

# Managing Stress

## How can I manage the stress in my life?

Keep in mind that stress can't be eliminated, only managed. Life, especially a well-lived life, provides us with a series of stressful encounters and events.

Often, stress management becomes a question of *lifestyle management*. It is important to take a look at your life and decide what is most important to you. We live in an age where there is tremendous pressure to “do it all”, but often stress management is about identifying our priorities and finding balance in our lives.

The following are some strategies for managing stress that have been shown to be effective in managing stress reactions:

- **Exercise** – Exercise in an extremely effective method of counteracting the effects of stress. Always check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.
- **Diet** – Try to eliminate foods like processed sugar, caffeine, and alcohol, which trigger stress responses in the body. Although these ingredients may be found in some of our favorite “feel good” foods or drinks, too much of any of them can make your body feel worse.
- **Relaxation** – Increase the amount of time spent in relaxing activities such as reading, relaxing, and engaging in hobbies and other pleasurable activities. Many people have found ancient yet non-traditional forms of relaxation like yoga, tai chi, controlled breathing, and meditation to offer many benefits and help for a stressful life.
- **Support** – Spend time with others who are important to you, and those who can offer support and encouragement. Professional support, in the form of counseling, can also be very helpful.
- Simplify your life whenever you can.
- Develop perspective: reduce the importance of certain events.
- Watch your language. Saying, “I had a horrible day” when you sat in traffic, your co-workers were grouchy, and your work was tedious, is the wrong use of the word “horrible.”
- Give certain events the 100-years test (as in, “will this really matter 100 years from now?”).
- Focus on what is most important to you (family, time, career, relationships, spirituality, instead of money and material things).
- For any stressful event, focus on the positive parts first, the interesting parts second, the negative parts third.
- Remember that you work to live, not live to work.
- Keep daily routines, make to-do lists, and be willing to adjust as necessary.
- Seek help and support from the significant people in your life.
- Limit the amount of time you watch or read negative stories in the news.
- Do activities which give you purpose and satisfaction.
- Be patient with yourself.

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