

# Combat stress using stress management plan

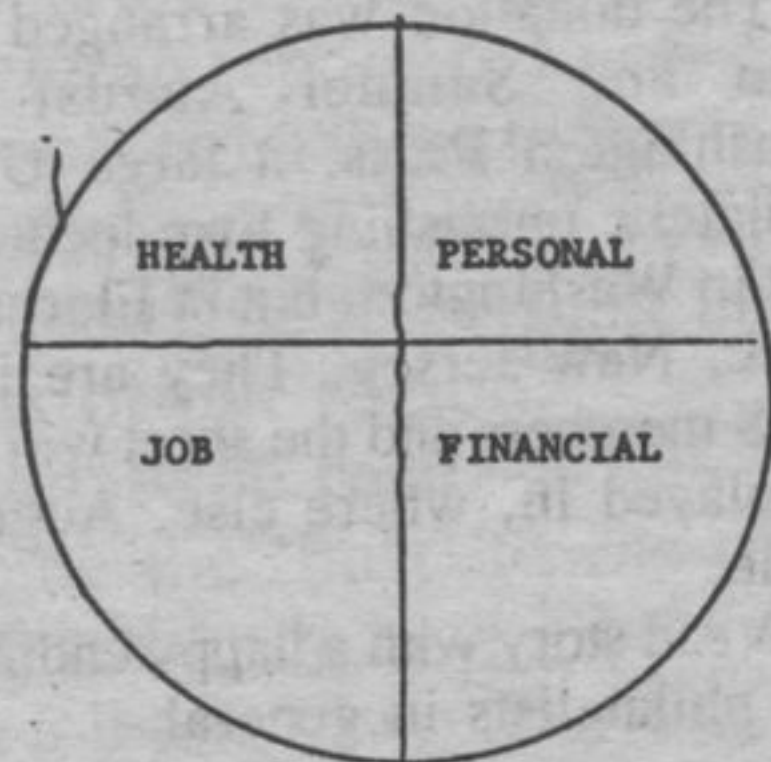
By Hadley Koltun

**Mental Health and You** is provided as a service of the North of Superior Community Mental Health Program.

These articles will appear every two weeks and will cover a variety of mental health issues.

We invite feedback from the community at large by writing the *News* office.

Any opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the management of the North of Superior Community Mental Health Program.



THE FOUR QUADRANTS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

Remember, each side has "Uncontrollable Excuses" and "Controllable Truths".

## Stress

Stress just well may be the ailment of our decade, if not the century. Some years ago, life was somewhat simpler and we just did not worry so much.

This last article on stress looks at what we can do to help lessen our stress, now that we know what contributes to it.

As I said in previous articles on stress, you should speak to your family physician about stress at your next physical checkup. He will be able to determine how much of an effect stress has on your life and how you can combat it.

Your physician will probably recommend a change in lifestyle. Does this mean you have to change your whole life? Not really, but there may be things about your life that you may wish to change to lessen stress and make you feel better.

Improving your sleep, changing your diet, changing unreasonable goals and jobs, fixing up your bankbook and stabilizing your home and social support network may help to lessen stress.

Dr. Peter G. Hanson, M.D., sums this all up in three easy principles: 1) Pamper thyself; 2) Ignore the unchangeable, and 3) Worry efficiently. Let's look at each in detail.

1) *Pamper thyself (within thy budget)*: Sometimes little small

rewards (not necessarily expensive ones) are far more effective than one big reward after years of toil.

A reward may be a hot bath or a game of racquetball. A big reward, like a Porsche or a mansion, can be unrealistic and pretty steep in terms of money and stress.

Taking smaller rewards more frequently makes us feel better.

2) *Ignore the unchangeable*: Many people blame their problems and stresses on things they cannot change. If you look behind this game, you may see the things you can change. One cannot change bad luck or natural disasters.

These are beyond your influence. Just ignore them, which leads us to...

3) *Worry efficiently*: According to Dr. Hanson, there are four quadrants of worry- financial, personal, job and health worries.

If we can identify those things about each that are unchangeable, then we ignore them. The things we can change, we plan for and we conquer (just like Caesar who "came, saw and conquered").

