

# STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

## What Does Stress Mean to You?

We all experience stress — yet we may experience it in very different ways. Because of this, there is no single definition for stress, but the most common explanation is that stress is a physical, mental or emotional strain or tension.

Stress is a reaction to a situation where a person feels anxious or threatened. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress and getting the proper care and support can help reduce stressful feelings and symptoms.



### Common Stress Reactions

Common reactions to a stressful event can include:

- Disbelief, shock and numbness
- Feeling sad, frustrated and helpless
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Headaches, back pains and stomach problems
- Smoking or the use of alcohol or drugs

### Healthy Ways to Cope

Here are some easy, and healthy, ideas to help you cope with your stress:

- Take care of yourself — eat healthy, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep and give yourself a break if you feel stressed.
- Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a family member, friend, doctor, pastor or counselor.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. These can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- Recognize when you need more help — know when to talk to a psychologist, social worker or counselor if things continue.
- Potentially the most valuable advice is knowing how to talk to others about your stress. This goes both ways, as it's important to know how to discuss your problems with others as well as how to talk to someone that comes to you with their own issues.

— Adapted from *The American Institute of Stress*