

STEPS

TO INDEPENDENT LIVING



**THIRD
EDITION**

How to Look Out for Yourself

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To the Student

Living on your own can be a great experience! You can choose and decorate your own place. You can decide for yourself what and when to eat. You can set your own hours. In short, you are free to make your own choices about your lifestyle.

Along with these freedoms comes responsibility. Living on your own means it's up to you to take care of yourself when you're sick or hurt. You are now the one who must be sure your nutritional, physical, and emotional needs are met. No one will be watching over you to ensure your personal safety. No one will be looking to make sure you make good decisions about alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. It's up to you!

But that's not all! You must make good choices as you choose and set up your home. You must keep your home safe and clean. And you must use your money wisely to meet your needs.

You will have a better experience living on your own if you are prepared to meet your new responsibilities. The six books in the *Steps to Independent Living* series will teach you the skills you need to make it on your own.

In this book, *How to Look Out for Yourself*, you will learn about:

- keeping emotionally healthy
- keeping yourself personally safe
- making healthy decisions about alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and sexual activity

We hope this information helps prepare you for the day you start living on your own!

Self-Test

How well can you care for yourself when you're sick or hurt?
Circle YES or NO for each question.

1. Do you know the steps to follow when working toward a goal?
YES NO
2. Do you know how to set a realistic goal for yourself?
YES NO
3. Do you know healthy ways to handle bad feelings?
YES NO
4. Do you know how to make friends easily?
YES NO
5. Are you able to cope with the stress in your life?
YES NO
6. Do you know how to act so criminals won't think you're an easy target?
YES NO
7. Do you know how to use public transportation safely?
YES NO
8. Do you know what to do if you are sexually assaulted, raped, or threatened with rape?
YES NO

Continued 

Coping with Stress

The teen years may well be among the most stressful times of life. Your body is going through big changes, inside and out. There is pressure to do well in school. There may be conflicts with parents or siblings (brothers and sisters). There are pressures from your peers to follow the crowd. Dating (or the lack of it) can be a problem.

Each one of us has stress in our lives. What's stressful for one person may not bother someone else. Most adults look back on their teen years as a time that was difficult in many ways.

Too much stress is hard on the body. Scientists have estimated that 75% of all visits to doctors involve problems related to stress.

Stress can cause a variety of physical symptoms. Stress can give you headaches or backaches. It can make you tired. You may get indigestion. Your heart may pound, or you may break out in a sweat. Long-term stress can cause high blood pressure, heart disease, and ulcers. Some studies suggest that stress makes you more likely to catch colds and other illnesses.

Stress causes a lot of bad feelings, too. A person under stress may feel anxious or depressed. The stressed person may be angry or fearful. He or she may feel powerless or hopeless.



People under stress may notice changes in their behavior, too. They may have trouble sleeping. They may overeat or not eat at all. They may use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs. They may go on spending sprees. They may act out of control, yelling or crying. Or they may withdraw and just keep to themselves.

Think about how you act when you're under stress. Write down your answers to the questions below.

1. Do you notice any physical symptoms when you're under stress? What are they?

2. What bad feelings do you notice?

3. How does your behavior change?

4. If you're under stress, what can you do to cope?

Here are some ideas for dealing with stress:

- Consider the number of activities on your schedule. If you're trying to do too much, cut some extras. Keep the activities that are important to you.
- Be realistic and do your best. Don't try to do everything perfectly.
- Make sure you get enough sleep. Sleep gives your brain a chance to relax.
- Relax your body. Try breathing deeply. Try relaxing your muscles, moving from one muscle to the next from head to toe.
- Relax your mind. Think about a relaxing place. Listen to soothing music. Pray or meditate.
- Keeping your body fit can help you fight stress. Get regular exercise. Eat nutritious food. Avoid alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Avoid too much caffeine or sugar.
- Keep a positive attitude.



- Try to take care of the small problems that come up each day. Letting things pile up will greatly add to your feeling of stress!
- Build strong relationships with your friends and family. If you have a good support system, you'll have someone to talk it out with when you are under stress.

Check Yourself

1. Name three ways to handle bad/negative feelings.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
2. What can you do to make friends? List at least three ways.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d. Others:
3. Why is it important to choose your friends wisely?

