



STRESS MANAGEMENT



stress management

How to Handle Your Busy Life

Table of Contents

GET A GRIP: STRESS MANAGEMENT ESSENTIALS	3
Can Stress Be Good for Your Health?	3
Step Up Your Stress Resistance	5
Laugh It Off	6
Ease Stress Anytime, Anywhere	7
HOME SWEET HOME: LESS STRESS AROUND THE HOUSE	8
Get Organized!	8
Staying Together With Stress Management	9
Got a Minute? Try (Self) Massage	9
Do-It-Yourself Spa	10
WORK & WORRY: LESS STRESS ON THE JOB	11
Slam the Brakes on Stressful Commutes	11
More Time, Less Stress, Better Work	12
2-Minute Stress Strategies	13
How to Avoid Burnout	13
Under Pressure? Relax!	14
TRY THIS STRESS TEST QUIZ	15



Before you learn to control stress, you need to understand what it is and why it occurs. You'll find that information here, along with tried-and-true recommendations on how to turn the tables on stress and make it work for you, not against you.

CAN STRESS BE GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH?

Stress is an inevitable part of life. Poorly handled stress can worsen heart disease, back pain, high blood pressure, ulcers and a range of other ailments. But not all stress is bad. The trick is not to let stress burn you out but instead handle it in a positive way.

Stress involves a wide range of physical reactions to life changes. Having a sinking feeling, churning stomach, tension headache, racing heartbeat and sweaty palms? These are warning signs that you're having trouble handling changes in your life. These changes can end up being dangerous crises ... if you let them. Or you can use them as an opportunity to learn. It's all up to you.

The first step in learning how to cope is to figure out which of the two types of stress is challenging you: stress from an event that you can do something about ... or stress you can't do anything about. As the old saying goes, the goal is to develop the courage to change the things you can change, the ability to accept the things you can't change, and the wisdom to know the difference.

When You Can Change It

The kinds of stress that you **can** do something about require action. **Immediate** action. By taking action as soon as you start feeling physical or mental distress, you can prevent molehills from turning into mountains. This type of stress can end up being good news because it's a clear opportunity to improve your life. You can use this stress to your advantage.

Say you've received a promotion at work. At first, you may feel overwhelmed by your new responsibilities. But then you get organized and start practicing time-management skills in your daily life. You break tasks into manageable steps and pace yourself by the hour, month and year. Eventually, you can look at a big stack of work without panicking. Congratulations: You've learned how to tackle **one thing at a time**.

Other examples of changeable stress abound. If you're experiencing a personality conflict, you can use it as a spur to learn how to become a better negotiator. Marital tensions can often be solved with counseling and mutual compromise. And even illness can provide you with the motivation to follow a doctor's advice and adopt a healthier lifestyle.

When You Can't Change It

Challenges that you **can't** change, such as an earthquake, a long-term illness or a death in the family, can feel horrible. But even the worst events may provide a chance to learn how to deal with stress more effectively. **Here's how:**

- Reach out to others for support. Talking to family, friends and counselors can help you cope.
- Work it out with exercise. Regular activity can help you blow off steam, lose any extra weight, feel better about yourself and recharge your batteries.
- Make time for activities you enjoy. Take up a hobby that interests you. Listen to music. Volunteer your time. Take a hike. Row a boat. Enjoy a picnic.
- Learn to relax. Find a time and place where you can be by yourself. Close your eyes. Think soothing thoughts. Breathe deeply.

Feeling better already, aren't you? ♦

STEP UP YOUR STRESS RESISTANCE

Stress can cause you to feel exhausted and drained of energy. It can cause short-term health problems, such as muscle pain, stomachaches and headaches, and has been linked to long-term conditions such as heart disease and back problems. Fortunately, you can make your body and mind more stress-resistant so the daily grind won't beat you down.

Here's how:

Maintain a healthy weight.

Excess weight puts stress on your muscles, joints and organs and makes you more susceptible to outside stress as well. If you're overweight, work with your doctor to come up with a weight management program that's right for you.

Get rest. Starting out your morning with a sleep deficit reduces your ability to cope with whatever the day brings. Strive for at least 8 hours of sleep a night.

Cut down on caffeine. Caffeine can raise your blood pressure, speed your heart rate and make you feel anxious ... just like stress. Cut down on coffee, tea and caffeinated sodas (such as orange soda) to help calm your body and mind. **Tip:** Drink more water. Staying hydrated is a great way to keep your body in tip-top shape.

Eat right. A stress-resistant body needs plenty of vitamins, minerals and nutrients to stay strong and healthy. Load up on fruits and vegetables, and go easy on simple carbohydrates (breads, crackers, bagels, sweets) and high-fat foods that can make you tired and sluggish. **Remember:** Eating many small, healthy meals throughout the day instead of three large, heavy ones may help you feel energized and resistant to stress.

Get 30 minutes of exercise a day. Regular exercise helps you let go of stress. And a fit body is more resistant to stress in the first place. A simple brisk 30-minute walk per day will do the trick.



Stressed? Fight Back!

Research shows that psychological stress from anger, anxiety, even grieving can lead to premature heart attacks. Why? When

you're stressed out, stress hormones such as adrenaline elevate your blood pressure and pulse and can lead to a deadly rhythm problem known as ventricular fibrillation. The answer? Attack stress now! Counseling, yoga, biofeedback, jogging, swing dancing—whatever it takes will most certainly add to your years.