

Basic Stress Management

1. **Exercise Regularly** – A fast walk, slow jog, or any activity that increases your heart rate will improve your endurance and soak up tension.
2. **Relax** – Learn techniques of deep breathing, meditation and muscle relaxation. Practice them daily or whenever you feel uptight.
3. **Set priorities** – Determine what you value most in your life. Focus on those things rather than on the things you cannot change.
4. **Choose your response to conflict** – Negative responses include: avoiding (known as the ‘flight’ response), or becoming angry and confrontational (the ‘fight’ response). Positive responses to conflict include bargaining, negotiating and cooperating.
5. **Solve the problem** – spend some time looking at what’s really bothering you. Then, move to change or deal with the situation.
6. **Avoid the chemical haze** – Alcohol, cigarettes, tranquilizers, and other drugs can have negative side effects and make it difficult to deal with stress.
7. **Listen to your body** – Pay attention to muscle aches, indigestion, tooth grinding, fist clenching and the like. Your body is telling you to use one of the above ways of dealing with stress.
8. **Reach out** – Share your concerns with family, trusted friends, clergy, self-help groups, or a mental health professional. Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness, but rather a show of strength. You’re worth it!

Adapted from The Rural Stress Toolbook
(Centre for Agriculture Medicine, U. of Saskatchewan)