

MENTAL FITNESS

A Newsletter of Self-Help Strategies

HOW TO BEAT THE STRESS OF WAITING

More and more these days, you have to wait. You have to wait at post offices, banks, doctors' offices, and a variety of government and private sector locations. Waiting can make you irritated and impatient. It can also make you sick and stressed out. Or waiting can be an opportunity to relax a short amount of time in an otherwise hectic and busy life. Your attitude is the key. You can choose not to wait, and you can also choose to change your attitude while you are waiting.

You can choose not to wait. You can call the M.D.'s office and confirm that you will be seen on schedule. If you have a physician who suffers from Tardiness Syndrome, you can change doctors. You can choose not to wait at the bank by only going there during slow hours, or by changing banks.

You can also, instead of getting mad or annoyed, surrender to the wait and have a good time. A resentful attitude makes the wait longer. A peaceful accepting mind shortens the wait.

You can defuse your anger and lessen your stress if you do not schedule yourself too tightly. Figure in traffic jams and late planes so that you are not harried.

Rename the wait. Think of it as "a rest," "a pause," or "relaxation time." The next time you're stuck in traffic, take a deep breath and plan ahead, or listen to relaxation tapes, books on tape, or just wonderful music.

Prepare for the wait. Bring a book, newspaper, magazine, or musical instrument. Bring a friend who likes to talk and listen. Bring a notepad, tape recorder, or cell phone. If you are a work addict, work while waiting. Make your weekend plans during the wait. Stretch or practice yoga or tai chi. Run in place. Pick a person waiting in line with you and strike up a conversation or song. Your list of things to do in the waiting room is limited only by your imagination and sensitivity to embarrassment.