

Descriptions of sources of stress, and ways of coping.

Where can I start about the sources of stress in here? There are so many forms of stress from the guards screaming at the top of their lungs to your family not being able to come to see you because they were 2 minutes late for the check in. That is complete bullshit if you ask me especially when your family drives 2 ½ hours to see you. In fact, there are a few women in here where their family members drive over 7 hours to come and see them and they were denied because they were late.

I can tell you that it is like antelope in mating season here now. We just got 11 new people that came up from the pods. That may not seem like a whole lot of people but when there is just over 80 women up here in the women's center and 10% of those women that you are used to seeing everyday leave for pre-release or get to go home on home confinement or are just released can cause a whole lot of stress.

Some women here are still in segregation because they can't handle all the stress here. I was one of those women, only I was not put into segregation. I just stayed in my room and never came out except for meds and sometimes meals. I am here for a good chunk of time and I decided that when I first got here that I was going to sleep my bid away. This worked for almost 2 years. However, there were some women here that I am so glad to I have met, just wish that it were under different circumstances they would come to my door and bang on it and yell, "You get out of that bed right now and you come out here and play spades with us."

I can tell you that that really boosted my confidence that there were women here that actually gave a shit about me. See we are like a family here. There are a few women that you want to get to know, and then there are a few that you can either take or leave. Lastly, there are the few that NOBODY can stand to be around because these women are so negative all the time and are evil manipulating bitches if you will.

Well-got way off track there but ways that we cope with stress is crocheting or knitting. That is not something that we are able to do as of now because they took everything in the last raid that we had in the beginning of April. Some short timers here took it into their own hands to say that their roommate was threatening them with knitting needles. Mind you that there has not been a problem here in over 14 years with the crocheting and knitting. I guess it just takes one person to screw it all up for all of us huh.

We have a gym here, the only downside to that is there is only space for about three people to do a workout video. There are also exercise equipment, you know like the elliptical, bicycles, tread climber, and of course yoga mats and exercise balls. Once again, there is not enough room for more than 3 to 4 people to work out in there at a time unless you are over in the corner on one of the machines. We have some very dedicated women who work out faithfully everyday here. Which is fine, but what about people who want to try to get their body back and just try to be as healthy as they can be. There is neither time nor space for them to do that, and if they work, the next day working out at 10 o'clock at night is just not really in the cards for them.

We also have a rec yard. You have to walk to circle 26 times to have walked a mile. We have volleyball net and a basketball pole. I like to play volleyball and basketball on the outside but not on the inside. See I don't like to go outside because we are fenced in and we have barbed wire on the top of the fence. I imagine that it is like that in other prisons. However, when you have 25 years or so left it can be a little depressing. We can also play cards and buy our own decks, but how many times can you play spades or cribbage. I mean it is fine for the time being but playing it repeatedly can get a little monotonous. Don't get me wrong though I like to play card games. We even make up our own card games.

We also have a library where people can take out up to four books at a time. I have read a good amount of books since I have been here. I have a big reading list also but many of the books on my list cost money, which is something that I don't have for such frivolous items. Women here have televisions, radios, cd players, and of course, there are that few that have play station 2's. Once again, I am not one of those lucky women. I have a radio, but that is about it.

I love to crochet; in fact, I was in the process of making thread bags with little pictures graphed into them. I make blankets with pictures, or words graphed into them also. However, the thing that I like the most is graphing with thread. I really like a challenge; the more difficult the task is the more I tend to like it. That is a big stress reliever for me. I am trying to do independent study so I can have a career when I am release. I love to learn new things, (I guess you could say that I am a bit of a nerd). I would love to study ornithology and maybe someday get to work with birds.

Lastly, the ways that most women cope with stress here is keeping contact with the outside world. I know that I try to keep contact with the outside world a lot. I just want to know that someone on the outside is still thinking about me. It seems like to most women here that they are forgotten about most of the time. That is why a lot of women look for pen pals to correspond with that way they can feel like they are still loved and that people still actually care about them. I know that would make my stress level decrease a hell of a lot if I had someone that I could write to that is okay with my past and present situation.