

## **KEEPING COOL: Healthy Coping Tools for When the Going Gets Tough**

Everyone has times when the pressure gets to be too much. It makes no difference who they are or what they are doing. No matter how much it may seem that a person is just a victim of the circumstances or situation, the truth is that we have choices in how we are going to handle that pressure.

If the decision is made to do nothing about the situation that is causing the stress or pressure, the person has made a choice. Often people simply make the choice to handle it in the same unhealthy ways that they always have handled troublesome situations.

Here are some healthy coping tools:

### ◆ **BREATHE**

- ◆ Simply stopping and taking slow, deep breaths in and out will slow down the heart beat and enable clear thinking

### ◆ **TAKE RESPONSIBILITY**

- ◆ Own your feelings. While you are taking deep breaths, try to figure out how you are feeling and where they are in your body. Is your stomach tied up in knots? Is your head throbbing? Is your chest tight? Being aware of what is going on inside is your first clue about what you are feeling.
- ◆ Take a step back and realize that you make choices about how you are going to handle the situation.

### ◆ **FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS**

- ◆ Often when under too much stress, we put all of our attention on the problem. That is when the breath becomes fast and shallow, the heart starts pumping, and we cannot think straight. And the solution to the problem goes flying right by and we miss it.
- ◆ When the attention is focused on solutions, we can see our options and usually find that there is more than one. Even if it is a simple one like giving ourselves time to think about it before coming to a decision.

### ◆ **ANTICIPATE CRISIS**

- ◆ When pressure is starting to build, that is a clue that the situation is due for a meltdown at any point. Just like a volcano.
- ◆ You can make a choice then to figure out some positive solutions before you get into a situation that will throw you off. Maybe you can find ways of smoothing a situation over before it reaches crisis point. For example, bringing toys and snacks for children when you know that they are going to have to be in the doctor's waiting room for too long.

### ◆ **WRITE IT DOWN**

- ◆ When a situation or life circumstances have become too much, it is often helpful to write it down. Usually, thoughts about the situation or stress go round in our head like an endless spiral and create more stress.
- ◆ Writing it down helps to get it out of our head, in black and white, and helps us to see it from another angle.

### ◆ **TAKE CARE OF SELF**

- ◆ The challenges of life are easier to cope with when we are rested and our needs are met. We cannot deal well with stress when we are already stressed over other things.
- ◆ It helps to take time for yourself when you realize that nothing works in life if we are not 'working'. If you have children, you will not be able to take care of them if you have a breakdown. If you are in a healthy relationship, it can fracture if you cannot hold up your part. If you are single, you will not be able to do what you need to do if you have a breakdown. It is all about choices!

Hope this helps!

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