

When Stress Is Good for You

"Good" stress, called eustress, is vital to performing your best. When you feel motivated to work hard, excel, win or get ahead, you're experiencing eustress. However, when those feelings take over your life in a negative way, health problems can result. Don't aim to live a stress-free life. Instead, learn to be happy, confident and satisfied with who you are.



FACTS TO REMEMBER

NOT ALL STRESS IS BAD FOR YOU

Stress is caused not just by "bad" events but by "good" ones too: a wedding, job promotion or the birth of a baby.

STRESS IS SERIOUS BUSINESS

Stress symptoms are your body's cry for help. Left unchecked, especially for long periods of time, they can contribute to problems with family, job performance and your health. Studies have shown that stress lowers

immunity and raises chemicals in the bloodstream that may lead to conditions such as diabetes and osteoporosis as you age.

STRESS CAN BE SUBTLE

Even minor signs of stress are early warnings that your health is being affected. Don't ignore the signals or, worse, disguise them with drugs, alcohol or medication.

AWARENESS HELPS YOU COPE

You can't eliminate stress, but you can plan your days so that stress doesn't overwhelm you. **First step to gaining control:** Identify your stressors and avoid the ones you can; accept or adapt to what you can't.

Work Out Stress on the Job

You spend much of your time at work, and work-related stress is one of the most common complaints among employees. Keep stress from affecting your job performance and bringing on burnout. **Tips:**

- **Be responsible.** Take control of your workload so that you feel in charge of the situation.
- **Build your skills.** The more competent and confident you feel, the less stress you will experience.
- **Create a workable environment.** Take what steps you can to provide yourself with a quiet, comfortable place to work.
- **Take a peaceful lunch break.** Spend some time reading or contemplating restful thoughts and images.
- **Set aside worry time.** If you're troubled by a situation, stop dwelling on it and make an appointment with yourself to resolve it later. During your worry session, write down the facts to help put things in perspective.
- **Count to 10.** When something makes you angry, give your body time to defuse before you react (and possibly regret it).
- **Move forward.** Don't rehash past negative situations or vent anger. Focus on solving problems, and look at tomorrow as a new day.
- **Deal with traumatic events.** If you work in a dangerous or especially stressful field, talk with a counselor or other professional to help manage stress.
- **Take vacation.** Time off can boost your motivation, morale and happiness, all of which work toward success.

Remember: Everyone copes with stress differently. What works to relieve stress for others may not work for you. Keep trying different healthy methods until you find what works best.



21 WAYS TO MANAGE EVERYDAY STRESS

PROVEN STRESS
RELIEVERS FOR
WORK &
HOME



PLEASE REMAIN CALM

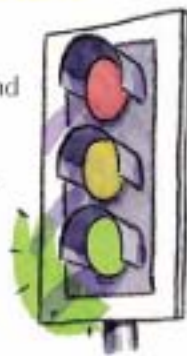
Stress happens. You know the typical triggers — deadlines, conflict, traffic jams, and job and money worries to name a few. The trick is to learn to manage your response to pressure. Take a breather and try the tips in this brochure.

Understanding Stress

People usually feel stress as tension, fear or pressure.

Physically, stress causes your heart to race and your muscles to tighten, and you become pumped up, ready for anything. This is a useful response during an emergency when you need to act fast. But when you're stuck in traffic, sitting in a meeting or lying in bed trying to sleep, your thoughts can trigger stress, which causes your body and mind to race needlessly.

Trouble is, your mind and body can't tolerate high levels of stress for long periods. Living in a prolonged state of "red alert" can leave you feeling burned out and can make you more vulnerable to illness.



Recognize the Signals of Stress

Knowing the early warning signs of too much stress can help you take steps to control it before it controls you:

- Restlessness and anxiety
- Inability to concentrate
- Trouble falling asleep
- Nightmares
- Persistent fatigue
- Depression
- Lack of appetite or overeating
- Indigestion
- Teeth grinding
- Tension headaches
- Heart palpitations
- Muscle spasms
- Persistent backache
- Trembling or shaking

Note: These signs can also be signs of other medical problems. If stress is producing symptoms like those above on a regular basis, then stress is negatively affecting your health.

21 WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS

1. Sleep well. Lack of sleep decreases your ability to handle stress. **Target:** Try to get 7-8 hours of sleep per night. If sleep problems persist, talk to your health care provider.

2. Move more. Regular exercise not only releases tense muscles, it also relaxes your mind. Try a brisk walk, exercise class or bike ride.

3. Eat healthfully. Small, light meals eaten throughout the day can provide steady energy and blood sugar levels, which may make handling stressful situations easier.

4. Plan ahead. When you know that a stressful event is approaching, prepare for it in advance. Plan your coping strategies, line up your support network, get prepared and rehearse.

5. Cut back on caffeine. Caffeine works on the body much like stress, raising heart rate and blood pressure, and revving up the body and mind. **Better:** Drink more water instead of caffeinated beverages during stressful times.

6. Relax your body. Once a day, tense and then slowly relax each muscle group, from your head to your toes.

7. Relax your mind. Take a mental time-out for 15-20 minutes daily. **Action:** Meditate, daydream or listen to music — whatever is best for you.

8. Take an imaginary vacation. Close your eyes and picture a quiet scene ... on a mountain ... in a meadow ... by the ocean. Imagine yourself relaxing in your ideal location.

9. Maximize your energy. Schedule your most difficult work for when you're rested and alert.

Tackle easier tasks when your energy is low.

Think of stress as a form of off-key mind music — you can adjust the volume or turn it off only from inside your head.

10. Get involved. Being with and helping others keeps you from blowing your own problems out of proportion. **Ideas:** Join a committee or group, or volunteer.

11. Avoid rushing. Leave earlier to arrive on time for meetings and other commitments.

12. Stop procrastinating. Make a list every day of the top five tasks you need to complete, and focus on them when energy is high.

13. Talk it out. Use your personal support system — family, friends, co-workers or a mental health counselor — to help find solutions.

14. Blow off steam. Release anger and tension in healthy ways. Go for a jog, write down your worries or try a new hobby.

15. Breathe out stress. Feeling tense? Stop, take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

16. Laugh. It's a great way to release stress, and it gives your heart and lungs a mini aerobic workout.

17. Change negative self-talk. Reverse "I can't do anything right" to "I have what it takes to get the job done."

18. Spoil yourself. See a play, get a massage or call an old friend.

19. Be thankful. At the end of each day, list the good things that happened. You'll be surprised at how much went right.

20. Get help if you need it. Speak to your health care provider or professional counselor if you're unable to control stress. Don't let stress control you.

21. Accept change. Consider it as a natural state that offers opportunity.

