

# Stress Management - Ways to Avoid Stress

Stress is a part of life, and you can't always avoid it. But you can try to avoid situations that can cause it, and you can control how you respond to it. The first step is knowing your own coping strategies. Try using a stress journal to record stressful events, your response to them, and how you coped.

After you know what is causing your stress, try making some changes in your life that will help you avoid stressful situations. Here are a few ideas:

## Manage your time

Time management is a way to find the time for more of the things you want and need to do. It helps you decide which things are urgent and which can wait. Managing your time can make your life easier, less stressful, and more meaningful.

## Look at your lifestyle

The choices you make about the way you live affect your stress level. Your lifestyle may not cause stress on its own, but it can prevent your body from recovering from it. Try to:

- **Find a balance** between personal, work, and family needs. This isn't easy. Start by looking at how you spend your time. Maybe there are things that you don't need to do at all. Finding a balance can be especially hard during the holidays.
- **Have a sense of purpose in life.** Many people find meaning through connections with family, friends, jobs, or volunteer work.
- **Get enough sleep.** Your body recovers from the stresses of the day while you are sleeping. For more information, see:
- **Adopt healthy habits.** Eat a healthy diet, limit how much alcohol you drink, and don't smoke. Staying healthy is your best defense against stress.
- **Exercise.** Even moderate exercise, such as taking a daily walk, can reduce stress.

## Get support

Support in your life from family, friends, and your community has a big impact on how you experience stress. Having support in your life can help you stay healthy.

Support means having the love, trust, and advice of others. But support can also be something more concrete, like time or money. It can be hard to ask for help. But doing so doesn't mean you're weak. If you're feeling stressed, you can look for support from:

- Family and friends.
- Coworkers, or people you know through hobbies or other interests.
- A professional counselor.
- People you know from church, or a member of the clergy.
- Employee assistance programs at work, or stress management classes.
- Support groups. These can be very helpful if your stress is caused by a special situation. Maybe you are a caregiver for someone who is elderly or has a chronic illness.

## Change your thinking

Stressful events can make you feel bad about yourself. You might start focusing on only the bad and not the good in a situation. That's called negative thinking. It can make you feel afraid, insecure, depressed, or anxious. It's also common to feel a lack of control or self-worth.

Negative thinking can trigger your body's stress response, just as a real threat does. Dealing with these negative thoughts and the way you see things can help reduce stress. You can learn these techniques on your own, or you can get help from a counselor. Here are some ideas:

- **Positive thinking** helps you cope with a problem by changing the way you think. How you think affects how you feel. See the topic Positive Thinking, or try:
- **Problem solving** helps you identify all aspects of a stressful event, find things you may be able to change, and deal with things you can't change.
- **Assertive communication** helps you express how you feel in a thoughtful, tactful way. Not being able to talk about your needs and concerns creates stress and can make negative feelings worse.

Source:

<http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-management-avoiding-unnecessary-stress>