



Recognizing Your Stress and What to Do About It!

Current Stressors <i>What is causing you stress? What makes you feel off balance?</i>	Symptoms of Stress <i>How do you know when you are stressed?</i>	Stress Management Techniques <i>What do you do to cope/deal with stress?</i>

Notes:

Some additional resources:

<http://www.k-state.edu/counseling/topics/stress/drstress.html#strategies>

http://hillsborough.ifas.ufl.edu/family_life/stress_management.shtml

<http://studentsupport.georgiasouthern.edu/counseling/resources/self-help/relaxation-and-stress-management/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/meditation/MM00623>

<http://www.fitness.gov/participate-in-programs/joining-forces/>



Stress Management Tips... The Top “Dos” and “Don’ts”

DO...

- **Take control:** See if there is something you can change or control in the situation.
- **Remove yourself from the stressful situation:** Give yourself a break if only for a few moments a day.
- **Change the way you see things:** Learn to recognize stress for what it is. Increase your body's feedback and make stress self-regulating.
- **Selectively change the way you react:** Focus on one troublesome thing and manage your reactions to it/him/her.
- **Avoid extreme reactions:** Why hate when a little dislike will do? Why generate anxiety when you can be nervous? Why rage when anger will do the job? Why be depressed when you can just be sad?
- **Set realistic goals for yourself:** Reduce the number of events going on in your life and you may reduce the circuit overload.
- **Work off stress:** Whether it's through workouts, jogging, tennis, or gardening, physical activity can relieve stress. As you have experienced, the military places great emphasis on physical fitness and exercise training. Studies show that physical activity enhances psychological well-being.
- **Learn how to best relax yourself:** Meditation and breathing exercises have been proven to be very effective in controlling stress. Practice clearing your mind of disturbing thoughts.
- **Do something for others:** Helping others can help get your mind off yourself.
- **Get enough sleep:** Lack of rest just aggravates stress.
- **Be positive:** Give yourself messages as to how well you can cope rather than how horrible everything is going to be.
- **Try to "use" stress:** If you can't fight what's bothering you and you can't flee from it, flow with it and try to use it in a productive way.

DON'T...

- **Sweat the small stuff:** Try to prioritize truly important things; let the rest slide.
- **Overwhelm yourself:** Avoid fretting about your entire workload. Handle each task as it comes, or selectively deal with matters in some priority.
- **Self-medicate or escape:** Alcohol and drugs can mask stress. They don't help deal with the problems.

Most importantly: If stress is putting you in an unmanageable state or interfering with your education, social and/or work life, seek professional help.

From Military.com - <http://www.military.com/education/keys-to-success/tips-for-stress-management.html>



Stress Management Strategies

Strategy #1: Avoid unnecessary stress

- **Learn how to say “no”** – Know your limits and stick to them. Taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.
- **Avoid people who stress you out** – If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can’t turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.
- **Take control of your environment** – If the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic’s got you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route
- **Avoid hot-button topics** – If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it’s the topic of discussion.
- **Pare down your to-do list** – Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. Distinguish between the “shoulds” and the “musts.” Drop tasks that aren’t truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

Strategy #2: Alter the situation

- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.** If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way.
- **Be willing to compromise.** When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same.
- **Be more assertive.** Don’t take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them.
- **Manage your time better.** Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. Plan ahead and make sure you don’t overextend yourself; you can alter the amount of stress you’re under.

Strategy #3: Adapt to the stressor

- **Reframe problems.** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective.
- **Look at the big picture.** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- **Adjust your standards.** Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with “good enough.”



- **Focus on the positive.** When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts.

Strategy #4: Accept the things you can't change

- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things in life are beyond our control— particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- **Look for the upside.** When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.
- **Share your feelings.** Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation.
- **Learn to forgive.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments.

Strategy #5: Make time for fun and relaxation

- **Set aside relaxation time.** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Connect with others.** Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.
- **Do something you enjoy every day.** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy.
- **Keep your sense of humor.** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.
- **Find healthy ways to relax and recharge**
 - Go for a walk
 - Spend time in nature
 - Call a good friend
 - Sweat out tension with a good workout
 - Write in your journal
 - Take a long bath
 - Light scented candles
 - Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea
 - Play with a pet
 - Work in a garden
 - Get a massage
 - Curl up with a good book
 - Listen to music
 - Watch a good comedy



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Strategy #6: Adopt a healthy lifestyle

- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat.
- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end in with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and you'll sleep better.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don't avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.
- **Get enough sleep.** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

References:

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_management_relief_coping.htm

Helpguide.org - Authors: Melinda Smith, M.A. and Robert Segal, M.A. Last updated: January 2013



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Stress Management Resource Guide

Relaxation (Diaphragmatic) Breathing

1. Sit or lie down shoulders straight.
2. Breathe in through the nose (or pursed lips) – see your stomach rise (use a pillow).
3. Breathe out through you nose (or pursed lips)- see your stomach fall.
4. Pause a moment.
5. Continue 15 – 20 minutes.

Also, included below are online resources that link up to free examples of diaphragmatic breathing and additional stress management techniques such as, progressive muscle relaxation, keeping a thought record, relaxation response and guided imagery. Additionally, using YouTube, you can search for any of the techniques to find free and helpful videos related to stress and stress management.

University of Florida Extension Stress Management Workshop

<http://hillsboroughfcs.ifas.ufl.edu/Stress-Management.html>

Includes a seven-part course on stress management, which includes breathing exercises, visualization, and muscle relaxation workshops.

