

Dealing with Stress

There are many things in life that you cannot control or get rid of but the good news is there are very few things that you can't learn to manage. Try to identify the situations in life that make you feel stressed and tense. These are called stressors. You may not be able to make them disappear but you can find solutions to make them manageable. Ideas to try are:

- Learn better ways to manage your time. You may get more done with less stress if you make a schedule. Think about which things are most important, and do those first.
- Find better ways to cope. Look at how you have been dealing with stress. Be honest about what works and what does not. Think about other things that might work better.
- Take good care of yourself. Get plenty of rest. Eat well. Don't smoke. Limit how much alcohol you drink.
- Try out new ways of thinking. When you find yourself starting to worry, try to stop the thoughts. Work on letting go of things you cannot change. Learn to say "no."
- Speak up. Not being able to talk about your needs and concerns creates stress and can make negative feelings worse. Assertive communication can help you express how you feel in a thoughtful, tactful way.
- Ask for help. People who have a strong network of family and friends manage stress better.
- Sometimes stress is just too much to handle alone. Talking to a friend or family member may help but you may also want to see a counselor.

Relieving stress

You will feel better if you can find ways to get stress out of your system. The best ways to relieve stress are different for each person. Try some of these ideas to see which ones work for you:

- Exercise. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to manage stress. Walking is a great way to get started.
- Write. It can help to write about the things that are bothering you.
- Let your feelings out. Talk, laugh, cry, and express anger when you need to with someone you trust. Find help if you feel overwhelmed, depressed, or unable to deal with stress on your own. Your Primary Care Provider or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at work can refer you to a professional to help you understand and cope with your feelings.
- Do something you enjoy. A hobby can help you relax. Volunteer work or work that helps others can be a great stress reliever.
- Learn ways to relax your body. This can include breathing exercises, muscle relaxation exercises, massage, aromatherapy, yoga, or relaxing exercises like Tai Chi.
- Focus on the present. Try meditation, imagery exercises, or self-hypnosis. Listen to relaxing music. Try to look for the humor in life. Laughter really can be the best medicine.

