

## The Four A's for Managing Stress

Written by: Sherial Pierre, CM | June 28, 2016



We all experience some level of stress daily; thus, it is imperative that we find healthy ways to manage and reduce its effects. While stress may seem overwhelming at times, we do have the ability to control stress once we understand what causes it. Stress produces an automatic response from the nervous system. We can anticipate stress that is related to a situation we have experienced in the past, such as a doctor's appointment, a traffic jam, or a monthly business meeting. By altering how we react to these situations (stressors), we can reduce the stress they cause. For example, when I'm heading to work, I try to leave home 45 minutes to an hour early to ensure I arrive on time; leaving early (my reaction) reduces stress associated with being late because I am not so anxious about being delayed in traffic. The **four A's--Avoid, Alter, Adapt, and Accept**—provide guidance for managing stress.

**AVOID the causes of stress.** Some stress is unavoidable--such as stress caused by death, illness, or accident. Other stress is the result of our negligence or procrastination and is avoidable. By tackling tasks as they arise and prioritizing their importance, we can avoid the stress that occurs when we defer a task, causing it to go from important to urgent.

**ALTER the way you handle a stressful situation.** Suppose we have back to back meetings scheduled and discover that one meeting will occur across town. Rather than stress, look for variables that can be altered to change the situation, such as postponing one meeting or moving one meeting's location. **ADAPT as best you can.** Understand that things come up, plans change, and emergencies happen. When they do, take a deep breath,

remain calm, and deal with it. If a stressor cannot be avoided or altered, then adapt as best as possible and carry on despite the circumstances. **ACCEPT that stress happens.** Regardless of its cause, stress is a reality of life that we must consciously accept. Rather than rallying against a situation that cannot be changed, find the peace in a storm; choose to weather the storm, not succumb to it. The **four A's** have many parallels to the serenity prayer—“*God grant me the serenity to change the things I can, accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference*”. Seek healthy ways to manage stress by embracing serenity through the following actions:

- Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond our control—particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing over them, focus on the things you can control, such as the way you react to a stressful situation.
- Look for the upside. When facing major challenges, view them as opportunities for personal growth. When poor choices cause stress, reflect and learn from them.
- Forgive and forget. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentment. Free yourself from negative energy through forgiveness.

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## About the Author



### **Sherial Pierre, CM**

Sherial Pierre, CM is a risk management maverick with the Grand Bahamas Port Authority. During her fourteen years in the security field, she has worked with persons from diverse backgrounds and expanded her knowledge of business operations and human resources through courses which include the Certified Human Resource Manager and Certified Manager. She hopes to use her expertise to help others grow professionally.