

TIPS FOR NEW NONSMOKERS

Anxiety

Here are some ways to relieve anxiety as you begin your new life as a nonsmoker: *

- Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.
- Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to appointments, and arrive at the airport at least 1 hour before domestic flight departures.
- Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
- Don't put up with something that doesn't work right. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoe-laces, windshield wipers - whatever - are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or get new ones.
- Say "No!" Saying no to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you know you don't have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday needs quiet time to relax and to be alone.
- Don't rely on your memory. Write down meeting times, when to pick up laundry, etc.
- Unplug your phone. Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect.
- Take a hot bath or shower (a cool one in the summertime) to relieve tension.
- Wear earplugs. If you need to find quiet at home but junior must practice piano, pop in some earplugs and smile.

- Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed. Create order out of chaos. Organize your home and workspace so that you always know exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong and you won't have to go through the stress of losing things.
- Write your thoughts and feelings down. It can help you clarify things and give you a renewed perspective.
- When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of getting the job done, have a planned diversion – a voluntary change in activity and/or environment – may be just what your need.
- Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem solving.

ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENTS

- Relax your standards. The world will not end if the grass doesn't get mowed this weekend, if the sheets don't get changed on Sunday, etc.
- Pollyanna-Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10, 50 or 100 blessings.
- Turn "needs" into preferences. Basic physical needs translate into food, water, and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference. Don't get attached to preferences.
- Simplify, simplify, simplify.
- Make friends with non-worriers. Nothing can get you into the habit of worrying faster than associating with chronic worrywarts.
- Learn to live one day at a time.
- Everyday, do something you really enjoy.
- Add an ounce of love to all you do.
- Do something for somebody else.
- Focus on understanding rather than being understood; on loving rather than being loved.

SELF-HELP

- Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you feel better.]
- Learn to delegate responsibility to capable others.
- Eliminate destructive self-talk. "I'm too old to ...I'm too fat to..." etc.
- Become flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly and some issues are well to compromise on.
- Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before doing something or saying anything that could make matters worse.
- Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.
- Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best that they can.
- "Worry about the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves." That's another way of saying, "Take care of today as best you can, and the yesterdays and tomorrows will take care of themselves."

PLANNING

- Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank get below $\frac{1}{4}$ full, keep a well stocked "emergency shelf" of home staples, don't wait until you are down to your last bus token or postage stamp to buy more, etc.
- Make duplicates of all keys. Bury a house key in a secret spot in the garden and carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.
- Be prepared to wait. A book can make a wait in a post office line almost pleasant.
- Practice preventive maintenance. Your car, appliances, home, and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart "at the worst possible moment."
- Always set up contingency plans, "just in case." Ex.-"If for some reason... What we'll do..." or "If we split... we'll meet.")

- If an “unpleasant” task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with. Then the rest of your day will be free of anxiety.
- Inoculate yourself against a feared event. If you expose yourself to one or more of the dreaded aspects of an experience beforehand, you often can mitigate your fears. Example: before speaking in public, take time to go over every part of the experience in your mind. Imagine what you’ll wear, what the audience will look like, how you will present your talk, what the questions will be and how you will answer them, etc. Visualize the experience the way you would have it be.
- One of the most obvious ways to avoid unnecessary stress is to select an environment (work, home, leisure) which is in line with your personal needs and desires. If you hate desk jobs, don’t accept a job that requires you to sit at a desk all day. If you hate to talk politics, don’t associate with people who love to talk politics.
- Schedule a realistic day. Avoid the tendency to schedule back-to-back appointments; allow time between appointments for a breathing spell. Allow yourself time every day for privacy, quiet and introspection.
- Do one thing at a time. When you are with someone, be with that person and with no one or nothing else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything else.
- Use your weekend time for a change of pace. If your work week is slow and patterned, make sure there is time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your work is fast-paced and full of deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off.

TIME SAVERS

- Ask questions. Taking a few extra minutes to repeat directions, what someone expects of you, etc. can save hours. (The old “the hurrieder I go, the behinder I get” idea.)
- Prepare for the morning the evening before. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc.

DIET/EATING TIPS

- Eliminate (or restrict) the amount of caffeine in your diet.
- Take a lunch break. Eat healthy. Try to get away from your desk or work area in body and in mind, even if it’s just 15 or 20 minutes.

PHYSICAL RELIEF

- When feeling stressed, most people tend to breathe in short, shallow breaths. When you breathe like this, stale air is not expelled, oxidation of the tissue is incomplete, and muscle tension frequently results. Check your breathing throughout the day, and before, during and after high-pressure situations. Relax all your muscles and take several deep, slow breaths. Note that, when you're relaxed, both your abdomen and chest expand when you breathe.
- Try the following yoga technique whenever you feel the need to relax: inhale deeply through your nose to the count of 8. With lips puckered, exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of 16, or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve. Repeat 10 times.
- Get up and stretch periodically if your job requires that you sit for extended periods.

* Source: *Green River Heart Institute, Owensboro, KY*