

## Self Care as a Coping Skill Fact Sheet

- **Do something for someone else.** Reaching out to someone in need is good for them and for you. Those who are depressed often find that volunteering or offering to help a neighbor helps lift their mood. It certainly won't hurt you, as long as it is within reason and not done as part of codependent behavior.
- **Find something positive.** Little things like saying thank you to someone for a small gesture such as holding the door, expressing your appreciation to a spouse/partner, coworker or child and writing thank you notes for gifts can make a difference for both you and the other person. Write down several things each day that you are grateful for or appreciate. It helps to identify five things at the end of the day that went well or left you feeling gratitude.
- **Learn to relax.** Rest and relaxation are critical to managing stress and minimizing anxiety. Those who find it difficult to let go and relax may find yoga, breathing or stress management classes helpful. Regulating your breath has a calming effect on the mind and loosens tension held in the body. Sitting quietly at home for 5-10 minutes each day to simply be aware of your breathing can enhance relaxation.
- **Move around every day.** Exercise and movement can include gardening, playing with your pets, shopping, invigorating sex, etc.
- **Engage in good conversation.** Spending time with good friends or engaging in stimulating conversation with someone at work is good for the soul (mind and body). When we share our thoughts with others, we establish an emotional and mental connection that can be refreshing and heartwarming.
- **Get enough sleep.** Good sleep hygiene involves cutting out caffeine after 5 PM, turning off electronics two hours before bedtime, eating your last meal two or more hours before you turn in for the night, going to bed early enough to get 6-8 hours of sleep, darkening the room you sleep in, and so on.
- **Keep up with your medical needs.** Annual physicals, biannual dental checkups and cleanings, mammograms, pap smears, etc. are proactive habits for good health. Many advocate an annual mental health screening, which may be part of the annual physical at some point.
- **Treat yourself regularly.** See a movie, eat dinner at a restaurant, sit in the park, get a massage, buy yourself flowers – whatever you enjoy – do that for yourself.

(Adapted from Good Mental Health: Self Care)

**Want to learn more about coping skills? Contact me:**