

Managing Stress

What is Stress? When you perceive a threat, your nervous system responds by releasing a flood of stress hormones which rouse the body for emergency action. Your heart pounds faster, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises, breath quickens, and your senses become sharper. These physical changes increase your strength and stamina, speed your reaction time, and enhance your focus – preparing you to either fight or flee from the danger at hand. Stress is a normal physical response to events that make you feel threatened or upset your balance in some way. **But beyond a certain point though, stress stops being helpful** and starts causing major damage to your health, your mood, your productivity, your relationships, and your quality of life.

Some Warning Signs of Stress Overload:

- *Memory problems*
- *Inability to concentrate*
- *Poor judgment*
- *Seeing only the negative*
- *Anxious or racing thoughts*
- *Constant worrying*
- *Moodiness, depressed*
- *Irritability or short temper*
- *Agitation, inability to relax*
- *Feeling overwhelmed*
- *Nausea, digestive problems, dizziness*
- *Chest pain, rapid heartbeat*
- *Loss of sex drive*
- *Frequent colds*
- *Eating more or less*
- *Sleeping too much or too little*
- *Isolating yourself from others*
- *Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities*
- *Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax*
- *Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)*

Learn how to manage stress! You may feel like the stress in your life is out of your control, but you can always control the way you respond. Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, taking care of yourself, and making time for rest and relaxation.

Tips to Help with Stress Management:

- *Learn to say “no.” Know your limits & stick to them.*
- *Avoid people who stress you out.*
- *Take control of your environment.*
- *Avoid “hot-button” topics.*
- *Pare down your to-do list.*
- *Express your feelings instead of bottling them up.*
- *Adjust your standards.*
- *Focus on the positive, eliminating negative thoughts and words.*
- *Make time for fun & relaxation—go for a walk, call a friend, have a massage, play with your pet.*
- *Do something you enjoy every day.*
- *Keep your sense of humor*
- *Adopt a healthy lifestyle—exercise, eat right, reduce caffeine & sugar, avoid alcohol, cigarettes, drugs.*
- *Get plenty of sleep.*



For more information, call

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