

# Early Warning Signs of Stress

The stress reactions below are presented in categories so that they may be more easily recognized and understood. There is no magic number of the symptoms that suggest difficulty in coping. Rather it is the extent to which the noted reaction is a change (different from a person's normal condition) that makes a reaction potentially important. Further, it is the combined presence of symptoms that determines the degree of the problem. Indicators may be isolated reactions or combinations among the three categories listed below. Finally, it is their duration (how long the symptoms have been present/how long they last), the frequency of such incidents (how often they happen) and the intensity (strength) with which they are present that suggests the severity of the difficulty in coping.

## Indicators of Difficulty in Coping

| Emotional  | Behavioral  | Physical  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Apathy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The "blahs"</li> <li>■ Recreation no longer pleasurable</li> <li>■ Sad</li> </ul>   | <b>Withdrawal (smoking avoidance)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Social isolation</li> <li>■ Work related withdrawal                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reluctance to accept responsibilities</li> <li>○ Neglecting Responsibilities</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <b>Preoccupation with illness (intolerant of/dwelling on minor ailments)</b>  |
| <b>Anxiety</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Restless</li> <li>■ Agitated</li> <li>■ Insecure</li> <li>■ Feelings of worthlessness</li> </ul>                         |   | <b>Acting Out</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Alcohol Abuse</li> <li>■ Gambling</li> <li>■ Spending Spree</li> <li>■ Promiscuity</li> </ul>                                    |
| <b>Irritability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Overly sensitive</li> <li>■ Defensive</li> <li>■ Arrogant/argumentative</li> <li>■ Insubordinate/hostile</li> </ul> | <b>Desperate Acting Out (getting attention-cry for help)</b><br><b>Administrative Infractions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Tardy to work</li> <li>■ Poor appearance</li> <li>■ Poor personal hygiene</li> <li>■ Accident prone</li> </ul>   |   |
| <b>Mental Fatigue</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Preoccupied</li> <li>■ Difficulty concentrating</li> <li>■ Inflexible</li> </ul>                                  |   | <b>Legal Infractions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Indebtedness</li> <li>■ Shoplifting</li> <li>■ Traffic tickets</li> <li>■ Fights</li> <li>■ Child/spouse abuse</li> </ul> |
| <b>Overcompensation (denial)</b><br><b>Exaggerate/grandiose</b><br><b>Overworks to exhaustion</b><br><b>Denies Problems/symptoms</b><br><b>Suspicious/paranoid</b>               |   |   |