# Healthy Ways to Cope With Stress

Stress is a healthy, normal part of life. In fact, the human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. When you experience changes or challenges (stressors), your body produces physical and mental responses. That's stress.

These stress responses help your body adjust to new situations. Stress can be positive, keeping us alert, motivated and ready to avoid danger. But if your stress level stays high for an extended period of time – i.e. chronic stress – then you start to run into problems. Excessive stress has been linked with many serious health issues, including weight gain, high blood pressure, anxiety, heart disease and high blood sugar in people with diabetes. Here are some healthy ways you can deal with stress:

- **Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories**, including those on social media. Consider limiting news to just a couple of times a day and disconnecting from phone, TV and computer screens for a while.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat healthy, exercise, get sufficient sleep and give yourself a break if you feel stressed out.
  - Take care of your body.
  - Take deep breaths, stretch or meditate.
  - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
  - Exercise regularly.
  - Get plenty of sleep.
  - Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco and substance use.
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Get social support.** If you are stressed, talk to people you can count on – such as your spouse, friend, parent, doctor, counselor or pastor.
- **Avoid drugs, alcohol and overeating.** These may seem to help, but they can create additional problems and increase the stress you are already feeling.
- **Recognize when you need more help.** If problems continue or you are thinking about suicide, talk to a psychologist, social worker or professional counselor.