

STRESS RELIEF

On the subject of stress, self-help books, magazine articles and well-meaning friends all seem to advise the same things: "Take a vacation or a mini-vacation." "Take a yoga class or get some exercise." "Eat a piece of dark chocolate or a 100-calorie pack of your favorite crunchy snack." Yeah, right. If we had time for yoga or exercise or a vacation, we probably wouldn't BE stressed. We would have to eat a piece of chocolate the size of a school bus, and 100-calorie packs are only good for one thing- sprinkling on hot fudge sundaes. Here is some advice you can really use:

- The best way to reduce stress is to have a plan for your day - every day.
- Clarify your expectations: train your staff or the children in your classroom, and your family! Then hold them accountable.
- When asked a question, ask it back. It not only empowers people, it encourages them to see themselves as problem-solvers instead of always coming to you for answers.
- Take a multi-vitamin and mineral supplement. When the mind is stressed, the body wanes and the vitamins and minerals it needs are used up much more rapidly.
- Don't be late. Trying to play "catch-up" all day is very stressful and not worth the extra minutes of snooze time.
- Accept the fact that some adults have to be told something nine times before they "get it." What are some other ways to get your message across? Can you think of a "hands-on" (physical) experience to reinforce the concept?
- When faced with a task you'd rather not do, ask yourself "Why is this important?" or "What's the worst that could happen if I do not do this?" The answer then becomes your motivation.
- Get rid of clutter. Clutter bombards the brain with excessive visual stimuli, creating stress.
- Find a spiritual path that resonates with you and embrace it and practice it.
- Open your door. It's tempting to always close your office door or run errands every day during nap time, but this is a great time to have your door open to staff. They are relaxed, they are on their own time, they will enjoy spontaneously interacting with you, and it really will bring you closer to one another. Make it a point be there and available during this time at least a couple of days each week. Feeling like you're not in this alone will greatly reduce your stress.
- Breathing really does help. Sit or stand in a relaxed position. Slowly inhale through your nose, expanding tummy w/shoulders relaxed, for 5 seconds. Let the air out from your mouth, counting to eight in your head as it leaves your lungs. Repeat several times.

Finally, remember, if we all threw our problems in a pile and saw everyone else's, we'd grab ours back!