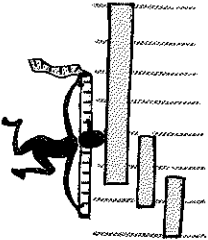


HOW CAN I COPE WITH STRESS EFFECTIVELY?

- ❖ Avoid putting yourself down or pushing yourself too hard.
- ❖ Realize that taking on too much too soon may lead to frustration and failure.
- ❖ Set reasonable goals and expectations for yourself.



- ❖ Make a "to do" list, rank order the items by priority, start with #1, and work down the list.

- ❖ Work on only 1 or 2 problems at a time.
- ❖ Talk to other survivors about how they cope successfully.

- ❖ Seek support and help from trusted friends and family members.

- ❖ Think positive thoughts and keep a good sense of humor.



- ❖ Keep up a healthy lifestyle by exercising, eating right, and avoiding caffeine, alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.

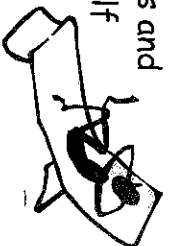
- ❖ Breathe slowly and deeply.

- ❖ Do something enjoyable.... listen to soothing music, take a long bath, go for a walk, read a book.



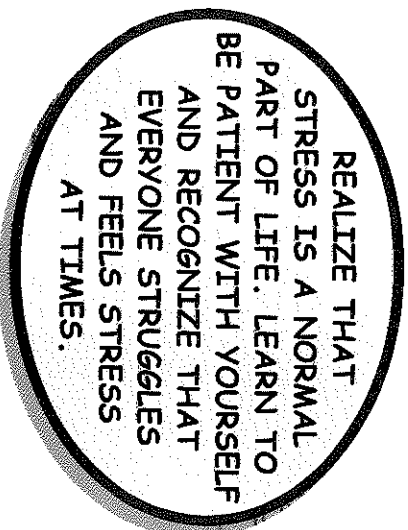
- ❖ Don't forget to take breaks. Everyone needs them.

- ❖ Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a pleasant situation.



- ❖ Have a back up plan in case your first plan does not work.

- ❖ Talk to your doctor about worrisome symptoms to help sort out their cause and possible need for treatment.



National Resource Center for traumatic brain injury

Tools for therapy, education, self-help, and support
 Virginia Commonwealth University Health Systems
 P. O. Box 980542
 Richmond, VA 23298-0542
 (804) 828-9055
 FAX: (804) 828-2378
www.neuro.pmr.vcu.edu

CALL, WRITE, OR VISIT THE WEB FOR YOUR FREE CATALOG TODAY

Layout and design — Debbie West

© 2002 Not to be reproduced by any means without the authors' permission

03-01-02

Effective Stress Management

JEFF KREUTZER
 LAURA TAYLOR



GUIDE # 3

National Resource Center for traumatic brain injury

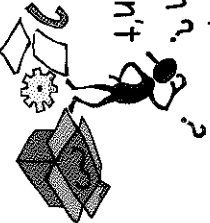
Tools for therapy, education, self-help, and support

BRAIN INJURY AND STRESS

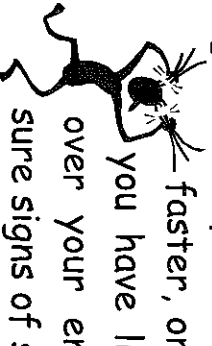
For many survivors, brain injury brings on a period of intense and prolonged stress. Injury brings on dramatic life changes, worries about recovery, work or school problems, and financial hardships. Many survivors worry that life will never be normal again. Understanding stress is a first step toward better coping.

WHAT IS STRESS?

The word stress is used often and in many different ways. Psychologists define stress as an emotional and physical response to a frightening or unpleasant situation. Stress is worse when you feel pressured to solve a problem[?], immediately, but don't see any solution.



Feeling your muscles tighten and your heart beat faster, or feeling like you have little control over your emotions, are sure signs of stress.



THE 13-ITEM STRESS TEST

To help you understand how much stress you are facing, circle T for True or F for False for each item below.

1. I have a lot to do. T F
2. I have more to do than I can handle. T F
3. I'm not being productive. T F
4. I'm trying really hard, but getting nothing done. T F
5. My symptoms are getting worse. T F
6. I can't afford to take breaks or time off. T F
7. I'm pushing myself too hard. T F
8. I don't sleep very well. T F
9. Too many people are telling me what to do. T F
10. I am not treating people the way I want to be treated. T F
11. I feel totally exhausted. T F
12. Nobody is happy with what I do. T F
13. I can't stand living like this. T F

SCORING: THE MORE TRUE RESPONSES YOU CIRCLE, THE GREATER THE STRESS AND PRESSURE YOU'RE FEELING.

HOW IS STRESS HARMFUL?

Stress can make brain injury problems worse, slow recovery, and cause additional problems including -

- ≡ Headaches, heart and digestion problems
- ≡ Hopelessness and depression
- ≡ Sleep troubles
- ≡ Low energy and motivation
- ≡ Decreased productivity
- ≡ Reduced life satisfaction and self-esteem
- ≡ Irritability, short temper, impatience, and withdrawal from others
- ≡ Anxiety and nervousness
- ≡ Relationship problems

