



What is Stress?

Stress is the body's way of adapting to challenges and threats. This includes, not only the stress we feel when we get overwhelmed, but also internal reactions to different environmental factors such as heat, illness, and allergies.

Stressors are the things that cause you stress. They challenge both the mind and the body, for example schoolwork and social interactions. Inside the body, stress causes blood vessels in the skin to narrow and ones in the heart and muscles to widen in preparation for the fight or flight response. The digestive system slows down while heart rate and breathing speed up. Senses are more aware, adrenaline is getting muscles ready for action, and the brain is on high alert.

Stress can also be positive. **Eustress** is stress that has positive outcomes, such as exercise or planning a vacation. It is important to know how to properly manage your stress because chronic exposure can cause fatigue, muscle weakness, and neurological disorders.

Stress Management

Stress can be prevented and managed by focusing on a combination of three things: (1) altering the stressor, (2) adjusting one's perspective on the stressor to one that gives a positive meaning to it, and (3) changing the bodily reaction to the stressor. To master these healthy stress management techniques, each one should be utilized, and by successfully doing so, increases the rate of recovering to normal functioning in the body and improves daily living. Ways to manage stress include:

- Changing ones environment by creating a clean, quiet and distraction free area that allows you to focus and get work done.
- Budgeting time for self-care. To properly manage time, realistic and achievable goals should be set for all tasks. Limiting screen time can be beneficial to focus and free up time.
- Getting enough sleep is important to starting a day energized and with a positive attitude.
- Clear communication with others is important in managing healthy and stress-free friendships. To verbalize you needs use the outline of "*I feel...when you... because... and therefore I would like you to...*".
- Having a social network of supportive and nonjudgmental friends that you can confide in.

Coping Strategies

Although everyone may feel stressed and overwhelmed at times, the ways to calm down vary from person to person. What works for your friend, may not work for you. It is still beneficial to try what people suggest. Some ways to destress and deescalate are;

- **Distraction**—making a list of your favorite things, going for a walk, or reading. This is helpful for when you have racing thoughts and need to take a break from worrying.
- **Journaling**—writing out the situation is helpful to get your emotions out.
- **Self—soothing** by using your senses to relax, listening to relaxing music, feeling a soft blanket, lighting a good smelling candle, or eating your favorite ice cream.
- **Deep breathing**—with the help of bubbles, prompts, or imagery such as square breathing where you draw a square in the air and breathe in when going vertically and out when horizontal. This is helpful to regulate your heart rate and calm down.
- **Practicing Mindfulness**—focusing on what is happening in that moment and being present and rational. You can follow a guided mediation on how to breathe and what to focus on, or try a couple of grounding exercises on your own.
Five Senses: look around & name 5 things you see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 you can taste.
Counting Colors: count how many objects of a particular color you see.