Stress comes to us all, be it through work, family life, relationships, calls, or on-the job. Some stress is chronic, while other is acute. Ongoing stress can have a litany of detrimental effects on mind, body, spirit and affect how we interact with those that we care about. Although there are many types of stressors, our bodies react to stress in a similar, predictable pattern. If and when you find yourself stressed, overwhelmed, or otherwise off track, it's important to start taking care of yourself, using healthy strategies to support your mind and body. We can't just put our head in the sand and expect things to change, we must also look at how we are doing things and if there are things we can do to help ourselves so that we can continue to help others and be there for others.

Negative Coping Skills (Don't do these!)

- Working too much
- Avoiding your problems
- Being in denial
- Drinking alcohol excessively
- Ignoring or bottling up feelings
- Taking sedatives
- Taking stimulants
- Using drugs
- Making things worse (yelling, hurting self, etc.)

Good Coping Skills (Do these!)

- Practicing relaxation techniques or meditation
- Carve out time to yourself - YOU time
- Engage in physical activity/exercise (walks, gym time)
- Spend time in nature
- Spend time with friends
- Talk to someone you trust
- Find some humor (funny videos, movies, etc.)
- Spend time on your hobbies
- Engage in spirituality (whatever that means for you)
- Spend time with pets (dogs are the best therapists)
- Read
- Get a good night's sleep whenever possible
- Eat healthy – the body needs the right kind of fuel to function well
- Set boundaries and say "no" – Yes, you can do this!
- Be assertive – ask for what you need and want
- Write, draw, paint, photography – create something
- Play an instrument, sing, dance – music!
- Take a shower or a bath – Epson salts can be relaxing
- Take a walk, or go for a drive
- Watch television or a movie

- Play a game (get engaged with kids)
- Clean or organize your environment
- Take a break or vacation.

Coping with Thoughts

- Make a list of things you're grateful for
- Brainstorm possible solutions
- Lower your expectations of the situation
- Keep an inspirational quote with you, on your dashboard, somewhere visible
- Write a list of goals
- Act opposite of negative feelings (e.g., I don't want to leave the house, so leave!)
- Write a list of pros and cons for decisions
- Reward yourself when successful
- Write a list of your strengths

If you've been going through a stressful time in your life, that's typically a normal experience and happens to us all. It's time to do something about it if it's starting to drag you down or has been going on for a few weeks and things aren't improving. Reach out if you need some support or to create an action plan to get back on track!