

## TEN STEPS TO STRESS RELIEF

- 1. Learn to identify “early warning signs” of your stress response**
  - Physical (*tense muscles, shallow breathing, racing pulse*)
  - Thoughts or feelings (*nervous, angry, preoccupied*)
  - Behavior (*do you withdraw, or lash out?*)
- 2. Identify stressors: What are your triggers?**
  - Lack of control over conditions of work?
  - Angry or difficult customers or co-workers?
  - Too much to do, not enough time?
- 3. How do you respond to chronic stress?**
  - Feelings (*anxiety, anger, hopelessness, depression*)
  - Thoughts (*“It’s not fair”, “Don’t talk to me that way”, “I can’t handle this”*)
  - Behavior (*irritable, can’t concentrate, fatigue, insomnia*)
- 4. Set goals to manage stress more effectively**
  - Focus on what you can control
  - Motivate yourself with specific rewards for every goal
- 5. Take care of your basic health**
  - Get enough sleep (*most adults need 7 to 8 hours a night*)
  - Eat regular meals which include whole grains, fruits and vegetables
  - Avoid caffeine, nicotine, junk food and skipping meals
  - Consume alcohol in moderation (*no more than 1 - 2 drinks a day*)
- 6. Take control of your thoughts and emotions**
  - Adopt a positive attitude and let go of resentments
  - Put things in perspective (*will this really matter 5 years from now?*)
- 7. Get stress out of your system!**
  - Learn simple relaxation techniques that you can use at work
  - Get fresh air and physical exercise daily (*take a walk at lunch*)
- 8. Learn conflict resolution skills**
  - Respond calmly and patiently (*avoid catching other people’s stress*)
  - Take time to listen (*we all need to be heard and understood*)
  - Look for the common ground (*aim for a “win-win” solution*)
- 9. Practice, practice, practice! It takes time to develop new habits.**
- 10. Know when to ask for help:** *An experienced mental health professional can assist you to analyze the stressors in your life, recognize the warning signs of stress overload, and develop more effective coping skills.*