Here's an example from the financial quadrant.

Firstly, identify the problems you have involving this quadrant. Secondly, identify those things that you have no control over (i.e. high interest rates [set by government], the inflation rate [set by government] and bad economy). Thirdly, determine those 'controllable

truths'- those things that you can change. I have graphed out an example:

### Financial quadrant

**Problem-** Not enough money no matter what I earn.

**Uncontrollable Excuse-** inflation rate is too high- **Controllable truth-** must try to live by net income (after taxes) instead of gross income.

**Uncontrollable excuse-** high interest rates- **Controllable truth-** spending too much on expensive items.

**Uncontrollable excuse-** inflation- **controllable truth-** should do more checking of prices for a better deal. "I'm too impulsive of a spender."

If you do this with the financial, personal, job and health quadrant, you will identify and understand the sources of stress and you will have a plan to reduce it.

There is something else that you can do to alleviate stress- that is 'relax'.

The question is how do you relax? One way that usually works is called, 'relaxation exercises' and they are very simple and very relaxing.

1) Find a quiet spot where there are no distractions. Sit in a chair with your body stretched out. Let all your worrisome thoughts leave your mind. Concentrate on a dot on the ceiling. Breathe deeply in. Hold

your breath- 1-2-3 and breath out. Concentrate on your breathing. Close your eyes.

2) Continue to concentrate on your breathing with your eyes closed. Tense your right hand and forearm. Tense them tight. Release and relax. Now do this again.

3) Repeat no. 2 with your left hand. Repeat no. 2 with your right foot. Repeat no. 2 with your left foot and do this to every muscle group in your body until your whole body feels relaxed.

Of course the best way to do relaxation exercises is to buy a tape in which instructions are given in a deep relaxing monotone voice. Several are available at record and tape shops. They are about the same price as popular pre-recorded tapes.

If you follow the plans to pamper yourself, to control unnecessary worry, to change controllable habits and to relax, you should be well on your way to living a lower stress life.

You cannot get rid of stress completely and anyway, you would not want to. A certain amount of stress is necessary for us to achieve many of our goals in life. Keep these articles on stress and refer back to them on occasion to see how well you have been doing.

Those who need training the most often lack the basic skills they need to get started. The Ontario Basic Skills program prepares adults for a better future in Ontario's workplace. Free courses in three important areas are offered at most community colleges

and sometimes through employer associations and unions.

## Basic Skills for a better future.

**TRAINING READINESS:** Counsellors help trainees identify the kind of jobs

they want and the starting point for a training plan that meets career objectives.

### ACADEMIC UPGRADING:

Courses provide up to grade 12 level in reading and writing, mathematics, science, and computer skills.

**JOB SEARCH:** Classes deal with how to write a resume, fill out applications, do well at interviews, and follow up on job leads. Trainees are taught how to compete in today's tough job market.

If you, or someone you know, wants to start the Ontario Basic Skills Program, contact the Ontario Basic Skills Office at your local community college, or call the toll-free HOTLINE at the number below.

For those who need them, there are allowances to help with costs of child-care, transportation and accommodation.

**Training. We can all profit from it.**

Any Ontario resident over 25 and eligible to work in this province may apply.

**Ontario**  
Minister, Hon. Gregory Sorbara  
Premier, Hon. David Peterson

**HOTLINE NUMBER 1-800-387-5656**  
(Information is available in English and French.)



The snowbaseball tournament last weekend provided plenty of fun for the competing teams. Above, one team member went headlong into a snow bank to catch this ball in the game between the 'A' Team and the Deadheads. The Deadheads won the championship over the Hooters 5-4.

Our classifieds are the best deal going and offer fast results too! **News**

### TOWNSHIP OF TERRACE BAY



**Terrace Bay Recreation Committee**  
has a vacancy for two  
**RECREATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Submit Written Letters of Application to:

**Terrace Bay Recreation Committee**  
P.O. Box 460  
Terrace Bay, Ontario  
P0T 2W0

**Deadline for Applications:**  
Wednesday April 1st. 1987