1. What Is Stress?

Stress is the way you react to any change (good, bad, real, or even imagined).

2. Good Health Habits

Follow a balanced diet. Very fad diets.

3. Prevent Burnout

You can get burnout from work or anything that takes more energy than you can give. Burnout is a state of mind, it builds over time. The saying, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” applies to burnout.

4. Breathing Exercises

Breathing exercises must relax in 4 ways.

a. They tense and relax muscles. Taking a deep breath tends muscles useful for breathing. A deep exhale relieves them.

b. They allow more oxygen to be absorbed. This assists the body’s response to stress. It also helps the body recover from stress.

c. They increase the oxygen, which allows the heart to slow down. This helps calm you.

d. They give you the chance to pause and plan your response to something that causes stress.

Tips to Help Prevent Burnout

a. Set career and personal goals that can be achieved.

b. Attempt to do well, but don’t try to be perfect.

c. Follow good health habits. (See topic 2.)

d. Try not to spread yourself too thin. Delegate tasks at work and at home to lessen your load. Learn to say, “No.”

e. Prioritize what you need to get done in a day, a week, etc.

f. Reduce long work or study hours, if you can. The more you do and the less you rest, the more likely burnout will occur.

g. If you feel overwhelmed with your workload, discuss this with your boss.

h. Discuss feelings and problems you have with your family, friends, and coworkers. Helping to ease feelings of frustration that feed burnout. If things don’t get better, get help.

i. Take regular 5 to 10 minute meditation breaks. Take mental breaks from stressful situations, too. Learn to meditate and to practice relaxation techniques. (See “Relaxation Exercises,” topic 5.)

j. Make time for leisure activities that you enjoy. Do these daily or at least every week.

k. Plan one or more vacations during the year. