

Health Plans



How to manage stress

Managing stress is important for your emotional and physical health. Your body gets stressed when you meet challenges you don't feel you can handle. You react as though you're in danger – blood rushes to your muscles, you get a burst of energy and your heart and breathing speed up. This physical reaction is called the fight-or-flight response. It can be useful in helping you meet an important deadline or react to an emergency, but frequent stress can be dangerous and lead to stomach issues, heart problems, poor sleep and a weakened immune system.

Fortunately, with some guidance and practice, you can learn to avoid or minimize stressful reactions and return to a more relaxed state.

Understand your stress to minimize it.

Figure out what's causing stress in your life. Is it your commute? A family member's illness? As suggested by [Mental Health America](#), list out your biggest sources of stress throughout the day using a stress log, a mood tracker or a journal. Notice any patterns?

Next, think about mitigating these stress-inducing situations. Can you avoid traffic by leaving 10 minutes earlier or later? Would it help to discuss a stressful work environment with your boss or a colleague? Try to be constructive and creative. The less stress you encounter in your day, the more relaxed and healthier you'll feel. We promise.

Finally, learn to manage stress as it crops up. Below are some suggestions from the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) to help you control and relieve your stress. These tools will help you bounce back from stressful situations. Our best advice is to be proactive with stress management. Take steps to handle it effectively, and then breathe a sigh of relief.

Take action to manage stress.

- Disconnect and decompress. It can be hard to separate work from home, but it's important to get some distance and down time. Often, there's the added benefit of having a creative idea when you give yourself a little space! Though we can't always leave work at work, try to always finish working and checking emails at least two hours before bed.
- Sleep! It helps better address daily frustrations. Everyone's needs are different, but most adults need seven to nine hours.
- Breathe. Meditation can help you regain calm and inner peace, get perspective on stressful situations and lessen the negative feelings caused by stress. There are a variety of techniques to try, from guided meditation to mindfulness to yoga.
- Exercise. Working out reduces stress hormones such as adrenaline. It also triggers the creation of endorphins, which help relieve pain and promote feelings of happiness.

Think positively.

- Think happy thoughts. Self-talk is the stream of unspoken thoughts going through your head ranging from "I'm hungry" to "I'm scared about meeting this deadline." Be aware of these thoughts and turn your self-talk in a positive direction. You'll develop a more optimistic view on life, which in turn leads to lower levels of stress.
- Laugh. We're not joking! Laughter has tons of positive effects on your health such as reducing depression symptoms and releasing tension from the body.
- Express gratitude. Showing appreciation increases your emotional resilience. Every day, write down five things for which you're grateful. Even better, thank someone in your life.

Voice your stress to better manage it.

- Address stressful situations. Stand up for yourself and express when you're having a hard time.
- Ask for help. Tell a trusted family member or friend that you need support. Having a social support network can increase feelings of self-worth and security.

Know when to seek help.

Sometimes, it's hard to manage stress on your own. Below are a few signs you might want to seek help from a pro.

- Anger is an important emotion and a driving force behind some of your actions. But if you're angry too often, it can be disruptive towards your health and relationships.
- Constantly feeling ready to fight will have you on edge. This can also be damaging towards your health and relationships.
- If you have ever acted physically because of anger, you should seek help. Violent behavior is emotionally, physically and socially damaging.
- Constant stress can cause some scary physical reactions. If you feel acute physical symptoms like chest tightening, insomnia, shortness of breath or stomach issues, seek help immediately.

Mood Tracker

Day	Mood	Mood Intensity	Events	Thoughts
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

MOOD LIST (feel free to add other moods you might be feeling as well):

ANGRY	CONFUSED	GRUMPY	RELAXED	STRESSED
ANXIOUS	DISAPPOINTED	HAPPY	SAD	TIRED
BORED	EXCITED	HOPEFUL	SCARED	
CONFIDENT	FRUSTRATED	NEUTRAL	SICK	

