

# TIP SHEET: COPING WITH WORRY AND TENSION

Excessive worry can cause physical, emotional and behavioral disorders that can affect your health and peace-of-mind, as well as personal and professional relationships. Worry can cause relatively minor illnesses like insomnia, backaches, or headaches, and can 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 the stress.

## WHAT ARE YOUR SYMPTOMS?

The following list of symptoms contains the most typical reactions to excessive worry and tension. Note any symptoms you have noticed in yourself. This is the first step towards successfully managing worry.

### PHYSICAL

- Headaches
- Pounding heart
- Fatigue
- Teeth grinding
- Insomnia
- Restlessness
- Weight change
- Increased alcohol use
- Colds
- Drug, tobacco use
- Digestive upset
- Neck & 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 a number of ways to relax. One way is to practice doing certain 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 as a way to help them relax. Whatever you decide to do, make sure you have a quiet location that is free of distractions. Sometimes creating a peaceful atmosphere with scented candles and soothing music can ease tension.

There is no way to completely eliminate anxiety and worry. Your goal should be to reduce the amount of unnecessary worry and keep it under control. Keep these simple points in mind:

- 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 so you can anticipate peak times of stress and plan accordingly.