In this fast-paced world, our minds can sometimes get the better of us, especially if we are not finding ways to lower stress. Effective stress management helps you break the hold stress has on your life, so you can be happier, healthier, and more productive.

Stress may affect factors that increase heart disease risk, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, smoking, physical inactivity, and overeating. However, these bad habits can increase blood pressure and may damage blood vessel walls. Changes made by stress can affect the body in other ways as well, such as triggering asthma, ulcers, and irritable bowel syndrome.

Let’s Get Moving!

Physical activity not only lowers stress, but also:
• Supports a stronger heart
• Lowers cholesterol
• Improves blood flow
• Lowers blood pressure
• Lifts your mood and self-esteem
• Lowers blood sugar
• Improves sleep
• Can reduce the need for medications
• Helps with weight loss

Physical activity is not JUST exercise. There are many ways to add “exercise” into your daily routine:
• Dancing
• Gardening
• Brisk (fast) walking
• Doing household chores such as vacuuming, mopping, and dusting

Other ways to manage stress:
• Practice breathing exercises
• Progressive muscle relaxation
• Meditation
• Listen to soothing music
• Yoga
• Make art -- draw, color, paint
• Work on a scrapbook or photo album to focus on good memories
• Read a book, short story or magazine
• Meet a friend for coffee or a heart healthy meal
• Do a hobby like sewing, knitting, or making jewelry.
• Take a relaxing bath and feel the stress wash away
• Play with your kids or pets – outdoors if possible

When stress makes you feel bad, do something that makes you feel good, even if only for 10 or 15 minutes!

If your stress is nonstop, stress management classes can also help. Look for them at community colleges, rehabilitation programs, in hospitals, or by calling a therapist in your community.

Resources:
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): 1-800-950-NAMI (6264). If you are in a crisis or looking for mental health information, you can call NAMI’s helpline for free support. NAMI has programs designed specifically for those who identify as living with a mental health condition, caregivers, veterans, teens, and LGBTQ.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): 800-662-HELP (4357). This national helpline is available 24/7 in English and Spanish for anyone facing a substance abuse or mental health disorder. You can call the helpline at any time to speak with a trained information specialist who can provide you with local resources and support.

MentalHealth.gov: This website provides information about mental health disorders and how to get help. There are a number of helplines listed on the page, and you can enter your zip code to find mental health services in your state or zip code.

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): This is an excellent and reliable resource to learn more about anxiety disorders. You can read about signs and symptoms, what treatment and therapies are commonly used in treatment, and much more.