



Stress can come from:

- Worrying about things beyond your control.
- A challenging living and/or work situation.
- Trying to do too much in too little time.
- Consuming certain foods such as caffeine, sugar or too much salt.
- Having poor physical or emotional health.

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When you manage stress, you stay in control instead of letting the stress control you.

A Stress Management Fact Sheet

Just for You from In the Know!



WHAT'S ALL THE STRESS ABOUT?

Stress can come from big events or from the small problems of everyday life. Stress has physical and emotional effects that can be positive or negative. It may be the feeling you get when faced with a new and challenging situation or it may be the faint sense of anxiety you feel after "one of those days!"

When you think about it, in some ways, stress is like falling in love:

- It's different for everyone.
- It often shows itself in strange ways.
- It's a powerful force that can do a lot of good or a lot of harm.

Stress affects you physically, mentally and emotionally. Physically, stress can be damaging to your overall health. Mentally, it can interfere with concentration and decision-making. Emotionally, stress can affect the way you interact with co-workers, loved ones and others around you.

Did you know that an estimated one million employees are absent from work every day due to stress? In fact, more than half of the working days missed in the U.S. are due to stress. The number of employees calling in sick because of stress has tripled in recent years.

WHAT ARE SOME SYMPTOMS OF STRESS?

- Faster heartbeat and breathing
- Tense muscles
- Feelings of nausea, or butterflies in stomach
- Change in appetite
- Aches and pains
- Fatigue and loss of mental energy
- Decreased enjoyment of work
- Difficulty sleeping
- Mood changes (depression, frustration, hostility, helplessness, impatience and restlessness)
- Being distracted, anxious or short-tempered
- An inability to concentrate or make decisions
- Drinking more alcohol and smoking more

STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The **first step** to managing stress is to become aware of things that make you feel stressed and of the way you feel when under stress. If you skip this step, you'll have a hard time getting rid of stress.

What causes stress in your life? Try to identify the situations in your life (called stressors) that make you feel tense. The first thing we usually think of are those events that make us angry or upset. It can also come from small things that build up. Look at the things that cause you stress and how serious each of them really is. Remember, you can cause stress through your thoughts, feelings and expectations.

Here are some common stressors:

- "I never have enough time."
- "It's hard for me to handle unexpected changes in plans."
- "My kids/spouse get to me."
- "I feel that I can't do my job."

Recognize your stress symptoms. Listen to what your body tries to tell you about stress.

The **second step** is to decide if there is anything you can do about the stress. If stress is caused by something out of your control, your only way out is to learn acceptance.

How? Learn to let go of the things you can't do anything about. When worries and fears are causing you a lot of stress, ask yourself "What's the worst that could happen?" or "What would I tell a friend in this situation?"

Another way to move toward acceptance is to maintain a positive attitude. It can be hard to smile when things go wrong. However, if you keep a positive attitude, you're more likely to find a way out of the problem – or learn to accept the situation.

Sometimes people need professional help to get through stressful events, such as the unexpected death of a client. Remember that getting counseling is NOT a sign of weakness.

TWO MORE STRESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The third step in stress management is to learn to cope with the stress of daily life. Coping may help you adapt to stress or help you change the situation.

A great way to cope with stress is with exercise. It helps the body tolerate the effects of stress and has a soothing effect that lasts long after you've exercised.

Doing fun things that you enjoy is a good way to relieve stress. Find a hobby. Create a garden in your back yard. Go to a movie. Read a book. Get a massage. Do whatever relaxes you and puts a smile on your face.

The **fourth step** is to take action to reduce any stress that can be controlled. Many people find that if they change a bad habit into a good habit, they have less stress in their lives.



Stress is a fact of life, but doesn't have to be a way of life.

For example, if you are usually a night owl, try going to bed an hour earlier every night for three weeks. See if it makes a difference in how "stressed out" you are.

Take charge of your stress by meeting the demands of every day life with these four skills: awareness, acceptance, coping and action.