

Coping with Stress



The stress response floods your body with chemicals made to prepare you for “fight or flight”. This helps you react quickly under pressure, and it is helpful in true emergencies. The stress response is a normal reaction, but it can be harmful if it goes on too long – after the pressure or emergency situation has passed, the stress response should turn off. If your body is constantly in “fight or flight” mode, it can wear you down. If this continues for a long time it can have negative affects on your physical health and wellbeing.

Signs Your Stress Response is Overworking

Change in Feelings

- Feeling sad, irritable, anxious, or panicked
- Blaming others for bad things that happen

Symptoms of Depression

- Only seeing the downside of situations
- Fun events feel less enjoyable

Physical Ailments

- Dry mouth or skin problems
- Loss of appetite or need to eat constantly
- Headaches, stomachaches, and digestion issues
- Trouble sleeping

How Stress Harms Your Health

Stress can contribute to the following conditions:

- Anxiety disorder
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Hair loss
- Heart disease
- Hyperthyroidism
- Sexual dysfunction
- Tooth and gum disease
- Ulcers
- Weight gain or loss



How to Lower Your Stress Level

Don't Overschedule Yourself

- Leave room in your schedule for down time, friends and family, and fun activities.

Make a List and Ask for Help

- Make a list of all your tasks ranked based on importance. Make note of which ones you can get help with. Then work on them one by one and cross off the task as you complete it.

Have Healthy Habits

- Exercise, eat well, and get enough sleep.

Relax

- Take time to unwind, such as going for walks, reading, sitting, and enjoying time with friends or family.

Starting a Relaxation Response Practice

The relaxation response is a state of rest that is the opposite of the stress response and tells your body to stop the fight or flight mode.

- Set aside 10 to 20 minutes once or twice each day to practice a relaxation method.
- Try to find a quiet place where you can sit or lie down alone to practice.
- Pick a relaxation method to try ([Deep Breathing](#), [Guided Imagery](#), [Mindfulness Meditation](#), and [Tense and Relax](#)). You may need to try a few to see which one you like the best, or you can alternate them.
- Use relaxation techniques during stressful times to help de-escalate the situation.