

- Strengthening spiritual resources.
- Being mindful of what is most important to oneself and one's family.
- Remaining aware of ongoing changes that contribute to stress, and postponing new commitments if they will add stress.
- Enhancing money and time management skills.
- Reaching out to people in the community (being there for others strengthens one's own circle of support).

Helping Co-Worker and Business Associates Cope with Stress

What can you do to help others cope more effectively? Here are nine points to assist you in relating to individuals experiencing stress.

1. Take time to listen. Stressed individuals should not be rushed. By taking the time to listen, you are showing that you care. Ask questions so you clearly understand the problem. By asking questions, the individual must respond to you in a manner that helps them frame and understand their own problem.
2. Be non-critical and non-judgmental as the individual shares his/her troubles. While their problem may not seem huge to you, it is to them.
3. Counsel on a one-on-one basis. Be a good listener - don't interrupt. Try to draw them out. Get them to talk. This can be a tremendous pressure reliever.
4. Be empathetic. We cannot know how the individual feels unless we have been there. Avoid one-upmanship.

5. Try to separate the problem's causes from the symptoms. Assist the individual in recognizing the difference. As the saying goes, "sometimes it's hard to see the forest for the trees", especially when we're in the middle of the forest.
6. Try to help the individual think logically and rationally. Jotting things down on a yellow note pad and prioritizing them can do wonders. Keep it simple.
7. Encourage the individual to get back into a routine of doing things. Stress often brings on apathy and a loss of interest in things formerly enjoyed.
8. Learn to recognize the signs of stress. There are many excellent publications available.
9. Above all, make sure the individual retains ownership of his/her problems. If you pick up the other person's problem, you both have a problem and you lose your objectivity.

Dealing with stress often calls for professional help that is beyond your capacity regardless of how sincere you may be. When this happens, suggest that the individual seek professional help. In lessor situations, just being a caring, empathetic, supportive, and unhurried listener can go a long way in helping an individual through a difficult situation.

Call the Iowa Concern Hotline

Iowans can call the ISU Extension and Outreach Iowa Concern Hotline, 800-447-1985, for help and referrals for dealing with stress. Their website at www.extension.iastate.edu/iowaconcern has a live chat feature as an additional way to talk with stress counselors.

... and justice for all

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