

## What is Stress?

Stress is part of daily life. There is bad stress and good stress, which can either make you feel overwhelmed or excited.



### Good Stress

In small amounts, good stress has many benefits. It can help you overcome daily challenges and motivate you to reach your goals.

### Bad Stress

This type of stress can build up in the body over a long time and it can lead to health problems.

### Causes of stress

Some common sources of stress are connected to big life changes or events, such as:

- Death of a loved one
- Having a baby
- Losing a job
- Moving
- Work and family responsibilities
- Health problems
- Getting married or divorced
- Financial problems

### Signs of stress



#### Physical Signs

- Fast heart rate
- High blood pressure
- Aches and pains
- Chest pain
- Tense muscles
- Feeling very tired
- Upset stomach



#### Emotional Signs

- Crying
- Bad temper or feelings of anger
- Sadness or depression
- Feeling overwhelmed, worried, or anxious
- Not being able to focus or be motivated



#### Behavioral Signs

- Eating/sleeping too much or too little
- Aggressive behavior
- Isolating yourself from others
- Using medication, alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to cope

## Healthy Ways to Manage Stress

To help you manage stress, practice different ways to relax your body and mind. When you are relaxed, you feel, think, and work better. There are many ways to relax and there is no right or wrong way to do it. Find what works best for you and keep practicing.



### 1. Deep Breathing

Relieves tension and helps you relax.

#### Inhale

Sit, stand, or lie down in a comfortable position. Place one hand on your lower abdomen and the other on your chest. Slowly breathe in through your nose. Let the air fill your stomach and chest area. Hold your breath for a few seconds before you exhale.

#### Exhale

Keep your hand on your lower abdomen. Slowly breathe out through pursed lips. Empty your lungs completely. Your hand and abdomen should return to the starting position. Repeat until you feel relaxed.



### 2. Visualization

Frees your mind while keeping your body in a calm state.

Start with deep breathing. Close your eyes and picture a happy place. For example, imagine yourself on a beach. “See” the palm trees. “Hear” the crashing waves. “Smell” the ocean air. “Feel” the sun on your body. Focus only on the details of your peaceful place until you feel rested and relaxed.

## 3. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Slowly relaxes each muscle group in the body. As your body relaxes, so will your mind.



### Hands

Extend your arms in front of you. Clench your fists tightly for 10 seconds. Relax for five seconds, and repeat.



### Shoulders

Shrug your shoulders so that they are close to your ears. Hold position for 10 seconds. Relax for five seconds, and repeat.



### Legs and thighs

Sit up straight in a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Slowly raise both legs, tense your thigh and calf muscles, and pull your toes back toward you. Hold the position for 10 seconds. Relax for five seconds, and repeat.

## What if my stress continues?

It is important to find healthy ways to cope with your stress. For some, basic relaxation techniques may be enough, and others may need more support. It is okay to reach out to your friends, family, or a mental health provider to manage your stress and to heal from past traumas.