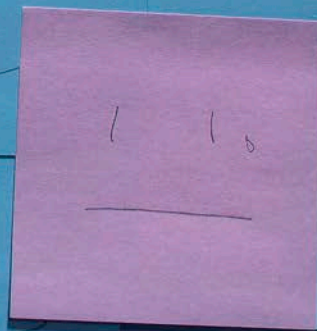


STRESS



WHAT IS IT?

Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the demands of life. A small amount of stress can be good, motivating you to perform well.

Your brain comes hard-wired with an alarm system for your protection. When your brain perceives a threat, it signals your body to release a burst of hormones that increase your heart rate and raise your blood pressure.

Once the threat is gone, your body is meant to return to a normal, relaxed state. Unfortunately, the nonstop complications of modern life and its demands and expectations mean that some people's alarm systems rarely shut off.

Stress management gives you a range of tools to reset and recalibrate your alarm system. Without it, your body might always be on high alert. Over time, chronic stress can lead to serious health problems.

KNOWING THE SIGNS

Common physical symptoms of stress include headaches, dizziness, chest pain, heart racing, muscle tension, stomach issues, and sleep problems such as insomnia.

Mental symptoms include:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Struggling to make decisions
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Constantly worrying
- Forgetfulness

Many behavioral changes may indicate that stress is an issue: being irritable or short-tempered, grinding your teeth or clenching your jaw, sexual problems such as losing interest in sex, restlessness, withdrawing from people around you, drinking or smoking more than usual, eating too much or too little, etc.

If you are displaying a number of these symptoms, making stress management a priority can be a key to improving your quality of life.



RESOURCES

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL

www.cdc.gov/mental-health

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management

NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS

www.nami.org/your-journey/individuals-with-mental-illness/managing-stress

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STRESS

YOUR SURVIVAL GUIDE





WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Prolonged periods of stress increase the risk of hypertension (high blood pressure) and deadly events like heart attacks, strokes, and cancer. When it comes to mental health, long-term stress puts you at greater risk for developing anxiety and depression.

Effective stress management allows you to maintain better relationships. It makes you a better spouse/partner, parent, friend, and colleague. It makes it easier for you to communicate effectively so that others can understand what you are going through and provide support.

Managing stress also reduces the level of stress that others feel. If you are stressed, others will be stressed. If you feel more relaxed, others will feel more relaxed.



HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

Talking with a trained professional about how to manage your stress is always a good step, but there are a number of things you can do.

Connect with Others

Reach out to your community, family members, or friends.

Make time for cultural, spiritual, or religious activities.

Volunteer with organizations that interest you. Giving back to others can help you too.

Get outside with others, connect with nature, and explore green spaces.



Take Care of Your Body

Eat healthy.

Get enough sleep, at least seven or more hours per night.

Move more and sit less. Start with small amounts of physical activity and build up to two-and-a-half hours a week.

Limit alcohol intake. Choose not to drink, or do so in moderation.

Avoid using illegal drugs or prescription drugs in ways other than prescribed.

Avoid smoking, vaping, and the use of other nicotine products.



Destress in 10 Minutes or Less

- Be active—Take a dance break! Lift weights. Do push-ups or sit-ups.
- Close your eyes, take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Write three things you are grateful for.
- Check in with yourself—take time to ask yourself how you are feeling.
- Laugh! Think of someone who makes you laugh or the last time you laughed so hard you cried.
- Find an inspiring song or quote and write it down (or screenshot it) so you have it nearby.

