

Exercises to keep relationships loving

By Dr. Ted Mala

You see them everywhere, in every village, city and state in the world. They are young and in love. They look into each other's eyes and tell one another how much they are in love. They hold hands and plan their lives around one another.

One goes away for a while and they begin a series of telephone calls and love letters back and forth. They talk to each other for hours on the phone saying how great things would be if their mate was there with him or her.

They are in love.

After a while of living together, some of that initial attraction begins to wear off and the realities of everyday work begin to set in. Life becomes routine and the dust and excitement begin to settle. The couple begins to really get to know one another. It is now that the test of time begins to measure if they are going to make it together or not.

In some relationships stress cannot be or is not worked out in normal ways and one of the partners turns to violence. Violence is not only physically attacks on another human but can include threatening someone.

Violence is *any* destructive

action or force that brings physical or mental harm to others. Violence is also addictive like any other power over the lives of others. Chances are that it will make you feel strong and superior over others and unless controlled, will lead to threatening and beating your mate or your children.

Protective homes or "shelters" are going up all over our state to give children and adults a place to work out their fears and anger and to just plain be safe until their mate "cools off." Like alcoholism and suicide, it is a subject that we do not like to think or talk about yet one that we have to face.

It is not a pleasant one to think or write about and to many who read this, something that applies to some one else, not "me." Yet looking at the shelter statistics from one small Alaskan community I read where in the past year they have had to provide over two thousand shelter nights to their area alone!

With winter setting in, I would like to leave you with a few suggestions for stress which breeds alcoholism, violence and other self and family destructive acts. How about cutting these out of the paper and putting them up

somewhere so you and your family can see them (back of a door or on your refrigerator)

WHAT TO DO WHEN STRESS STRIKES

1. Always remember: only the dead and unborn have no problems. Hope for the best, plan for the worst and take what comes with humor.

2. Don't keep feeling sorry for yourself. We usually get what we deserve. Try to deserve important things like and respect and friendship.

3. Only rarely will things turn out really bad. Why waste time worrying about the worst that could happen?

4. When trouble comes, don't stay by yourself and hide. Get out, keep active, keep involved. See friends and family that make you feel good. Do things that really feel good.

5. If you are having trouble sleeping, try a "stress diet": a big breakfast, a light lunch and a small dinner. Don't do exercises just before going to bed, do them earlier in the evening. Listen to music, read a good story, be good to yourself.

6. AVOID ALCOHOL!!! It will make your problems deeper and stop you from working

them out and make your stress last longer.

7. Help others: do volunteer work. It will help you see your problems better and help you be more grateful for what you have.

8. Don't despair. Don't give up. This too will pass.

9. Be careful about your physical health. People who are under stress tend to get sick more easily because their immune system (natural defense system of your body) is upset.

10. Spend some time each day just relaxing. Put your feet up and let your mind daydream. Think about relaxing tight muscles. Breathe deeply.

11. Don't be surprised if you start thinking about suicide . . . when you are under lots of pressure, your mind starts thinking about *all* solutions. If you find yourself really thinking about ending it all, get help immediately from your pastor, doctor, health aide, counselor or anyone else you trust.

12. Don't be around places that you do not have to be that make you feel "down." Look for people who make you feel good. Also look for places and things that make you happy. Anything that brings you "up" and feels

good.

13. Get some exercise. How about exercises that stretch your muscles like yoga, aerobics, dancing . . . do something twice a week that is strenuous and lots of work for 30 to 45 minutes.

14. The hardest thing to do when you are under stress is to do anything at all. Now you know what to do but getting yourself to do it will be the hardest part. Force yourself to be in charge of your stress and not allow stress to be in charge of you. Your body, your mind, your health are YOUR responsibility.

When you are under stress, you just won't feel that you have the energy to do what needs to be done. When we think about traditional Native values and how the family was and is the basic unit of our society and that keeping it together, like any relationship, requires work to keep it that way, the focus goes back to each of us and our responsibilities.

We have to stop looking to outside agencies and government to solving our own problems and have to start taking more responsibility for our own lives.

Now. Here's to good, safe, happy and stressless winter!