Stress Management Tips for Those with Hepatitis C

December 3, 2013 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

We are headed into the high-stress holiday season. Stress can be harder to cope with if you have hepatitis C or another chronic illness. Here are some tips for managing stress:

- Do not aggravate stress by turning to smoking, overeating, skipping meals, drinking, or drug use that is not medically supervised.
- Find a physical outlet. Try walking, running, dancing, biking, golfing, swimming, gardening, playing with kids, or yoga. Do this for at least 15 minutes daily. Even better, do this twice a day or increase your activity to 30 or 45 minutes.
- Maintain good nutrition. Try to eat a low fat, high fiber diet. If you are short on time, fast food restaurants now offer healthy alternatives to the usual fried fare.
- Find ways to relax and turn your mind off. Spend time with friends and family. Go to the movies, play some music, watch a sporting event, play cards, read a magazine, take a hot bath, go to a favorite restaurant, get a massage, light a candle, do a crossword puzzle, read the comics.
- Attend a stress-management class. Some employers, clinics, health insurance plans, and adult education services offer stress management classes.
- Talk about it. Sometimes others can see ways to improve our situation.
- Put a positive spin on things. Don’t turn little things into big things. Try saying to yourself, “This too shall pass.”
- Help others. Sometimes the best way to get out of our head is to help someone else.
- Let others help you. Perhaps you can off-load some of your responsibilities.

- Set limits. Remember that the word “no” is a complete sentence.
- Take issues one task at a time, one minute at a time. Don’t overwhelm yourself by thinking about everything you have to do. Make a list and focus on what you can accomplish. Be realistic. Prioritize. Put your health at the top of the list.
- Prune your “to do” list. My favorite way to shrink my “to do” list is to cross something off without doing it. This is very liberating.
- Waiting in long lines can be uncomfortable when we are stressed. Prepare for this by bringing along a puzzle, smart phone, or reading material. Try finding the longest line rather than the shortest one. This can be surprisingly therapeutic.
- Avoid others who increase your stress.
- Practice acceptance. Let go of what is unchangeable.
- Find ways to laugh. When we laugh, the body produces helpful stress hormones. “He who laughs, lasts.”

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