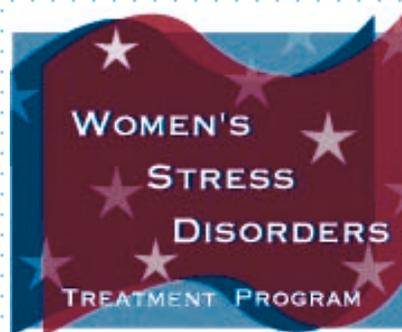


# *Therapy Skills for Consumers*

How to get the most out  
of your treatment



## **Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program**

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

## *Set measurable, realistic goals*

- ◆ Consider what you would like to have in your life.
- ◆ How would someone looking at you or listening to you know you were meeting your goals? How specifically would you be acting, what would you be saying, what feelings would you be having?
- ◆ What would be a small step that would demonstrate you are moving towards your goals?



### **Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program**

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

## *Take care of basics first*

- If you seem to move from one crisis to another in your life, your counselor will help you develop some skills to anticipate and avoid some of the crises, and to cope better with those challenging situations that may not be avoidable.
- Even in trauma counseling, delving into past trauma is not a good first step.
- It is critical that you have a stable base from which to begin working through this.



### **Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program**

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

***The first order of  
business is to keep  
yourself safe***

This means having a safe home, free from abusive behavior by others, being able to meet your basic expenses, getting adequate medical care, and practicing good health habits (moderation in most things, regular physical activity, avoiding tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, practicing safe sex).

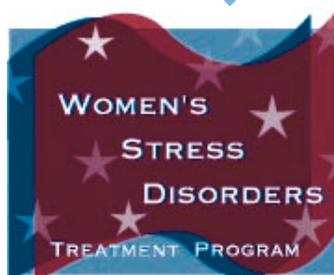


**Women's Stress Disorders  
Treatment Program**

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

## ***Rally your support people***

- ◆ Ask your friends and family to support the positive steps you are taking.
- ◆ If you don't currently have trustworthy friends or family members work with your counselor on some ways to meet people who are capable of friendship.

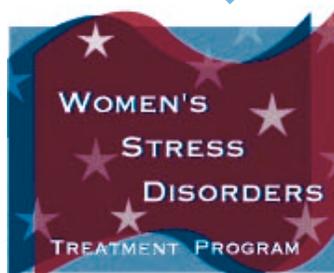


### **Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program**

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

***Be honest with  
yourself and your  
counselor***

- **Therapy is different than other kinds of interactions or relationships.**
- **In many social situations it is appropriate to gloss over your problems. In order to see some progress in therapy, however, you need to “squeal on” yourself.**

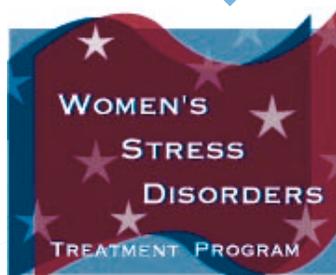


**Women's Stress Disorders  
Treatment Program**

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

## ***Pace yourself***

- It takes time to build a trusting relationship with your counselor.
- Moving at a speed that is faster than you can tolerate generally backfires.
- However, once you've determined your counselor is trustworthy, pushing yourself to disclose a little more will improve your progress.



### **Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program**

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

***A therapy relationship  
is not a friendship***

- You and your counselor will work together to develop concrete, realistic goals for you.
- Your counselor will challenge you from time to time, especially when you get off track from the path you've set for reaching your goals.
- The focus will be on you, not the therapist, not your partner or your friends or family.

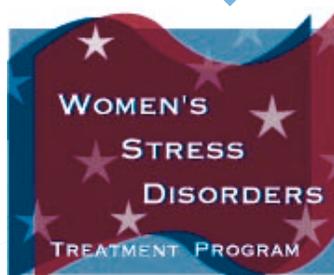


**Women's Stress Disorders  
Treatment Program**

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

*Think about patterns in  
your life by focusing  
on the big picture*

- It is helpful to pay attention to what happens over and over.
- If something feels “familiar” or like it always seems to happen to you, that is exactly the thing to bring up in therapy.

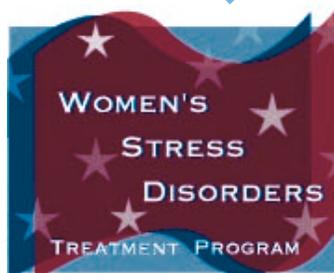


**Women's Stress Disorders  
Treatment Program**

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

***Assume that you will feel uncomfortable at times***

- If change were easy and comfortable, people wouldn't need help in order to develop better ways to meet their needs.
- Facing problems may be uncomfortable, but is the only way to loosen their grip on us.
- It is possible to be safe even when you feel uncomfortable.



**Women's Stress Disorders  
Treatment Program**

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

***Cultivate a willingness to tolerate some discomfort***

- You probably already are tolerating some discomfort. We are asking you to do that in a way that supports your growth rather than keeping you stuck.
- Therapy is not about helping you learn better ways to stay numb or avoid dealing with unworkable situations that keep you feeling miserable.

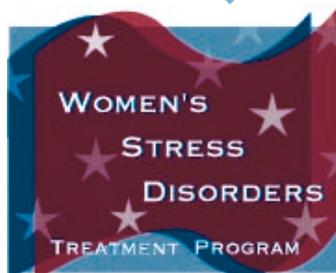


**Women's Stress Disorders  
Treatment Program**

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

***A caveat. What tolerating  
discomfort does  
NOT mean.***

- It is never okay for a counselor to expect you to engage in romantic/sexual behavior with them. That is unethical and illegal.
- Pushing yourself way beyond your comfort zone is not generally helpful. You should feel like you are stretching outside of your comfort zone, but not like you are damaging yourself.

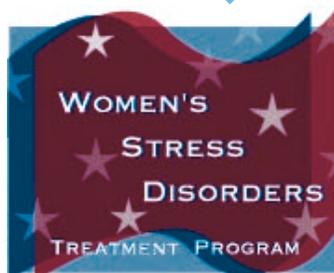


**Women's Stress Disorders  
Treatment Program**

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

## *Practice skills in your life*

- Like anything else in life, you will get better by practicing. If you only practice speaking French for one hour a week, you won't have much success in getting your needs met when you go to France. The same is true of therapy.
- You can create practice situations in your personal life. You don't have to wait for something to come up before you practice new skills.

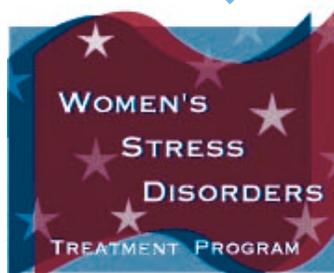


### **Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program**

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

## *Keep track of your successes*

- Positive reinforcement is much more effective than punishment. Make a chart, write in a journal, tell a friend, do whatever it takes to genuinely appreciate the hard work and persistence you put into the positive changes you have made.
- “Self esteem” does not come from telling yourself you are good at particular things. It comes from demonstrating to yourself that you are.



### **Women's Stress Disorders Treatment Program**

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

***Stick with it***

**Your life can be fuller and you can grow in a satisfying way when you face your problems and learn more effective ways to meet your needs.**



**Women's Stress Disorders  
Treatment Program**

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