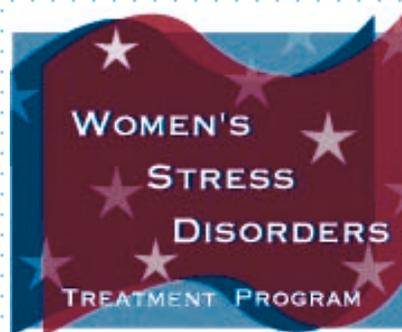


Taking Care of Yourself

◆————◆

**The first step in
reclaiming your life**



**Women's Stress Disorders
Treatment Program**

William S. Middleton VA Hospital
2500 Overlook Terrace
Madison, WI 53705
608-280-7084

Why is it so hard for me to take care of myself?

- ◆ Women in our society are socialized to take care of the needs of others, which sometimes leaves no time or energy for taking care of their own
- ◆ Sometimes women's history of trauma convinced them that they don't deserve better treatment, either by others or by themselves

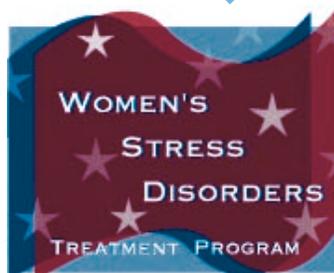


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How do I overcome that and treat myself better?

- ◆ Sometimes it works to change behavior first, sometimes it is better to first change your thinking.
- ◆ Put yourself on the list of “things to take care of today” and then actually do it.
- ◆ Remind yourself that, unless you are okay, you won’t be able to help anyone else.



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What kinds of things are involved in self-care?

- ◆ Physical safety
- ◆ Taking care of your health
- ◆ Treating yourself with compassion
- ◆ Developing positive relationships with others
- ◆ Participating in meaningful activities

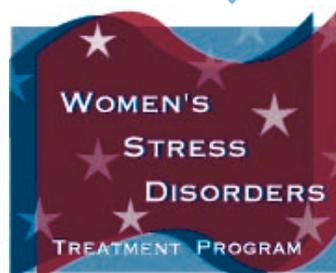


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Physical safety – the foundation

- ◆ We focus on physical safety first because nothing else can be accomplished unless you are physically out of danger.
- ◆ No matter what anyone told you in the past or present, everyone is entitled to be safe.
- ◆ Physical safety means you are not experiencing violence or threats of violence from others (including people you know as well as strangers).

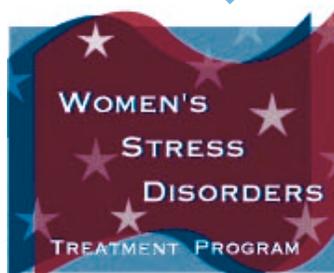


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What are some ways to be safer physically?

- ◆ Use the locks on your doors
- ◆ Do not give keys to your home to people you do not know well, who are untrustworthy, or who treat you badly.
- ◆ Be aware of your surroundings, especially when traveling alone or in dangerous neighborhoods
- ◆ Get help in eliminating violence from your relationships

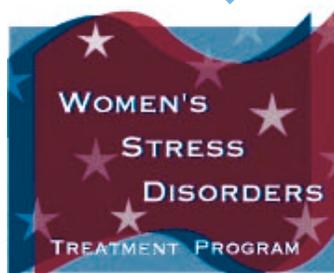


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What else?

- ◆ **Keep a clear head.** Although the abusive behavior of others is never your fault, using alcohol or drugs leaves you less able to determine whether a situation is unsafe, and less able to take actions that would increase your safety.
- ◆ **What can you think of in your life that would help you be safer?**

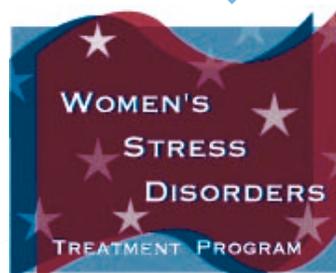


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I see how physical safety is important. What else?

- Take care of your health
- See your doctor and dentist regularly and follow their advice
- Take medications as prescribed
- Include physical activity in every day
- Eat a balanced diet
- Avoid excessive caffeine, alcohol and other drugs
- If you use tobacco, quit



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Treating yourself with compassion

- Be kind to yourself, like you might to a close friend or a child.
- Recognize and appreciate your positive characteristics and behavior.
- Practice accepting compliments from trusted others in a way that allows you to really take it in. Just say “thank you”.
- Allow yourself to be human and imperfect.

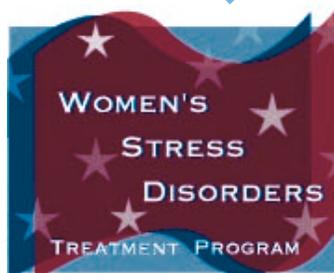


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Nurturing positive relationships

- ◆ Choose relationships wisely
- ◆ Maintain a balance in relationships of offering and accepting help and support
- ◆ Speak up in a relationship-enhancing way about how the other person's behavior affects you
- ◆ Allow others to be human and flawed, but not to consistently mistreat you

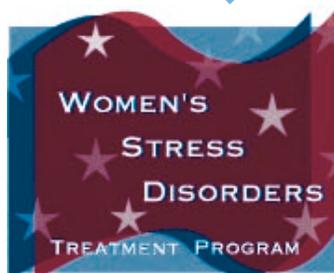
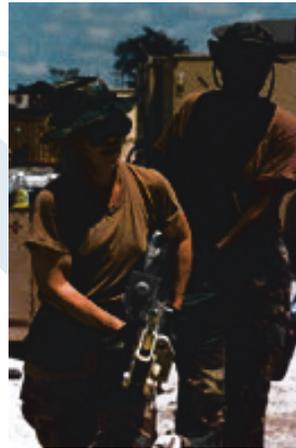


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Participating in meaningful activities

- ◆ Whether it is paid or unpaid, find an activity which helps you make meaning in your life
- ◆ For example, mentor a person in Special Olympics, or help plant a neighborhood garden, or offer to be a friendly visitor to an older person

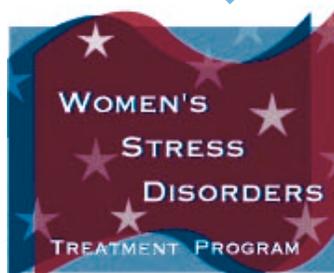


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For more information on any of these, take a look at other units

- Riding out uncomfortable feelings
- Mindfulness
- Improving this moment
- Making and keeping friends
- Enhancing relationships
- Assertiveness skills
- Creating meaning



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