

# STRESS, HOW TO COPE



## BASIC INFORMATION

### CAUSES OF STRESS

- There are numerous ways to reduce stress in your life; the correct answer is finding what works for you. A certain amount of stress is not always bad. It varies from person to person how much stress one can handle easily. Sometimes, stress can push us on to greater achievement. But excessive stress or chronic stress can be self-defeating. Many health professionals believe that stress has a role in almost any disorder. Stress can complicate an illness by preventing normal recovery, prolonging pain, and adding to disability.
- Reducing stress could be as simple as adding exercise to your daily routine or making new friends. To make the most of your life, limit your stress, and for that stress that you cannot avoid, learn to manage it.

### TIPS FOR COPING

Here are some tips that may help you reduce stress:

- Learn a meditation technique and practice it regularly—daily if possible. There are many methods available. Most of them include “tuning in to” and giving complete attention to a word, sound, sentence, or concept that you silently repeat to yourself. Don’t try to banish other thoughts that enter your mind during your period of concentration, but don’t focus on them enough to stop you from meditating. The purpose of meditation is to empty your mind of all disturbing thoughts for a given period of time to aid in mental relaxation. Mental relaxation, in turn, will help reduce stress.
- Take a short period of time away from any stressful situation you meet up with during a day. Practice a muscle-tensing and muscle-relaxing technique. Close your eyes. Take a series of deep breaths. Then start with the muscle groups in your face. Consciously tense them and hold the tension for a few seconds. Then consciously relax them. Continue through all major muscle groups in the body: neck, shoulders, hands, abdomen, back, and legs. You can use this technique to help you relax quickly any time you need to.
- Begin an exercise program. People who are physically fit are less likely to suffer the negative effects of stress, anxiety, or depression. One form of exercise is yoga. Yoga involves both stretching exercises and deep breathing techniques. However, any form of exercise is helpful in reducing the affects of stress on the body.
- Humor is another way of dealing with stress. Having the ability to find humor in a stressful situation and being able to laugh about it releases all the tension that is building inside. Even if the situation cannot be made light of, think of something else that will make you laugh.

- Healthy lifestyle changes can reduce the level of stress. A few suggestions include reducing caffeine intake, making new friends, eating healthy, and avoiding alcohol. Healthy lifestyle changes can help manage the stress as well as improve your overall well being.
- Get enough sleep. Avoid taking your problems to bed with you. At the end of the day, spend a few minutes going back over your entire day’s experiences, event by event, as if you’re replaying a tape. Release all negative emotions you have built up (anger, feelings of insecurity or anxiety). Relish all good energy or emotion (loving thoughts, praise, feeling good about your work or yourself). Reach a decision about undone events, and release mental or muscular tension. Now you’re ready for a relaxing and emotionally healing sleep.
- Avoid self-medication or escape. Alcohol or other drugs of abuse can mask stress. They don’t help deal with the problem.
- Set realistic goals for yourself. Reduce the number of events going on in your life and you may reduce the feeling of being overloaded.
- Don’t overwhelm yourself by fretting about your entire workload. Handle each task as it comes, or selectively deal with matters in some priority.
- Do something for others to help get your mind off yourself.
- Avoid extreme reactions. Think about disliking something rather than hating it. Be a little nervous, not anxious. Don’t be full of rage when anger will do the job. Don’t be depressed when you can just be sad.
- Try to be positive. Give yourself messages as to how well you can cope rather than how horrible everything is going to be.
- Keep a stress diary. Write down stressful events, how they made you feel, what caused the event, and how you coped. On a scale of 0 (very relaxed) to 10 (extremely stressed), put down a number for your stress level.
- Research has shown that cognitive-behavioral therapy can be effective in reducing stress. Ask your health care provider about this option.



### NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

You or a family member wants help to cope with stress.

Special notes:

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