

Understanding Stress – and How to Control It

In ancient times, our stress response (“fight or flight”) likely developed to help us react quickly to danger, such as a charging saber-toothed tiger. In today’s more complex world, it can be triggered by many other situations as well. Stress may manifest in physical symptoms, emotional reactions and changes in behavior. And chronic stress can lead to physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomach discomfort, increased blood pressure, chest pain, and problems sleeping. Stress may also bring on or worsen certain symptoms and diseases.

How can we control stress?

We can’t make stress go away. But we can lessen its impact with these tips:

- 1. Strive for a balanced life.** We often work long hours and take work home to stay on top of our many demands. This may help in the short term, but it keeps us from nurturing ourselves and our relationships.
- 2. Eat well and exercise.** Exercise and relaxation techniques (such as deep breathing or yoga) can reduce the harmful effects of stress. We also cope with problems better when we eat healthy and stay well.
- 3. Manage your time efficiently.** Set your priorities each day. Break large tasks into smaller, more manageable ones. Be realistic and flexible in the way you schedule time.

- 4. Give yourself a break.** Develop the self-awareness to know when you really need a break, whether it’s a walk or a week on a sunny beach. And when you go, leave your work behind.
- 5. Recognize what you can and can’t control.** Family members get sick, work gets crazy and extra guests show up for dinner. Pay attention to what is within your control and focus your energies there. This will help to distract you from focusing on what is out of your control.
- 6. Use your Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** Your EAP is available around the clock to connect you to a licensed professional if you need support. You can also visit your EAP member website for stress relief articles, self-help programs and other resources.

Although we can’t avoid stress, we can respond in ways that help us stay happy and healthy.

Need help?

**Call toll-free, 24 hours a day,
seven days a week:**

1-866-EAP-4SOC | 1-866-327-4762

TTY users should call 1-800-327-0801.

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