


How do I manage Stress

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A dramatic landscape photograph showing a massive volcanic eruption. A thick, dark plume of ash and smoke rises from a mountain, dominating the right side of the frame. The foreground is a dark, forested valley with some small pools of water. The sky is a mix of blue and white clouds.

STRESS IS YOUR BODY'S WAY OF RESPONDING TO ANY KIND OF
DEMAND OR THREAT.

Stress

The stress response is the body's way of protecting you.

When working properly, it helps you stay focused, energetic, and alert. In emergency situations, stress can save your life—

giving you extra strength to defend yourself, for example, or help you react and slam on the brakes to avoid a car accident.



Stress

But what do we do if stress isn't helping us to stay focused and able to manage life?



- If you tend to get stressed out frequently, like many of us in today's demanding world, your body may exist in a heightened state of stress most of the time. And that can lead to serious health problems.
- Chronic stress disrupts nearly every system in your body.
- It can suppress your immune system, upset your digestive and reproductive systems, increase the risk of heart attack and stroke, and speed up the aging process. It can even rewire the brain, leaving you more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems.





Your nervous system isn't very good at distinguishing between emotional and physical threats.




If you're super stressed over an argument with a friend, a work deadline, or a mountain of bills, your body can react just as strongly as if you're facing a true life-or-death situation.



And the more your emergency stress system is activated, the easier it becomes to trigger, making it harder to shut off.



The most dangerous thing about stress is how easily it can creep up on you.



You get used to it.



It starts to feel familiar, even normal.



You don't notice how much it's affecting you, even as it takes a heavy toll.



That's why it's important to be aware of the common warning signs and symptoms of stress overload.



Signs of stress

Cognitive symptoms:

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Seeing only the negative
- Anxious or racing thoughts
- Constant worrying

Emotional symptoms:

- Depression or general unhappiness
- Anxiety and agitation
- Moodiness, irritability, or anger
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Loneliness and isolation
- Other mental or emotional health problems

Physical symptoms:

- Aches and pains
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Nausea, dizziness
- Chest pain, rapid heart rate
- Loss of sex drive
- Frequent colds or flu

Behavioral symptoms:

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Withdrawing from others
- Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities
- Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax
- Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)



Top 10 stressful life events

According to the widely validated Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale, these are the top ten stressful life events for adults that can contribute to illness:

1. Death of a spouse

2. Divorce

3. Marriage separation

4. Imprisonment

5. Death of a close family member

6 Injury or illness

7. Marriage

8. Job loss

9. Marriage reconciliation

10 Retirement



Walk with me through a technique that can help keep you calm and lessen stress. It is called 54321

First sit up, close your eyes and if you can put your feet on the ground.

Take a deep breathe from your belly and push it out as hard as you can from your lips.

We are going to do these types of breathes for 5 breathes... Follow the sound of my voice...



What are 5 things you can see? Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed.





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What are 4 things you can feel? Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.





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What are 2 things you can smell? Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.





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What is 1 thing you can taste? Carry gum, candy, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavors. Or you say one good thing about yourself





YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

A STRONG NETWORK OF
SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS AND
FAMILY MEMBERS IS AN
ENORMOUS BUFFER
AGAINST STRESS TO
STRESS.



YOUR SENSE OF CONTROL.

IF YOU HAVE
CONFIDENCE IN
YOURSELF AND YOUR
ABILITY TO INFLUENCE
EVENTS AND PERSEVERE
THROUGH CHALLENGES,



YOUR ATTITUDE AND OUTLOOK.

THE WAY YOU LOOK AT
LIFE AND ITS INEVITABLE
CHALLENGES MAKES A
HUGE DIFFERENCE IN
YOUR ABILITY TO
HANDLE STRESS.



YOUR ABILITY TO DEAL WITH YOUR EMOTIONS.

HAVING THE ABILITY TO
IDENTIFY AND DEAL
APPROPRIATELY WITH
YOUR EMOTIONS CAN
INCREASE YOUR
TOLERANCE TO STRESS
AND HELP YOU BOUNCE
BACK FROM ADVERSITY.



YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND PREPARATION.

THE MORE YOU KNOW
ABOUT A STRESSFUL
SITUATION, INCLUDING
HOW LONG IT WILL LAST
AND WHAT TO EXPECT,
THE EASIER IT IS TO COPE.



It was great to see everyone, check out the recording if you want to try the technique again, or the handout attached.

Join us next week for....

