

Taking Charge When You Get Really Stressed Out

Let's face it: When we get really stressed out, all we do is make matters worse. We say mean things. We make unnecessary mistakes. We harm our health. Tragically, we may even strike out in anger and hurt those we love the most.

Whenever stress threatens to overwhelm you, get control of yourself—the sooner the better. You've got what it takes. You just need to plan ahead and be prepared so that you know what to do. Then you can prevent all kinds of needless problems.

Talk with some people you respect and ask: "When you become very stressed out, what helps you get back in control?" By sharing ideas you can learn and support one another.

When you start to get really stressed out, stop! Back off, chill out, get control of yourself. You can do it!

One at a time, picture yourself in a variety of very challenging situations. In your mind, see yourself mastering each challenge with poise, creativity and kindness.

Taking charge when you get strung out 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 ◆

Whenever you are really upset, stressed out or angry, try one or more of the following:

- ◆ *Back off and take some deep breaths—slowly.*
- ◆ *If possible, leave the situation immediately. Get outside in the fresh air, or go to another room. Calm yourself.*
- ◆ *Run, jog or walk briskly. Or do as many push-ups or sit-ups as you can.*
- ◆ *Call or visit a friend, neighbor or family member.*
- ◆ *Read from an inspirational source.*
- ◆ *Write in a journal or draw a picture.*
- ◆ *Call a crisis hotline or mental health professional.*
- ◆ *Take a cold shower or soak in a hot bath.*
- ◆ *Do some physically demanding work. Scrubbing a floor or digging in the garden gives you an outlet for your energy and time to think.*

QuickSkills # 4, by Sam Quick, Human Development & Family Relations Specialist. (1997) FAM-QS.104

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