**Promoting Health**

Coping with stress requires the development of good stress management skills such as ensuring that you get aerobic exercise, social support, relaxation and, in some cases, biofeedback.

* **Aerobic** **exercise** is any sustained activity that increases heart and lung fitness. It has been shown to alleviate depression and anxiety by increasing the production of *mood-boosting neurotransmitters* such as norepinephrine, serotonin, and the endorphins.
* **Biofeedback** is described as a system for electronically recording, amplifying, and feeding back information regarding a subtle physiological state such as **blood pressure** and **muscle tension** in an attempt to allow the person to better control these things.
* Research has shown that feelings of acceptance, support and of being loved as well as having faith and spirituality in ones life contributes to a persons health and longevity.

***Prevention***

Health Care carries an enormous cost that could be made substantially less if people took better care of themselves by eating healthier, exercising, managing stress appropriately and quitting smoking.

***Smoking***

It is estimated that smoking kills the equivalent of about 20 loaded jumbo jets full of people per day. It is rare that people start smoking as adults and because most smokers start when they are very young, smoking is considered a pediatric disease. Reasons for this include an increasingly rebellious youth, ad campaigns targeted at youth, and young people simply trying to "fit in" or to "be cool".

Nicotine is an addictive drug and quitting can be very difficult for many. A smoker will become *dependent* on the drug, will eventually develop *tolerance*and will need a larger dose for the same effect. Quitting will cause withdrawal and smoking will relieve the aversive symptoms of *withdrawal* thereby *reinforcing* the behavior. When trying to quit, it is important to understand that the symptoms of withdrawal can last for months but will slowly go away. Some will need to wean themselves in an attempt to reduce the symptoms of withdrawal. This can be accomplished through the use of a nicotine patch or nicotine gum.

***Preventing Smoking***

It has been shown that by educating youth on the dangers of smoking and by eliminating the social reinforcement and increasing social support for quitting, there has been a huge decrease in the number of youths who take up the habit. Also, studies have also shown that for every 10% increase there is in the cost of cigarettes there is a 4% reduction in smoking.

***Obesity***

Childhood obesity is now one of the top childrens health concerns in North America. Living in the land of plenty with fast food at your service at your every turn and a faster paced lifestyle of working parents has made it difficult for children to appreciate "the basics" of food choices. A Lack of activity due to computers, TV, Game Cube etc. coupled with an ever-present fear of allowing children to stray too far has contributed greatly to this problem. Today, some studies have shown that a childs size 8 pant has a waist size similar to that of a size 12 twenty years ago. It is known that childhood obesity increases the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, high cholesterol and certain types of cancer.

Losing weight and keeping pounds off, requires a lifestyle change of eating healthier foods, eating in moderation and by increasing your activity level.

There are many reasons why some people are more susceptible to obesity than others and this unit discusses the following factors:

1. **Culture**: North Americans tend eat more than those from other cultures due to the sheer abundance of food available and our "fast-food" lifestyle.
2. **Physiology:**
   1. Set point: otherwise described as your personal "weight thermostat", when your weight falls below a certain set-point range, hunger increases and metabolism decreases.
   2. Metabolism: refers to your bodys ability to burn calories. People with a higher metabolism can eat more without gaining weight than an equally heavy person with a lower metabolism.
   3. Genetic Factor: metabolism is influenced by your genetic make-up as is your activity level and self-motivation.  Research has shown that as you become full, genes produce a protein called **leptin**which signals the brain to stop eating.