

Stress Management in the New Year

It's 2010- a New Year. Most of us make New Year's resolutions; at the top of many people's lists is "*reduce the stress in my life.*" Susan Locke, M.D., Medical Director for Healthnetwork offers tips to help you with this resolution- reducing stress in the New Year.

The first thing to remember is that "stress" or what is perceived as "stressful" differs from person to person. "Emotional resilience" refers to one's ability to adapt to stressful situations and crises. It is not an all or nothing phenomenon, but can exist in varying degrees in different people. Although it is thought that we are born with a certain degree of emotional resilience, it is also something that can be developed. The more emotional resilience you have, the better you can cope with the stress in your life.

Characteristics of emotional resilience:

- Emotional awareness – understanding what you are feeling and why
- Perseverance – focus on being action oriented
- Internal focus of control – believe that control comes from inside, not from external forces
- Optimism – see positives and believe in strengths
- Support – have a strong network and supportive friends and family members
- Sense of humor
- Perspective – learn from mistakes and see obstacles as challenges
- Spirituality – associated with stronger emotional resilience

The first step in stress management is to accept responsibility for the role you play in creating or maintaining it.

The 4 A's of dealing with stressful situations

Avoid unnecessary stress:

- Learn to say no

- Avoid people who stress you out
- Take control of your environment
- Shorten your to-do list
- Prioritize – distinguish between must do and should do

Alter the situation

- Express your feelings
- Be willing to compromise
- Be more assertive
- Manage your time better

Adapt to the stressor

- Reframe the problem
- Look at the big picture
- Adjust your standards – perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress
- Focus on the positives

Accept the things you cannot change

Remember to make time for fun and relaxation and adapt healthy lifestyles. Connect with others, exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet, reduce caffeine, sugar and alcohol, avoid cigarettes and recreational drugs and get enough sleep.



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Have a health question you want to ask Dr. Locke? Send an email to help@healthnetworkfoundation.org. All inquiries are kept private and confidential. For all other medical requests or a referral to one of our centers of excellence, please call **866-968-2467** or **440-893-0830**.