

Please read the coping mechanisms outlined below and engage in the exercise as instructed.

**Share your feelings** \* in order to share our feelings we first must recognize and identify them ourselves. It is also important to share your feelings appropriately, you don't want to yell at your boss or snap at a loved one. Now having said that, let's engage in our first interactive exercise!

**Exercise: Three Feelings** - Feeling expression is very important to daily functioning. Take out three squares of paper. Write three feelings that you have had today, one on each square. Every feeling is OK. Was it difficult to name the feelings? Now, let's all stand up and move into the center of the room you are in. Bring your feelings with you. Walk around and greet each other. (You may use imaginary people or recruit a few real people you know) Now drop one of your feelings on the floor and cover it up with your foot. Walk around and continue greeting each other. Stop where you are. Where were you looking before you dropped your feeling? What is your posture now? Drop another one of your feelings and cover it up with your other foot. Continue about your day greeting each other. Stop where you are. Is it getting more difficult to move around? Drop your third feeling and cover it up with a body part other than a foot. Continue greeting each other. Stop where you are. Where are you? Can you effectively continue to function and go about your day? You may return to your seat.

When we suppress our feelings we cannot function and stress only increases. Picture a giant spring that you are pressing down, down, down. What happens when the spring is released? Does it take much to release the spring? It's the little things that push us over the edge when stress builds up.

**Let's take a look at some more coping techniques.**

- Schedule down time
- Recognize your energy patterns \* schedule accordingly.
- Never schedule more than one stressful activity at the same time - develop a buffer zone between one stressful activity and another.
- Engage in physical activities \* this increases your endorphins (natural sedative), affects your mood, and relaxes tense muscles. Exercise returns your body to its normal state of equilibrium by releasing natural chemicals that build up during stress. Exercise may include aerobic, stretching, and toning.

- Eat Properly \* enjoy the colors, aromas, textures and tastes of food.
- Set Limits \* 80% of all housework can wait \* almost indefinitely.
- Live in the Moment
- Find Humor
- Learn to Relax \* Relaxation, when practiced often is more healing and restful for the body than even sleep. It brings the body to rest through the same response as fight or flight takes the body to a state of hyper-arousal. Share some ways that you relax and reduce stress with the group.

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