

## ***4 STEPS TO DESTRESS***

*Good stress management is like the Serenity Prayer:*

**God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.**

**Step 1) LIST the stressful things you are dealing with right now.**

**Step 2) Pick one. List what can change, and what can't be changed, about the problem.**

The stressful situation is: \_\_\_\_\_

**What I can't change about it**

**What I can change about it**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Step 3) Things that I can change – Taking Action**

What actions can I take? What do I need to take action? When will I do this?

Accountability: Who will I tell or ask for support? When will I check in with them?

Try, try again: What will I do, what will I try next, if this action doesn't help?

**(Try Problem Solving Steps, page 2)**

Notes for what I'll do:

**Step 4) Things I can't change – How can I accept this more, or lower my stress about it?**

Ideas: Meditation, prayer, exercise, talking with a friend, hot bath, writing, reading, watching TV, doing something nice for myself, no matter how small. **(Try "Change your thoughts", pg 3)**

Notes for what will help:

### PROBLEM SOLVING

*This problem solving tool can help with stressful situations that **CAN BE CHANGED**.*

*If you ask, Can this problem be solved? And you get a Yes, try this out.*

1) Name and Rate: **Define the problem briefly.** The problem is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

Allow your feelings and images. Just let the situation emerge. You are now coping DIRECTLY (ACTIVE coping), versus avoiding the problem (PASSIVE coping).

**Rate the stress on a scale of 1-10**, how distressed this problem makes you feel, 10 being the highest. \_\_\_\_\_

Rate your confidence that you can manage it: 1-10 \_\_\_\_\_

2) **Brainstorm – List possible solutions.** Don't worry yet if they'll work. Bonus points for silly options that cause a chuckle (this often expands the ability to generate good ideas). Come up with a good 6 ideas, the more the better.

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1) | 4) |
| 2) | 5) |
| 3) | 6) |

Extra credit: SILLY ONE: 7)

**Circle the ideas you feel are the best options.** If it helps, use the following scale to see which appears to be the best fit by writing in the numbers on the spot they'd occupy on the scale – **from BAD to BEST fit**.

| \_\_\_\_\_ |

**Bad fit**

**possible Solutions scale**

**Best fit**

3) **Pick one option that you feel has the best chance of solving the problem.** I will try:

4) **Try it! Afterwards, evaluate how it worked. If it didn't help, try another option.** Continue this process until you succeed, or start again.

5) **Re-rate the distress this problem causes you now that you've completed this exercise.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Re-rate your confidence** in managing the problem. \_\_\_\_\_ (rerate these once you've tried the solution out.)

**Problem solving** works with parts of problems that can be changed. **Challenges:** Not naming enough solutions (think outside the box); or editing solutions while brainstorming ("But that won't work" – don't worry about that yet, just put it on the list); or not coming back after trying a solution to see how it worked. (Well that didn't work as I'd hoped – but it did get things moving.) If it didn't work, try the next best option. **You can also start from the beginning, if the problem changes.**

from The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, by Susan Folkman, Richard Lazarus, Margaret Cheney

## CHANGE YOUR THOUGHTS

*Certain thoughts can lead to bad feelings but may not be true. Change the thought, improve your mood.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### 1) NAME AND RATE THE THOUGHT

**Write out the Thought(s):** *If negative, stinkin' thinkin', self-critical, automatic, distorted or sad/anxious*

**RATINGS:** how strongly you believe the thought, how strong is the feeling:

*How strongly do I believe that thought? 1-10, 10 highest:* **BELIEF Strength** \_\_\_\_\_

*What emotion(s) does that thought make me feel? FEELING is:* \_\_\_\_\_ **Strength:** \_\_\_\_\_

*(Name the feeling, rate the strength of it, 1-10, 10 highest)*

\*\*\*\*\*

### 2) Challenge the thought: Ask these questions, and answer yes or no.

Is it true/accurate? Yes or no \_\_\_\_\_

Is it helpful? Yes, or no. \_\_\_\_\_

**Why is this thought off base, inaccurate, or unhelpful?** If a lawyer challenged it, what would they say?

\*\*\*\*\*

### 3) Reframe the thought: How would that thought be expressed in a truthful way, but more accurately?

Reframe #1

Reframe #2

**RATINGS: go back to the first thought up top in step 1) -**

Rate how much you believe the original thought now.

**BELIEF Strength** \_\_\_\_\_ **FEELING Strength** \_\_\_\_\_

*You may want to put the "reframe" on a post it, and keep it by your computer or on bathroom mirror.*

*Your mind will want to go back to its default position, until you get the new thought established.*

\*\*\*\*\*

### Resources to learn more:

Dr. David Burns, [Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy](#) and [Ten Days to Self-Esteem](#)

*The thought changing tool is adapted from the work of Dr. Aaron T. Beck, of Beck Institute.org. His daughter Judith Beck has followed in his footsteps in developing cognitive therapy theory and practice.*

**STRESS MANAGEMENT – My Strengths, Challenges and Next Steps**

**How I know when my stress is rising** (physical signs, mental signs, interactions with others):

---

---

**What I already do to cope with stress :**

Passive coping (ways you take a break/distract/avoid: Netflix, wine/sugar, comfort food, games)

---

---

Positive coping (+ self-care (good sleep, healthy eating, exercise, breaks), good planning):

---

---

---

Active coping (facing challenges, problem solving, thought changing, meditation/stress mgmt):

---

---

**What is working well overall:**

---

---

**What new things could I add to cope better?** (Daily relaxation/meditation, watching thoughts, exercise, tracking passive coping time, journaling, gratitude practices, hobbies, pet time)

---

---

---

**What would be a good first step?** (Make a plan, get more info, get a buddy, talk to therapist):

---

---

**What help/support I need to do this:** (Tell family, my team, my MD, a buddy, a therapist, etc.)

---

---

*To fine tune your stress mgmt, try the course: <https://soulsavvy.net/4-steps-to-destress-series/>*