

We all need to experience some anxiety in order to be motivated. Anxiety becomes a negative experience when it interferes with your ability to carry out daily tasks.

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