

DEALING WITH STRESS & TRAUMA

By Lynne Campbell-Gillies

Our community seems to be sitting on a tinder box at the moment. Crime, increasing expenses, never-ending developmental changes and attendant traffic problems, and deteriorating basic services are some of our major stressors. All of these factors tend to impact on our individual physical and mental well-being, as well as on our close relationships and work environments causing us to feel less and less in control of our lives.

The point is: we cannot eliminate the resulting stress from deadlines, sorrows, confrontations, frustrations that are part of our lives. Some of our community have had to confront unspeakable horrors. We can, though, learn to manage it and use it to help us. The main steps in managing stress involve i) identifying the source of stress and ii) changing your reaction to it. The choice, ultimately, is ours.

Steven Covey, the well-known management and leadership training expert, talks about the 10/90 rule. He maintains that 10% of life is what happens to you, and the other 90% of life is decided by how you react. In other words, you probably have no control over 10% of life, but you have control over the remaining 90% simply by how you react. A much more empowering perspective, wouldn't you say?

In the meantime, for those who have experienced a traumatic event there is a possibility that you are experiencing disabling symptoms. Trauma symptoms may present themselves immediately or sometimes only weeks, months or even years later, and include the following:

- sleeping disturbances
- sexual dysfunction
- depression
- feeling of numbness
- spontaneous crying
- anxiety
- panic attacks
- irritability
- withdrawal from normal social routines
- difficulty with relationships
- memory lapses
- difficulties in concentrating
- flashbacks

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms and feel that your quality of life has generally been impaired, then it's time to seek professional assistance and take back your life!

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