

Tip Sheet: Coping with Worry and Tension

Excessive worry can cause physical, emotional and behavioral disorders that can affect your health, peace of mind, and personal and professional relationships. Worry can cause minor illnesses and contribute to potentially life-threatening diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes. It is sometimes unavoidable and will affect most of us at some point in our lives, so it is important to identify ways to help you manage stress.

What are your symptoms?

The following list of symptoms contains the most typical reactions to excessive worry and tension.

Physical

- Headaches
- Pounding heart
- Fatigue
- Teeth grinding
- Insomnia
- Restlessness
- Increased alcohol use
- Colds
- Drug, tobacco use
- Digestive upset
- Weight change
- Neck and shoulder aches

Mental/emotional

- Forgetfulness
- Confusion
- Poor concentration
- Low productivity
- Boredom
- Negative attitude
- Easily discouraged
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Depression
- Mood swings
- Angry/irritable

Sometimes you may not be aware of these symptoms. Ask your spouse, family or friends if they have noticed any of these symptoms in you.

How can I relax?

There are several ways to relax. One way is to practice doing relaxation exercises such as deep breathing, meditation, and muscle relaxation. Some people use a method called guided imagery, where they imagine themselves someplace serene and peaceful. Others enjoy doing yoga or other exercises to help them relax.

Whatever you decide to do, make sure you have a quiet location that is free of distractions. Sometimes taking a bath or creating a peaceful atmosphere with scented candles and soothing music can ease tension.

Other ways you can reduce the amount of unnecessary worry and keep it under control are:

- Schedule your time realistically and include time for the unexpected and for you to relax.
- Remind yourself that it is okay to say “no” to tasks that do not fit into your schedule.
- Remember to take occasional short breaks.
- Break down major tasks into smaller parts. After completing one task, do another and so on.
- Plan the week or month ahead to anticipate peak times of stress and plan accordingly.

You will be better able to cope with worry and tension by following these simple steps and experiencing better health and improved relationships.

Call your EAP or MAP and talking with mental health professionals who can also help.

Find more information at www.1in5.info