

# How Managing Stress Can Be Beneficial For Your Physical And Mental Health

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ALTON - There are a multitude of reasons that people find themselves stressed in their daily life. Some of these reasons for stress are situational or they can be more general things, like family, work, school, and personal relationships. Stress can be overwhelming to endure alone, and without helpful ways of managing it, stress can create havoc in other aspects in your life. In order to start minimizing stressful components, let's address why stress is bad for you and your body.

Stress is a biochemical reaction to something that creates tension—whether that is emotional or physical. When we experience stress, our brain goes into “high alert” as it prepares our body to respond to whatever situation is at hand. In these moments, our body begins a complex process, part of which is to release hormones such as cortisol

and adrenaline, essentially preparing the body to fight, flight or freeze. While this process can be lifesaving in truly dangerous situations, experiencing this stress reaction on an ongoing basis can have detrimental consequences for the body and mind.

The responses caused by stress are normal and can be very useful. Stress helps us do well on tests or perform well at work. Stress helps us slam on the brakes when a car in front of us stops suddenly. However, healthy stress management is essential otherwise it can affect you in many different ways. Stress can cause physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral difficulties including nausea, racing thoughts, inconsistent sleep, anxiety, panic attacks and difficulty concentrating. If stress goes unaddressed it can lead to serious health issues like obesity, substance use disorder, heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. It is extremely important that you monitor the responses you are having to stress, and find ways to better manage them.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, most people around the world have been lacking consistency and stability, and this can make it more difficult to find healthy ways to manage our stress. If you are experiencing symptoms of stress, you can try using these tools to help:

- **Setting boundaries.** Create reasonable boundaries to help with self-preservation. Say “no” when you feel overwhelmed. Keep your mental health in mind, and open up conversations with family, friends, and even coworkers about what you can or can’t manage.
- **Practicing mindfulness.** Be present in your surroundings. Be aware and know what makes you happy. Do something for the sake of making you happy that has no other purpose involved. Read the novel, play the videogame, and watch the TV shows—make yourself feel comfortable and at ease.
- **Choose your environment.** Connect with people during this time of isolation! Be *intentional* with your environment. Have people around that can make you feel capable of doing anything! Encouragement is a great tool for dealing with stress.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Remember that you are a human, and there is only so much you can do. Give yourself grace and your brain a break. Understand that there are many people in the same situation.

Once you begin to eliminate some of the stressors in your life and learn to be patient with your own process, then you can begin to manage your stress in more healthy ways. Take the time to connect with others, and understand that the process of eliminating stress is not always easy. If you have tried to better manage your stress, but find you are still struggling, it may be time to reach out to a mental health professional. They can provide more tools on how to manage your stress and healthy tips for coping.

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