Being positive, thinking positive, and reframing our thinking will not mean that we will never experience stress in our lives. It is only natural to feel stress when we experience significant events in our life. We must also learn to cope with feelings of stress.

SOME WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS

- · Create positive images in your mind
- · Take deep breaths
- Take one step at a time
- Accept what you cannot change
- · Ask for help when necessary
- Get busy (your mind must be thinking about something other than stress!!)
- Get physical (e.g. go for a walk, chop wood, play basketball, etc. Physical activity relieves tension.)

SIGNS OF STRESS

(Signs that we must change how we react to situations/change, experiences, and setbacks. Signs that we must change our thinking.)

- panic attacks
- trouble sleeping
- · obsessive behaviour
- depression
- · eating disorders
- hyperventilation
- phobias
- irritability and anger
- · excessive drinking
- smoking
- · chronic fatigue
- low self-esteem
- headaches and migraines
- · high blood pressure
- irritable bowel syndrome

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ABC'S TO REDUCING STRESS IN YOUR LIFE

ACCEPT

Accept the things you cannot change.

Become more tolerant of others.

Let go of the past.

Take responsibility for your life.

BE POSITIVE

Be aware of your self talk (say only positive things <u>to</u> yourself and <u>about</u> yourself).

Choose to function with a positive attitude.

Live life with enthusiasm.

Learn to create positive images in your mind when you face new challenges.

Choose to have a good day from the minute you get out of bed in the morning.

Know your strengths.

Choose to leave the victim mentality behind.

Maintain a sense of humour.

CREATE BALANCE

Learn to be at peace with yourself: Get to know who you are and what makes you really happy.

Balance activities that make you feel good physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally.

Seek opportunities for the future.

Be flexible.

Develop a support network (to both give and accept support).

STRESS: We can do without it!!

WHAT CAUSES STRESS?

Stress often comes from abrupt changes to our daily routine/activities. Significant life events such as the death of someone close, a divorce or separation, a major illness, problems with the law, pregnancy, an increase in the number of arguments or disagreements with your partner, an unexpected accident or trauma, and/or starting a new relationship may create stress. When we feel stressed it is often because we have experienced a significant CHANGE in our life that contributes to how we are feeling. If the feelings are not dealt with in an effective way then the feelings become more intense over time and are increasingly intensified with the accumulation of significant changes in our lives.

Did you ever wonder why people who experience similar "stressful" life events react quite differently?

The difference is in our way of thinking. 95% of stress is self-induced.

Stress is not something that happens to us... but rather something that develops from within our own thinking.

This is good news!! It means that if we change our thinking then we will feel less stressed.

We must reframe our thinking.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO REFRAME OUR THINKING?

Stop yourself from asking:

"why did this happen to me?"
"why do bad things always happen to me?"
"why can't I do anything right?"
"nothing good ever happens to me."

Replace your thoughts with positive thoughts, phrases such as...

"Change is here to stay."

"I did the best I could with what I had"

"I do the best I can with what I have"

"It is impossible to satisfy everyone when difficult decisions must be made"

"Problems are the natural fallout of change."

"I know I can do this."

"I will get through this."

"Balancing my life during difficult times is an investment in my future."

"This too will pass."

"I can handle this."

"I am strong."

DON'T

Don't take things personally.

Don't lose sight of what is important in life.

Don't replay bad experiences over and over again in your mind.

Don't exaggerate the negative in your life.