Coping With Emotional Stress: Some Practical, Common-Sense Suggestions That Work

It’s normal……

- Remember, you are having normal human reactions, just like others under similar stress. You are not going “crazy” or having a nervous breakdown.
- Give yourself permission to feel bad. Like the flu, emotional stress has to run its course.
- Physically you may feel fatigued or have difficulty sleeping, notice changes in your appetite, or feel “on edge.”
- It may be difficult to concentrate or make decisions. You may have unwanted thoughts or find yourself not able to think about anything other than the incident.
- Emotionally you may feel fear, guilt, anxiety, depression, anger, or helpless. You may also feel numb or spaced out.
- These reactions will decrease over time and in most ways they are adaptive and healing.

Stay in touch with others.

- Don’t isolate yourself.
- Talk it out with people. Talk is a very healing medicine.
- Allow supportive people to assist you.
- Reach out to people who care – family, friends, clergy, and counselors.

Stay active.

- Maintain a normal, active and productive schedule, but modify as necessary.
- Physical exercise (within your normal limits) is one of the best ways to reduce stress.
- Do things that you enjoy.

Help others. (It will help you too).

- Realize that those around you are also under stress.
- Assist family members, friends and colleagues who are experiencing stress.

Take care of yourself.

- Exercise regularly (within your limits) to burn away stress chemicals in your body.
- Avoid stressful situations for a while.
- Have some relaxing times.
- Don’t abuse alcohol or drugs. This can hinder and delay recovery.
- Eat well-balanced, regular meals (even if you don’t feel like it).
- Get plenty of rest; remember that sleep disturbance is common, too.
- Avoid hazardous activities – there is an increased likelihood of accidents.
- Delay making major life decisions until your stress level lowers. Symptoms will decrease significantly.

For brief support services during business hours or for crisis services after hours and on weekends call (757) 221-3620 or call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255. For life-threatening emergency call 911.