

Saying No to Negative Stress

Sometimes life is stressful. We can't change that. And not all stress is bad. In confronting stress we learn about ourselves, and we grow in strength and wisdom.

But a lot of stress is harmful and unnecessary. It doesn't have to be a part of your life. With practice you can learn to head off much of the needless tension and worry that comes your way. You *can* say no to unwanted stress.

The key is to catch negative stress before it gets the best of you. Learn to tune into signals of stress as early as possible. Then calm yourself in a way that works for you, such as breathing deeply, taking a break, praying, thinking positive thoughts, talking it over, or doing something physical.

When you see negative stress building, mentally say, "Whoa!" Then use your creativity to calm down and to change what you can.

Saying no to negative stress is a skill. The more you practice, the more skillful you become. Work with the following "skill builders." Then use your creativity to come up with additional ones designed just for you. Write your new skill builders on the back of this sheet. And put them into action!

◆ Skill Builders ◆

- ◆ *Remind yourself: "I'm in charge. While I can't always control what happens, I can control how I think about it and how I respond."*
- ◆ *Catch negative stress as early as possible, before it gets out of hand.*
- ◆ *Enjoy life more by keeping things simple. Do less better. Learn when to say no.*
- ◆ *Laugh often. It's one of the best stress dissolvers ever created.*
- ◆ *Frequently, slowly, say to yourself three times: "I am calm, I am peaceful." Concentrate on your words; believe them. Feel what you are saying.*
- ◆ *Don't be overly demanding on yourself or others. Keep your expectations realistic.*
- ◆ *Exercise regularly, eat nutritiously, and get plenty of rest.*
- ◆ *Share your struggles with a friend you trust and respect.*
- ◆ *Keep things in perspective by remembering Dr. Eliot's Stress Management Rules.*
Rule #1: Don't sweat the small stuff.
Rule #2: It's all small stuff.

QuickSkills # 1, by Sam Quick, Human Development & Family Relations Specialist. (1997) FAM-QS.101

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