

Stress Management

Stress is the body's reaction to triggering thoughts, events, or circumstances. Stress is a core component of the fight or flight response which functions as an automatic survival mechanism that prepares us to take action or protect ourselves. Common physiological responses to stress include racing thoughts, dry mouth, increased heart rate, tensed muscles, quickened breathing and sweaty palms, to name a few.

While this may have evolved in response to physical threats, one may experience stress responses such as fight, flight, freeze, or faun in response to perceived mental, emotional, and physical threats. Thankfully, although stress can be unpleasant, it can also help motivate you under the right conditions.

Finding a solution

Stress can have far reaching effects on both the mental and physical health. If you experience stress on a regular basis, consider trying some of these strategies:

- Self-care – this can be any task or activity that brings you peace and happiness in the moment.
- Getting good sleep! A regular sleep routine can help to regulate regulate mood reduce stress.
- Exercise – During physical activity the body produces produce endorphins (chemicals in the brain that can act as natural painkillers) that can help to improve sleep and reduce stress
- Sticking to a healthy diet. This can help to strengthen the immune system and lower blood pressure
- Deep breathing – When you practice deep breathing in moments of stress you are, in effect, sending a message to your brain to relax and calm down
- Time management – By planning your days you can better track and prioritize tasks as well as plan time for self-care
- Talk your problems out with a trusted friend or professional. Talking out worries, concerns and fears relieves the strain and puts things into perspective
- Develop workable solutions for problems at hand. Get help if you need it from co-workers or friends
- Take stock of your own power and identify your own strengths and weaknesses
- Admit that you may need help from other's in certain areas when you do not have the training or expertise; it's okay to ask for help!
- Find ways to release your emotions (especially anger and frustration). Talk it out, play squash, hit a pillow, find a place to yell if you need to. Suppressed feelings can cause added stress and lead to anxiety and physical symptoms of distress. Let go in the privacy of your home

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Give our Stress Management Roadmap a try if you're feeling stuck!

Understand your stress response(s) and develop strategies to help when you need it most.

My stressors (The triggering thoughts or events that cause you to feel stressed):

How stress makes me feel (sad, frustrated, angry, unwell, etc.):

When I ask for help (when might it be useful to get support?):

Who I ask for help (people, places, or things to turn to):

How I cope with stress (what actions do you take; are they effective?):

How have you been dealing with stress? Are you a(n)...



Ostrich

- Head in the sand
- Denies a problem exists



Bulldog

- Sees a problem
- Blames problem on others



Chicken

- Sees a problem
- Runs the other way

Additional Resources

Books: 10% Happier: How I Tamed the Voice in My Head, Reduced Stress Without Losing My Edge, and Found Self-Help That Actually Works by Dan Harris

Apps: Pacifica, Headspace, My Mood Tracker, Personal Zen, Happify