



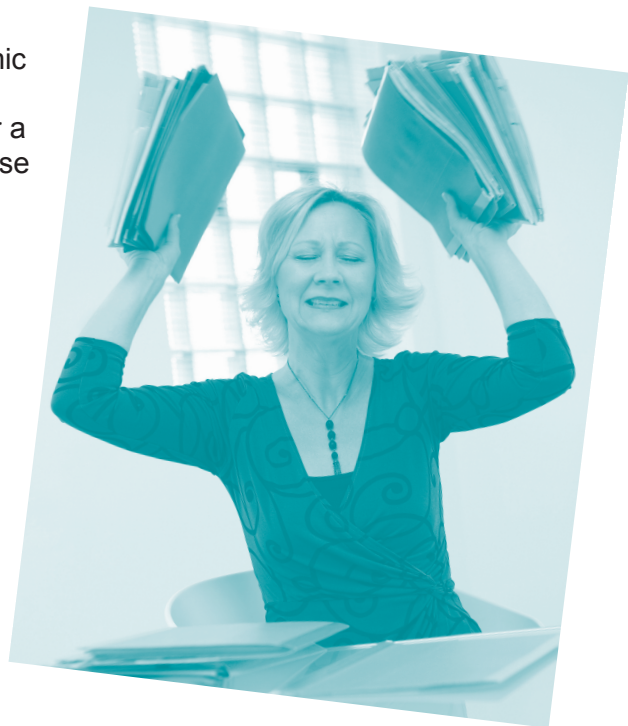
Staying Sane

During tough economic times, everyone is impacted—especially library staff. You and your colleagues can find yourselves overworked and frustrated due to decreased resources for your library (e.g., fewer staff, less budget for materials, fewer open hours to get things done, etc.) at the same time that there is an increased demand by your patrons. In addition to needing more resources and services, the emotional state of patrons can take a toll. Many of our patrons are anxious, angry, sad and frustrated by their economic situation; and they take those emotions with them to the reference desk.

Of course, library staff are not impervious to the economic recession! Handling patron frustrations can feel overwhelming when coupled with our own economic worries, such as fear of losing our job or not getting enough hours, coping with colleagues being laid off, or a spouse or partner who is unable to find work. All of these factors combined have the potential to make us lose sight of the powerful and positive role we play in our communities. It's important for us to find ways to stay sane in these tough times so that we can continue to provide the critical programs and services that support our communities.

Here are a few helpful resources for managing your own and your patrons' stress in tough economic times:

- Watch this short video for simple tips on **Keeping One's Cool in Difficult Times**; check out the resource links below the video screen.
www.webjunction.org/documents/wj/Keeping_Ones_Cool_in_Difficult_Times.html
- **Unemployment Blues** links to numerous articles on the impact of job loss on individuals and families, which will help you empathize with the kinds of stress people experience from job loss and economic difficulties: http://amby.com/worksite/unemployment_blues.html.
- Stress at Work: Tips to Reduce and Manage Job and Workplace Stress offers sound advice on stress management in the workplace.
http://helpguide.org/mental/work_stress_management.htm.



The following questions will help you articulate your own coping strategies and discover areas where you'd like to gain more skills. We encourage you to begin by answering the questions individually and then share your answers with your colleagues. You'll learn new coping strategies from one another and find ways to support each other through the challenges of our work.

What methods do you employ to maximize resources in these tough times?

What skills have you developed to stay calm while dealing with stressed out patrons?

What skills have you developed to help yourself stay calm during these tough times?

What are the skills developed/methods employed by your colleagues that you'll use in the future?