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**D.A.R.E. to RELAX ©**  
**Adapted from Julie Lusk's Book**  
**Desktop Yoga ® The Anytime, Anywhere Relaxation Program**

Going through life's adjustments and changes can add unwanted stress causing unhappiness, sickness, poor relationships and lack of energy. Improve your ability to handle stress by practicing the following effective ways to cope with stress. DARE to Relax includes: D = Diet; A = Attitude and Awareness; R = Rest, Relaxation and Relationships; E = Exercise.

**DIET:** Don't deprive yourself of essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals that can help you reduce the effects of daily stress. Stress uses up your supply of vitamins A, B and C that can lead to feeling irritable and tired. Calcium is essential for your central nervous system to function normally. Without enough, your nerves become frayed. If you consistently eat well-balanced meals, you can fortify your system giving you the nourishment to guard against the harmful effects of stress.

- Eat a nutritious breakfast
- Choose fresh fruit, vegetables and whole grains
- Choose baked or broiled food instead of fried
- Cut down on too much fat, salt, sugar, caffeine, alcohol, additives and preservatives
- Maintain a healthy weight

**ATTITUDE AND AWARENESS:** Research shows that as much as 75% of illnesses are the result of experiencing too much stress. Not being able to handle stress properly can decrease the effectiveness of your immune system. Become more aware of how you respond to tension and stress in your life and begin to make adjustments. Are you responding appropriately? Could you be over-reacting? Is it possible to avoid or change a situation that causes you anxiety? By improving your awareness and improving how you react to stress, it might be possible to avoid some of your headaches, stomachaches and other problems. Try laughing. Laughter is like internal jogging. It aids digestion and improves alertness and productivity by sending blood and oxygen to your brain and increases the production of the body's catecholamines.

- Learn to accept situations you can't change; give in once in a while
- Learn to communicate with others; talk your worries out
- Take one thing at a time; don't take on too many changes at once
- Manage your time more effectively; don't procrastinate
- Be positive and realistic
- Express your feelings in healthy ways
- Create variety in your work; do old things new ways

**REST AND RELAXATION:** It is much easier to handle stress if you are rested and know how to remain calm. Getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night is essential. Although recreation and being diverted from stress is helpful (playing tennis, watching a movie) true relaxation is different. It involves giving yourself an honest break from activity and excess stimulation. Breathing deeply, smoothly, slowly and from the diaphragm is relaxing since it too sends a fresh supply of blood to the brain and throughout the body. It oxygenates your system and even slows down the heartbeat.

- Plan leisure time; take breaks
- Spend time on a hobby; seek new interests
- Schedule some quiet time alone every day; meditate; pray
- Have fun, play and laugh
- Cut down on noise levels at home and work; turn the radio or TV off

**EXERCISE:** When under stress, there is an increase of adrenalin in the system as part of the flight or fight response, which can drain you of energy if not effectively released. Exercise regularly to work stresses off positively. This can improve your productivity and increase your energy. Be sure to choose physical activity that you enjoy.