

How to stop unhealthy stress responses

Do you ever wish you could erase the stress from your life? Although that's not possible, there's another option: change the way your body responds to stress. The American Heart Association recommends the following strategies for dealing with stress.

Change your self-talk.

Think about some of the thoughts that pop into your head when you're stressed. There's a good chance some of these thoughts are making your stress response worse. Thoughts like "I can't do this" or "Everything is going wrong" can be replaced with positive thoughts that can calm your body and mind. Practice telling yourself, "I can handle this, one step at a time," or "Everyone makes mistakes, and I can forgive myself."

Adopt a healthy habit you enjoy.

Many people respond to stress by overeating or other unhealthy habits, such as drinking alcohol or using tobacco. Instead, try going for a walk, calling a friend, listening to your favorite music, or reading a good book or magazine. Try to do this healthy habit at least once a day for 15 minutes to keep stress levels under control.

Look into relaxation.

Relaxation is about more than just sitting down in front of the TV. True, deep relaxation involves exercises such as deep breathing, meditation, yoga, or tai chi. These can take some practice to learn how to do them, so look into community classes or one of the many meditation apps available.

When you change your body's stress response, you'll feel better and may possibly avoid some or all of the health problems stress can cause.

