

COPING WITH STRESS

1. **CLARIFY YOUR VALUES.** It's important to run not on the fast track, but on your track. Pretend you have only six months to live. Make three lists: the things you have to do, want to do, and neither have to do nor want to do. Then, for the rest of your life, forget everything in the third category.
2. **IMPROVE YOUR "SELF-TALKS".** We all talk to ourselves, and many of our self-talks are needlessly negative. Discipline yourself not to overreact emotionally. Why despair when sadness is sufficient? Why be enraged when simple irritation will get your message across?
3. **LEARN HOW TO RELAX.** All you need is a quiet room. Get comfortable. Then close your eyes, breathe rhythmically (preferably from your abdomen), and blot out distractions for 10 to 15 minutes. Do this twice a day.
4. **EXERCISE REGULARLY.** Try to exercise at least three times a week for 20 minutes at 75 percent of your maximum predicted heart rate. To determine that rate, subtract your age from 225 (if you're 40, for example, the rate is 185; 75 percent of that, 139, would be age 40's exercise rate). Make sure your doctor approves and start gradually.
5. **GET THE LEISURE YOU NEED.** The best way to avoid burnout is to allow yourself proper leisure to renew your commitment to work and recharge your batteries. If you're a workaholic, consider: you owe it to yourself to take time off or else you jeopardize your chances of keeping on top of a rough job over the long haul.
6. **ADOPT DIETARY GOALS.** Maintain normal weight. Limit fat to no more than 30 percent of your calories; substitute cereals and breads for fats and sugars; moderate salt intake. Also remember to eat a REAL breakfast.
7. **AVOID "CHEMICAL HAZE".** One definition of stress is loss of control; the need to acquire control through artificial means accounts for the popularity of nicotine, alcohol, caffeine, and drugs. My advice:
 - + Smoking--Don't! Stopping is the single best thing you can do for your health
 - + Drinking--Only in moderation. No more than two drinks a day--preferably wine or beer with meals.
 - + Coffee--Too much can make you jittery, irritable, prone to headaches.
 - + Drugs--Only if prescribed. Chemicals make you FEEL you're in control; but you're not. Real control takes effort, not escape.

Excerpted from "IS IT WORTH DYING FOR ?" ©1984 Robert S. Eliot & Dennis L. Breo



OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.