



Skills to Manage Your Stress

You're familiar with the symptoms of stress—a pounding heart, increased perspiration, tight neck and shoulder muscles, anxiety and fear. But you may not know how to prevent or relieve these symptoms. The following actions can help you counteract its negative effects:

Exercise. It can release pent-up frustrations. Experts recommend 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. But if you can't work it into your busy schedule, you can find relief through brief periods of exercise, like a walk around the building or up and down a few flights of stairs on your work break.

Keep communicating. Your immune system gets a boost when feelings are released, experts say. Talking to others shows that you're not alone and helps put your stress in perspective, and it may lead to a solution to your problem. If you can't find an open ear or struggle to talk about your feelings, write about the situation in a journal—it can be equally effective.

Watch your diet and habits. A diet of wholesome, healthful foods can help stabilize your moods. Consuming too much caffeine, sugar, alcohol or nicotine can increase your stress, making coping more difficult.

Make time for laughter and fun. Surround yourself with people who like to laugh. Watch funny TV shows or movies. Let the child in you come out and you'll find that laughter is good medicine.

Immerse yourself in a favorite activity or hobby. This will give you a block of time to focus on an enjoyable task instead of your problems. Gardening, fishing, sewing and drawing are good examples, but many good choices are depending on where you live and the time of year.

Use relaxation techniques. Exercises like deep breathing, progressive relaxation and visualization are skills that can be learned and practiced. The more you practice and apply them, the better you will be able to manage stress.

Live in the present. Think about the causes of your stress. It may come from thinking about the past or worrying about the future. If you can plant yourself firmly in the present, you can leave any worries behind and focus on solutions to current problems.

Utilize your EAP. If you're having a hard time managing your stress, your EAP can help. Call your Care Coordinator at 800-245-1150 for more information.



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