



Action Steps to Manage Stress & Relationships

- Marcia Hughes, President, Collaborative Growth

We're thrilled with the great hope sailing around the U.S. and so many other locations at this time of profound change as the U.S. begins a new Presidency. Hope is one of the best ways to counter the negative effects of stress. And there's considerable stress in today's world due to financial conditions and more. Stress has significant impacts to every aspect of our well-being, including our productivity, our physical health, and our ability to maintain good relationships. Part of the reason is due to the deep impact stress has on our ability to think and to manage our emotions. Our hope, zest and willingness to serve will be more effective if we manage our stress. So here are some strategies to help you be the best you can be personally and in important interactions with others!

1. Start by taking care of yourself, turning to that which provides hope and perspective. If you are strong and resilient, you have more resources to draw upon in working with others and meeting the demands of daily life.
2. Take time to prepare yourself for important conversations – recognize your positive intentions and intend to be respectful.
3. Be outcome oriented and remember that a key part of the outcome is maintaining relationships as well as achieving strategic and procedural results.
4. Tell yourself the truth. Stay informed so you connect a realistic take on what is happening with a healthy dose of optimism. Be insistent on hope without being unrealistic. Your optimism will be more credible for yourself and others when you include a plausibility check.
5. Manage your stress – just because you can tolerate stress doesn't make it good for you. When stress builds up, it can impair your strategic thinking, your creativity and your health.
6. Exercise – anxiety and worry have physical effects. Movement, be it a walk or going to the gym, will help you be more resourceful and think better. Anxiety creates cognitive distortion and makes it harder to concentrate and process information. Decision-making is impaired and more mistakes are likely, all of which emphasizes the importance of creating a proactive and supportive environment at work to help your staff, teams and board find healthy responses to the challenges they face.

Smile and be respectful – your emotions are contagious. Be intentional about what you pass on.