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**Coping Strategies Help Women Facing Economic Stress**

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 Society for Women's Health Research  
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You couldn't ignore the news if you tried. The economic crisis is all over magazines, newspapers and television news programs. So, it's no wonder people are feeling anxious and stressed out.

But women may be reacting more strongly than men. A recent survey from the American Psychological Association (APA) called "Stress in America" says women are expressing fear about the current financial situation more than men. Women are also reporting physical and psychological symptoms, including sleep disturbances, headaches, mood swings and changes in appetite, in higher numbers than men.

"Women are sometimes more aware of the stress they are feeling," says Stephanie Smith, Psy.D., public education coordinator for the APA and a licensed clinical psychologist in Erie, Colo. "They are often more willing to talk about it and admit to the struggles they are having."

Women also tend to be the primary caretakers for most families, which in times of economic crisis, can add to the burden. "Women have many roles to play in life. They are often the primary caregivers for children and the older generations [aging parents], as well as workers in industry," Smith said. All of this responsibility can add up to a lot of stress, especially when families are being squeezed financially.

In addition, many of the traditional household responsibilities end up falling on the shoulders of women. "As much as things have changed over the years, women still tend to do more of the household work," Smith said, referring to cooking, cleaning and laundry. "Taken together, these things often lead to more stress in women, because they just have more things to be stressed about."

That's not to say that men aren't stressed out. Seventy-five percent of male respondents to the APA survey expressed fear about the economy, compared to 84 percent of women.

Since everyone reacts differently to stress, a key to maintaining good health during distressing times is to know your own warning signs the physical symptoms that indicate when your brain and body are experiencing unusual or excessive pressure.

Women are more likely to report unhealthy behaviors, including eating poorly and excessive shopping and napping as a response to stress. They are also more likely than men to report physical symptoms of stress, including headaches, exhaustion and depression.

For tips on recognizing and coping with stress, consult the APA's online Help Center: <http://www.apahelpcenter.org/>.

Despite the tumultuous times, there are measures you can take to safeguard your health and well-being. "One of things we often do is abandon our good coping strategies," Smith said. "The first and easiest coping mechanism is to keep up your good habits." That means continue going to your aerobics class, eating dinner with your family, participating in social events like a book club. Take enough time out of each day to focus on yourself and your own well-being.

If possible, do not cut back on preventive and basic health care services. Saving money on health expenditures may seem like a good idea in the short run, but it can lead to serious health problems and enormous bills, which make financial matters worse.

To make your health care dollars go further, talk to your primary care physician about all of your health needs and concerns. If he or she can manage multiple conditions, it can cut down on the number of doctors you regularly visit and the associated out-of-pocket expenses.

Taking time for yourself and taking care of yourself are keys to getting through tough times successfully.

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