

# Stress is a fact of life.

It's the tension you feel when faced with a new or difficult situation.

## Stress isn't always a bad thing.

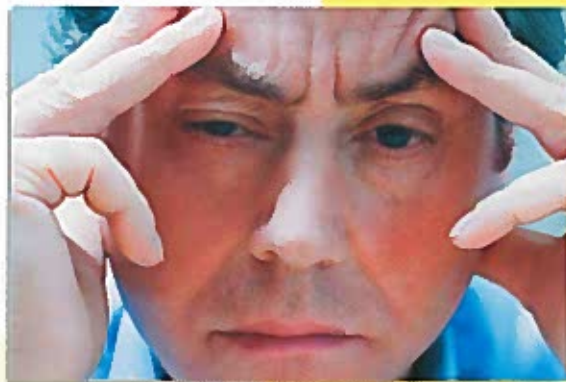
It can help you meet life's challenges. For example, the rush of energy you get when under stress can help you meet a deadline, deal with a family crisis or avoid danger.

## But too much stress can cause problems.

Ongoing stress about things like money, illness or problems with work or relationships adds up. It can hurt your physical and mental health—and affect your relationships with friends and family.

For example, you may have symptoms such as:

- ▶ headaches
- ▶ sleeping problems
- ▶ anger
- ▶ anxiety
- ▶ depression
- ▶ arguing with friends or your partner
- ▶ mood changes.



The good news is you can learn to beat stress!  
**Here are 12 ways that can help...**

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## 12 WAYS TO BEAT STRESS

### 1 Focus on the positive.

Sometimes you have no control over the sources of stress in your life. But you can control the way you react. Instead of worrying about things you can't change, be optimistic about possible outcomes.

For example, let's assume you've been given a rush project at work. Instead of dwelling on the time crunch, think of it as an opportunity to show your boss how well you can work under pressure.



### 2 Talk it out.

Talking with a trusted friend can help you sort out your feelings and get a new perspective.



### 3 Make a "to-do" list.

It can help you manage your time wisely.

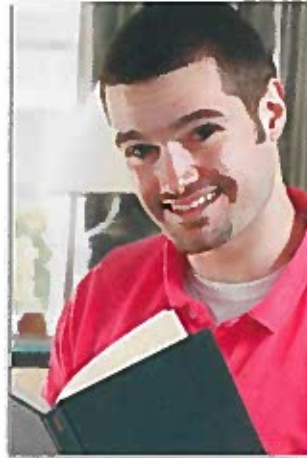
- ▶ Write down everything you want to get done in a given day.
- ▶ Prioritize your list by importance and/or due date.
- ▶ Start with the most important activity (or the one you have to get done soonest) and move down your list.



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**Make time for yourself every day.**

Don't think of free time as what's left over after you've done everything else. Set aside time each day to read, take a bath, work on a hobby or do something else you enjoy. Making time for things you like can help you "recharge your batteries." You'll feel more prepared to take on new challenges, too.

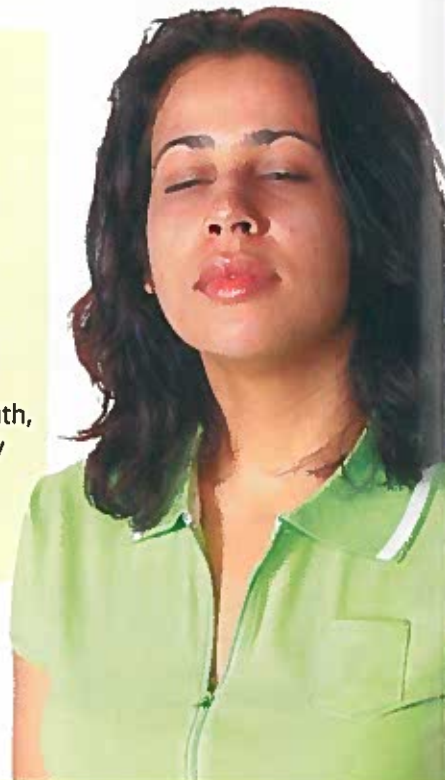


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**Try deep breathing.**

This is one of the easiest ways to relieve tension.

