

# MANAGING YOUR STRESS



Your body and mind are designed to recover and recharge after periods of stress. But this cannot happen if stress persists. That is why finding healthy ways to manage stress is vital.

Here are some ideas to help you take control of your stress:

**Find the cause of your stress and make a change.** Set limits and be ready to say “no” without guilt or excuses. If you have job stress, ask your boss to set clear priorities. Be willing to work out conflicts and misunderstandings with the people in your life. Built-up anger or resentment is a stressor you don’t need.

**Reframe your stress.** Try to take an objective look at the stressors in your life. Are they really so bad? Are you seeking perfection where perfection isn’t needed? Can you view a stressful challenge as an opportunity rather than a burden? How would you advise a friend in your situation?

**Get enough sleep.** This may seem impossible, especially if your stress keeps you lying awake at night. Your sleep troubles may stem, in part, from poor bedtime habits. Try these tips to improve your sleep quality:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.
- Avoid late-night snacking, alcohol or rousing activities.
- Don’t read, work or watch TV in bed.
- Make your bedroom cool, dark and comfortable.

**Take time to relax.** Find a few minutes each day to let off steam and wind down. Relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, have been proven to induce your body’s relaxation response. This is how your body naturally recovers from stress and restores normal body function. Prayer and meditation are other ways to return to a calm state and shore up the inner strength to manage stressful moments.

**Eat right and exercise.** Make small changes to improve your lifestyle. Avoid emotional eating—that is, eating too much or eating unhealthy foods to deal with stress. Find a physical outlet, such as brisk walking. Exercise is also a physical way to release stress and can improve sleep.

**Lean on friends and family.** People feel stressed when they don’t have the resources to cope with the demands they face. Ask people who love and care about you for help during stressful times. This could mean taking your kids so that you can have a few moments to yourself, helping with household chores, or listening to your cares and concerns.

## GET READY TO MANAGE YOUR STRESS

Make a plan to deal with your stress. Take on one change at a time. Otherwise, making too many changes at once will become a source of stress. Don’t expect all your stress to go away. But do expect to feel less stress and more control.

## WHEN STRESS WON’T GO AWAY

Some people feel trapped by stressful relationships or situations. If stress continues to be a problem for you even after making changes, get help. Talk to your doctor or a mental health provider. Your doctor may suggest medicine to help with stress and worry. Therapy can help you recognize and change behaviors and situations that contribute to the stress you feel.

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