

Relaxation

You can use relaxation techniques to produce short restful states by closing your eyes and breathing deeply, slowly and regularly. "Let go" of muscle tension with each exhalation, relaxing all your muscles beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. You can also "breathe out" troubling thoughts and worries. Say, "I'm relaxed this way. "I'm" as you take a deep breath, "relaxed" as you slowly exhale. Repeat a number of times, slowly and regularly.



Exercise

Exercise is an excellent form of stress reduction.

Exercise relieves both physical and mental tension.

Choose activities that you enjoy. Consider walking, jogging, dancing, swimming, bicycling, or yardwork.

If you don't have a regular exercise program, start slowly, and increase gradually to avoid injuries.



In order to better manage stress,
one thing I will start doing is _____
one thing I will stop doing is _____
one thing I will continue doing is _____

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Choose Health



Choose Stress Management



Stress is part of everyday life. The pressures of time, money, and relationships ensure that stress will always be with us. But stress need not be negative or overwhelming. It can be an opportunity to make important positive changes in your life.

What is stress?

Stress is your response to events or situations that call for a change, threaten the order or safety or your life, or otherwise place an unusual demand on your physical, mental, and emotional resources.

Reactions to stress vary and can take their toll, both mentally and physically. Common symptoms include:

- Tense muscles that cause headache, backache, neckache, or jawache
- Stomach pain, indigestion, bowel upset, ulcers
- Anxiety, nervousness, tension, depression
- Anger, irritability, restlessness or exhaustion

Some people react to stress by eating or drinking too much, losing sleep, or smoking cigarettes. Others may "take out" their frustration on those around them through yelling or abusive behavior. Managing stress is important not only for your health but also for successful relationships in your personal life or at work.

Coping skills for stress management

- **Get organized** - Organizing the details of daily life reduces stress. Plan, schedule, and keep good records. Use calendars and "to do" lists.
- **Do it now** - Do your most difficult and least pleasant tasks at the beginning each day when you are fresh. This avoids the stress of worrying about them all day.
- **Know your limits** - Be realistic about what you can accomplish. Planning your goals will "even out" those stressful peaks and valleys.
- **Change your attitude** - Train yourself to see stressful situations as challenges rather than obstacles. Ask, "What can I learn from this situation?"
- **Talk it over** - Talking over difficult issues with someone you trust helps reduce stress and also helps you to form solutions.
- **Take a break** - A two or three minute break in the middle of a stressful situation can give you a new outlook on the problem. A short walk can clear your mind.
- **Learn to say "no"** - There are some demands over which you have no control. Separate those from activities over which you do have some control, and learn to say "no" to demands that are unreasonable.
- **Positive self-talk** - In the face of a stressful situation you can manage with positive statements, such as, "I can handle this one step at a time," or "I've been successful with this before."
- **Treat your body right** - You will be better equipped to handle stress if you eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep and exercise regularly.
- **Take charge** - Take responsibility for making your life what you want it to be. It is less stressful to make decisions and take action than to feel powerless by reacting to others' decisions. Decide what you want and go for it!



Communication tips

How you communicate may increase or decrease your stress. Carefully evaluate your communication style. Do your words, gestures, and body language indicate that you are open to others' ideas? Is your "body language" inflexible and combative, or friendly and approachable?

Here are some tips to help you avoid stress-producing miscommunications:

Pay attention to what is being said.

- When talking with someone look them in the eyes but don't stare.
- Let people know you are listening by asking questions.
- If you deal with the same people regularly, learn to recognize their moods. Discuss sensitive issues when they are open and receptive.
- Don't discuss important issues when they (or you) are extremely busy, distracted, or tired, unless you have no other choice.
- Don't interrupt others when they are speaking.
- Have a purpose when you speak. Prepare your ideas ahead of time. Make your point without wandering all over the place.

Guided Imagery



Guided imagery is a stress-reducing technique which uses your imagination as a means of relaxation. This requires quiet and concentration. Pretend you are walking through a quiet rainforest or lying on a warm beach - whatever it takes for you to unwind.

Guided imagery can also be used to preview or review any stress-related incidents or relationships that you want to improve. Picture in your mind, in color and sound, how you would like a particular relationship to be. "See" yourself as being successful in that situation. As you transfer the improved behaviors that you practiced into your real relationship, they will become a part of you. Stress that was part of that relationship will disappear.