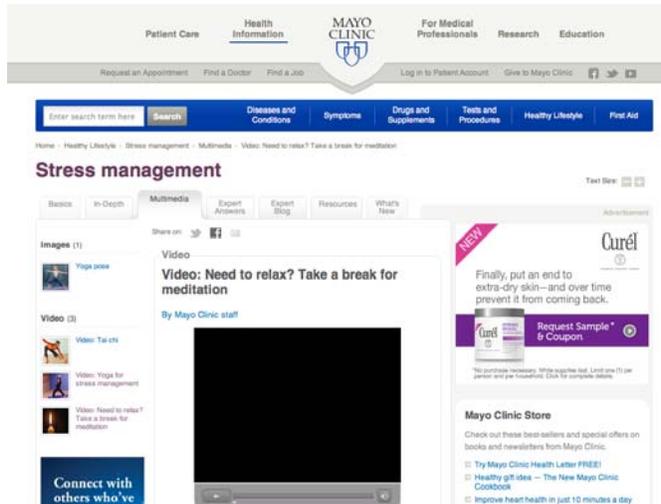


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Georgia Southern University

<http://students.georgiasouthern.edu/counseling/relax/index.htm>

Contains an online stress management workshop and online relaxation exercises, including diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, and a thought record worksheet.



Mayo Clinic Meditation Video

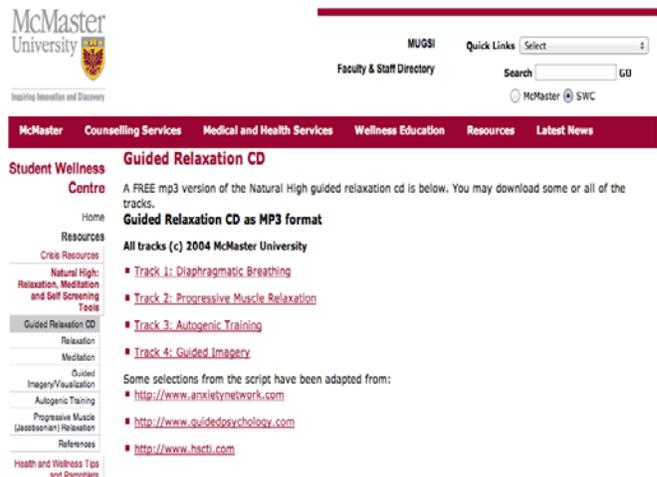
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/meditation/vid-20084741>

This Mayo Clinic instructional video offers a guided meditation session to help you relax.

McMaster University Guided Relaxation CD

<http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/resources/relaxation15/relaxation.html>

The McMaster University Guided Relaxation CD includes free mp3 audio tracks for diaphragmatic breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, autogenic training and guided imagery.





Podcasts



Podcasts are free and can be downloaded from the iTunes Store by using the search string “managing stress”, “relaxation”, “relaxation music”, “breathing” to find the titles listed below.

You can listen to podcasts through the iTunes stores or download for later viewing. You can also subscribe to podcasts to receive content from the same author.

- Managing Stress with Jones Bartlett – PRM and Autogenic Training Sessions
- Great Relaxation Music (www.greatrelaxationmusic.com)
- Relaxation Meditation with Lita Stone
- Wellness Workbook Guided Relaxation Exercises
- George Mason University – Guided Imagery, Mindfulness Meditation, PRM and Breathing Exercises.

Mobile Applications



Mobile applications are also available from the iTunes Store for iPhone and iPad. Similar apps are also available for other smartphone devices. Those listed below are free although data charges may apply.

- Nature Space Holographic Audio Theater (Visualization)
- National Center for Telehealth Technology Breathe 2 Relax (Guided Breathing)
- Pranayama (Guided Breathing)
- Silva Relaxation (Relaxation Exercises)



Stress Busting Strategies

- ✓ **Journal about your stress and worry** ... to help you identify the regular stressors in your life and the way you deal with them. Each time you feel stressed keep track of it in your journal. Make sure to track what caused the stress, how you felt physically and emotionally, how you responded, what you did to make yourself feel better.
- ✓ **Limit worry to a specific time of day** ... do your most unpleasant or most difficult task at the beginning of the day when you are fresh, thereby avoiding the stress of last minute preparation. Procrastination feeds stress!
- ✓ **Postpone worry when you are busy** ... Schedule your day, if possible, so that stressful scenarios don't overlap, reducing the number of stressors you must juggle at any one time. Stagger deadlines for large projects.
- ✓ **Tolerate and understand uncertainty** ... when deadlines approach and calamities at home arise, remember to take a *time out* and take a moment to address the situation. See if there really is something you can change or control in the situation.
- ✓ **Focus on the present, all else is illusion** ... Admitting to yourself that there's nothing you can do about a particular issue will go a long way in helping you adjust.
- ✓ **Do a physical activity** ... when we exercise, our bodies release endorphins that create a natural high. Exercise helps regulate sleep, decrease tension, decrease depression, and increase your immune system – from yoga to simple stretches during the day and at night.
- ✓ **Talk to a friend** ... is all we need to alleviate some tension. Having a conversation can add different perspectives, allow our frustration to vent, and give us a feeling of community instead of isolation. Remember you are not alone and many others face similar hardships.
- ✓ **Slow down your breathing** ... taking a moment to slow your breathing down can clear your mind and decrease your stress reaction.
- ✓ **Relax your body** ... begin in a comfortable position, either lying down or with your feet flat on the ground. Slowly tense the different parts of your body (starting with your toes) and then slowly relax them. Repeat this process of tensing and relaxing three times.
- ✓ **Adopt a healthy lifestyle** ... Eat a healthy diet - well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Get enough sleep - adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally. Drink water – helps to relieve stress.