

HOW TO REDUCE *Stress & Sadness*



- 1. EXERCISE CAN HELP IMPROVE YOUR MOOD** by helping you relax, increasing your stamina, releasing natural “tranquilizers” (endorphins), and improving your sleep. Start with 5-10 minutes of exercise daily and work up to 2-30 minutes at least three times a week.
- 2. GOOD NUTRITION WILL FORTIFY YOUR BODY**, while over-eating, skipping meals or eating junk food may deplete your body of essential nutrients that keep you healthy. Be sure you eat only when you are hungry, don’t skip a meal, and select wholesome fruits and vegetables as a treat. Consider consulting with a nutritionist.
- 3. AVOID HARMFUL SUBSTANCES**, such as alcohol, nicotine, caffeine (found in coffee and soda), and other drugs. While they can sometimes appear to cause a very brief break from your symptoms, they will immediately make them worse. Many are also addictive. These substances only create problems you cannot afford.
- 4. RELAX WITH PLEASURABLE ACTIVITIES.** Spending time with people you enjoy or doing things you like to do will raise your spirits. Try at least one favorite activity a day, or talk with the person who makes you feel special.
- 5. ARGUE AGAINST NEGATIVE THOUGHTS.** When you have negative or unhelpful thoughts, note the thoughts (ideally in writing), evaluate them (as they are almost always irrational or unhelpful), and respond to them with more rational or helpful thoughts. View difficulties as challenges instead of defeats. Better moods will follow.
- 6. COMFORT YOURSELF WITH COMPANIONSHIP.** Family and friends are “good medicine.” They can remind you of your strengths and better times. Seek out positive people who will listen without judging or giving advice.
- 7. USE RELAXATION EXERCISES.** Try 10 minutes of slow, deep breathing. Also use guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, recorded relaxation exercises, or some other relaxing activity of your choice.
- 8. MEDITATION AND/OR PRAYER CAN LIFT THE SPIRIT.** Engage in activities which renew or inspire your heart and mind. Seek out beauty in nature. Look for meaning in your life or own spiritual path. Find ways to accept yourself or forgive your mistakes in life.
- 9. SLEEP.** Your body will appreciate at least 6-8 hours sleep. If you are getting too little (or too much), this can increase stress and/or sadness.
- 10. TIME MANAGEMENT.** Rushing around or not getting tasks done increases stress and can bring you down. Create lists and organize your time with a schedule. Prioritize. Have fun checking off items as you get them done. Make sure you don’t take on too much; say “no” to people who ask for more than you want or need.



11. COMMUNICATE. Not getting along with others increases stress and/or sadness. Improve your communication skills by really listening to the other person. Imagine what they’re feeling, and express understanding. Make sure that others know how you’re feeling. Do not be passive nor aggressive. Be assertive.

12. LAUGH. Humor is a wonderful stress reliever and mood enhancer. Watch funny movies or TV shows. Talk to people who make you laugh. Look for the lighter side of life.

13. TALK TO A THERAPIST OR DOCTOR. They can help you assess your situation and find proper treatment. If you have not have a physical exam recently, do so. If FEELING SUICIDAL, seek immediate help.