Facing Challenges

We will all undoubtedly experience challenging situations in this coming year that we will have to cope with. How we cope with these challenges will often determine whether they are made worse or are managed effectively. All of us have ways that we cope with stress and challenge, some healthy and some unhealthy. Examples of good coping strategies are exercise, reaching out for social and community support, problem-solving through planning and information gathering, proactive trouble shooting around financial or time management issues, and getting professional help (legal, medical, psychological). Examples of poor coping mechanisms are withdrawing from life, overeating, drinking excessively, ruminating about worst case scenarios, and denial or avoidance of issues. Often we are not consciously aware of the choices we make in coping. We just act in ways that make us feel good in the moment. However, these choices may damage us in the long run and the repeated use of actions that feel good in the present might serve to solidify some poor coping mechanisms, making them our “default” strategies in times of stress. This New Year, I encourage you write down a list of your personal healthy and unhealthy coping mechanisms. Being self aware about how you handle things can be the first step toward making a more conscious decision about how you will cope. Hopefully, the next step will be to actively choose some of the more healthy coping options, ones that will make you stronger in the long run rather than the ones that will only serve to exacerbate your challenges

“Life is not the way it’s supposed to be. It’s the way it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference.” Virginia Satir