

## TACTICS FOR COPING WITH STRESS INVENTORY

Before you embark on a program of change, it is important to consider how you currently manage your stress.

**Instructions:** Listed below are some common ways of coping with stressful events. Mark those that are characteristic of your behavior or that you use frequently.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I ignore my own needs and just work harder and faster.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I seek out friends for conversation and support.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I eat more than usual.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I engage in some type of physical exercise.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I get irritable and take it out on those around me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I take a little time to relax, breathe, and unwind.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I smoke a cigarette or drink a caffeinated beverage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I confront my source of stress and work to change it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I withdraw emotionally and just go through the motions of my day.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I change my outlook on the problem and put it in a better perspective.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I sleep more than I really need to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I take some time off and get away from my working life.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. I go out shopping and buy something to make myself feel good.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. I joke with my friends and use humor to take the edge off.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. I drink more alcohol than usual.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. I get involved in a hobby or interest that helps me unwind and enjoy myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. I take medicine to help me relax or sleep better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. I maintain a healthy diet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. I just ignore the problem and hope it will go away.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I pray, meditate, or enhance my spiritual life.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. I worry about the problem and am afraid to do something about it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. I try to focus on the things I can control and accept the things I can't.

adapted from the "Coping Styles Questionnaire." © 1999 by Jim Boyers, Ph.D., Kaiser-Permanente Medical Center and Alth Styles, Santa Clara, CA.

**evaluate your results:** The even-numbered items tend to be more constructive tactics and the odd-numbered items tend to be less constructive tactics for coping with stress. Congratulate yourself for the even-numbered items you checked. Think about whether you need to make some changes in your thinking or behavior if you checked any of the odd-numbered items. Consider experimenting with some even-numbered items you haven't tried before. This workbook will assist you in making these changes.

## KNOWING YOUR GOAL

The goal of stress management is not merely stress reduction. After all, wouldn't life be boring without stress? As mentioned earlier, there is a tendency to think of stressful events or stressors as negative (such as the injury or death of a loved one), but stressors are often positive. For instance, getting a new home or a promotion at work brings with it the stress of change of plans and new responsibilities. The physical exertion of a good workout, the excitement of doing something challenging for the first time, or the pleasure of watching a beautiful sunset on the day of your vacation are all examples of positive stress.

Distress or negative stress occurs when you perceive that the challenge facing you is dangerous, difficult, painful, or unfair, and you are concerned that you may lack the resources to cope with it. You can actually increase your ability to deal with distress by integrating into your everyday life positive activities such as solving challenging problems, practicing regular exercise routines and relaxation techniques, staying in touch with enjoyable social contacts, following sensible dietary practices, and engaging in optimistic and rational thinking, humor, and play.

Performance and efficiency actually improve with increased stress, until performance peaks when the stress level becomes too great. Stress management involves finding the right types and amounts of stress, given your individual personality, priorities, and life situation, so that you can maximize your performance and satisfaction. By using the tools presented in this workbook, you learn how to cope more effectively with distress as well as how to add more positive stress stimulating challenges, pleasure, and excitement to your life.