



Coping With Stress

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Stress

Stress is one way our body responds to life events that are demanding. Not all kinds of stress are bad. Small amounts of stress that we experience when we take tests or go to an interview are certainly helpful in motivating us to



perform well. There are many factors that can contribute to stress. Natural disasters, debt, government regulations, increased loan interest rates, commodity prices, farm injuries, machinery breakdowns, crop and animal health issues, family relationship difficulties, and low crop yields are common stressors among farmers. Chronic stress can affect you, your spouse, children, and friends adversely. Learning to use coping strategies to deal with stress can improve mental and physical health.

Chronic stress increases the amount of stress hormone called *cortisol* which can trigger anxiety, decrease immunity for your body to fight infections, and lead to neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia. Ongoing, chronic stress can lead to hypertension, heart diseases, diabetes, ulcers, suicide, cancers, and fertility issues in men and women. Stress can affect your body, thoughts and what you do every day.

Some symptoms of stress

- ◆ Sleeping more or less
- ◆ Overeating or loss of appetite
- ◆ High blood pressure
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Fatigue
- ◆ Faster heartbeat
- ◆ Nausea
- ◆ Poor concentration
- ◆ Muscle cramps (Sore neck/back)
- ◆ Irritability
- ◆ Excessive anger
- ◆ Restlessness
- ◆ Trouble making decisions
- ◆ Taking drugs, smoking and using alcohol
- ◆ Withdrawing from family members and friends
- ◆ Feeling foggy
- ◆ Experiencing reproductive issues

What symptoms do you have?

More than 75% of Americans reported having experienced physiological or emotional symptoms of stress. Stress affects everyone as it is a survival strategy for us to avoid dangerous situations. Chronic stress can harm our mental and physical health. Fortunately, there are effective coping strategies and techniques that can be used to deal with stress. Take steps to find ways to manage your stress.



Stress Management Strategies

- ◆ **Identify the stressors that cause the stress** Keep a stress journal to write about the stressors and your feelings.
- ◆ **Practice self-talk and accept your feelings** Tell yourself that it is okay to feel this way and that you will overcome it. Tell yourself to be calm and in control.
- ◆ **Eat nutritious and balanced meals** A nutritious, well-balanced diet is needed to maintain the proper function of our brain. Eating fresh vegetables, berries and fruits rich in vitamin A, C, and E can elevate your mood and improve your health. B group vitamins such as folic acid, B6 and B12 promote neural health and play a role in reducing stress. They are found in green leafy vegetables, nuts, eggs, whole grains, and meat.
- ◆ **Engage in physical activities** Exercise decreases the level of cortisol in the body and alleviates stress. 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (brisk walking, yard work, dancing etc.) per week 3-5 times is recommended for an adult.
- ◆ **Breathe** Take 5-6 deep breaths to calm your brain.
- ◆ **Practice mindfulness** Stay in the present and let go of the past. Cultivating the right mindset helps with increasing resiliency and optimism. This present-centered approach teaches one to accept the emotions and thoughts in that moment nonjudgmentally.
- ◆ **Surround yourself with happy people** When people are happy, they spread happiness to others.
- ◆ **Practice gratitude** Think about 3 things that you are grateful for.
- ◆ **Do not use alcohol, drugs, or smoke** These substances temporarily relieve stress. In the long term it would increase stress and cause harm to your health.
- ◆ **Seek social support** Seek help from family, friends, clergy and mental health professionals. Share with them how you feel physically and emotionally.

What stress management strategies do you use to alleviate your stress?

For More Help

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255); En Español 1-888-628-9454

Crisis Text Line (24/7)

Text "HELLO" to 741741

Disaster Distress Helpline

Call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746

Veterans Crisis Line

Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press 1 or text to 838255

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