Mix this sluggish economy, stubbornly
high unemployment, uncertain polit-
ics, and foreign upheaval together and
you’ve got a big bowl of stress stew.

Add to it a heaping dose of the “do-more-
with-less” workplace, along with a fast-
paced, ever-changing, technology-driven
world, and what you end up with is a perfect
recipe for freak-out time!

The sky isn’t falling, but it sure can seem like it!

Can you still thrive in this environment?
The answer is yes.

So what now? Is this truly the end of the
world we once knew? Are our best days be-
hind us? And if so, how do we cope with
what’s to come?

There are no easy answers, but two things
remain true: 1) it is not as bad as it seems,
and 2) you have more control over your fu-
ture than you think.

Power of Perspective

If crime, dishonesty, rudeness, and all-
around bad behavior seem at an all-time
high to you, consider that what has changed
is not society, but your ability to see it up
close—the worst part of it—through modern
media technology. You know only what you
hear, see, and read.

There’s an old saying in the news busi-
ness—“If it bleeds, it leads.” Media outlets
love doom and gloom because it’s generally
cheap to cover and it draws eyeballs. And
they are pushing the edge of the envelope.

But it’s not just traditional media. Today
anyone with access to the web can broadcast
to the world through mediums like Face-
book and YouTube where exhibitionism and
outrageous behavior tend to crowd out re-
straint.

The next time you find yourself wonder-
ing if the whole world has gone mad, remember
that the stories
and images on your
TV, computer, and
smartphone are distorted, “funhouse” rep-
resentations of reality. If they are having a
negative impact on your outlook, switch
your consumption to something positive or
simply unplug. You don’t have to partici-
pate in the circus.

Coping with Anxiety

The world’s problems seem too big for
you to handle for one simple reason—
they are!

Think about it—you have little to no con-
trol over weighty things like crime, pov-
erty, oppression, terrorism, and world hun-
ger. What you can control, however, are
your thoughts, actions, associations, and
lifestyle. This is key to a happier life.

With that in mind, here are some tips to
help you manage stress and anxiety:

• Learn your triggers. Carefully note
what sets off your anxiety, and limit
your exposure to it.

• Spot quickly and interrupt negative
feedback loops with positive rein-
forcement. Anxiety often comes from
playing out “what if” and doomsday
scripts in your head. Keep motiva-
tional, spiritual, and affirming litera-
ture at hand, or even your own private
“positivity hot link” on your com-
puter—music, video, narrative, or im-
ages that instantly help you “reset”
your mind.

• Cut yourself a break when you’re
overwhelmed. Agree to do what you
can, when you can. Let that be
enough for the day.

• Let go of worst-case scenarios. Most
of what we fear never comes to pass.
When or if a crisis ever hits, options
will appear at that time to help you
deal with it.

• Realize that fretting is not productive.
The world doesn’t change because
you are concerned and unhappy. It’s
OK to be cheerful even in the face of
misfortune.

• Get moving. Worry is undirected en-
ergy. Put that energy to use on some-
thing positive and productive.

• Seek out positive, uplifting people.
Your happiness is directly related to
your influences.

• Learn relaxation techniques like yoga
and deep breathing exercises.

• Exercise regularly. Seriously, for
dozens of reasons that you have al-
lready been beaten over the head with,
this is one of your most powerful
“feel better” strategies.

• Accept that it takes time to change.
Hint: Focus on lowering the intensity
and length of worrying, rather than
eradicating it completely.

Finally, don’t beat yourself up for feeling
anxious. A certain amount of stress is un-
avoidable.

The key to managing it is changing your
habitual reactions to it. Your Employee
Assistance Program has the knowledge,
tools, and resources to help. Don’t hesi-
tate to contact your HR department for
assistance and information the next time
you’re feeling stressed out, depressed, or
overwhelmed.