- ▶ Get into a comfortable position. Relax your stomach.
- ▶ Put one hand on your stomach, just below your rib cage.
- ▶ Slowly breathe in through your nose, feeling your stomach rise.
- ▶ Exhale slowly through your mouth, emptying your lungs completely and feeling your stomach fall.
- ▶ Repeat several times until you feel calm and relaxed.



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**Try progressive muscle relaxation.**

This technique can help relieve tension in your muscles.

- ▶ Sit in a comfortable chair, or lie down.
- ▶ Start with your arms. Make fists with your hands for 5-10 seconds. Then relax all your muscles.
- ▶ Work other arm muscles by bending at the wrists or elbows for 5-10 seconds. Then relax.
- ▶ Now move on to other muscle groups—shoulders, face, chest, stomach, legs—until you've tensed and relaxed your whole body.



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**Get enough sleep.**

Don't get into a habit of giving up sleep to get more done. It can lead to more stress in the long run. Most adults need about 7-8 hours of sleep every night.

8

**Take regular breaks.**

Taking a break from what you're doing every once in a while can help you come back feeling refreshed and relaxed. For example, if possible, step away from working, studying or cleaning for a short walk every few hours.





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**Get regular exercise.**

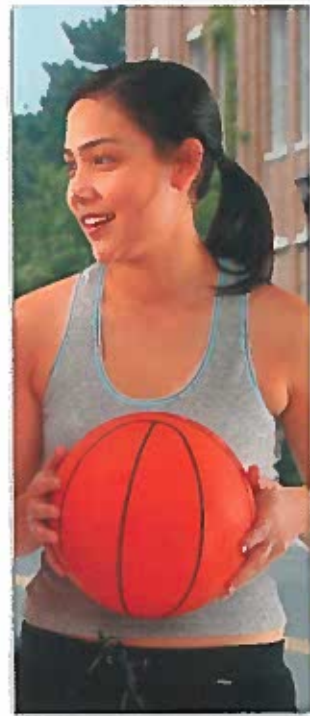
Finding time to exercise when you're already busy may seem like one more source of stress. But regular activity can actually help:

- ▶ reduce tension
- ▶ improve your mood
- ▶ give you more energy to get through the day.

In general:

- ▶ Get at least 150 minutes of moderate—or 75 minutes of vigorous—physical activity each week.
- ▶ Try to spread out your activity over the week, getting at least 10 minutes at a time.
- ▶ In addition, do muscle-strengthening exercises on 2 days each week.

Consult your health-care provider before starting an exercise program.



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**Eat a healthy diet.**

Give your body the energy it needs to cope with stress.

- ▶ Eat a variety of foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber.
- ▶ Limit fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), caffeine and added sugars (in food and beverages).



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**Ask for help when you need it.**

Let others share in tasks and chores. And if stress gets out of hand, don't be afraid to ask for professional help. (See the list below for sources of help.)

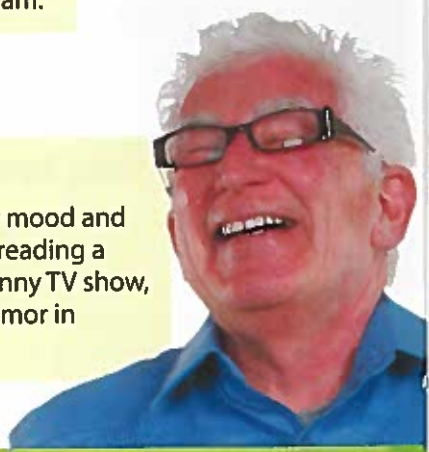
**For more tips on managing stress, contact:**

- ▶ your health-care provider: \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ a mental health professional or mental health center
- ▶ your employee assistance program (EAP): \_\_\_\_\_
- ▶ Mental Health America  
www.mentalhealthamerica.net.

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**Laugh!**

Laughing can brighten your mood and relieve physical tension. Try reading a comic strip or watching a funny TV show, for example. Look for the humor in everyday situations.



**Stress is a normal part of life—  
but it doesn't have to control you.  
Take charge of stress today!**