



Community Support Nights Addiction, Stress, and Coping

- 1) Invite participants to write down five things (not to be shared) they tend to do when they are stressed. These may include adaptive/healthy things as well as old habits that may be less healthy.
- 2) Have participants rate (not to be shared) different dimensions of the JV year – community meetings, performing on the job, interacting with other JVC communities, maintaining the house, living in the neighborhood, etc. – on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 representing minimal stress, and 10 representing extreme stress.
- 3) Note that behaviors that are not unhealthy, when done to excess, may have a negative impact. (e.g., if I listen to music when stressed, great. But if I retreat to my room for hours, insulate myself from others with my headphones, and withdraw, this may become a problem for me, and for the community.)
- 4) Acknowledge that one of the substances most widely used in dealing with stressful situations is alcohol. While this discussion centers on alcohol, it may apply to other addictive substances or patterns. Spend some time with the following questions:
 - How does alcohol (or other substances, or food) play a role in how I handle challenging times?
 - What role does alcohol play in our community functioning? Is it used for relaxation, social interaction, out of habit, to numb unpleasant feelings, other?
 - How do decisions about alcohol get made – whether to buy it, with which funds, whether to have it at social gatherings, community dinners, other shared times, individual times?
 - Has anyone ever suggested I have a problem with alcohol? (See next page for additional self-assessment questions.)
 - Now that I am out of college, do I want to change how I use alcohol?
- 5) An additional focus is how to respond when one is concerned about someone else's use of destructive coping strategies.
 - Is this hard to talk about this with someone? Would I bring it up? Why or why not?
 - How might the person with the issue feel if his/her main coping strategy is challenged or removed?
 - How does overuse of one coping strategy affect community communication?
 - What does the community 'miss out on' if someone is retreating into a particular coping style?
- 6) The group may want to consider attending a meeting of AA, Al-Anon, or other 12-step group individually, or as a community.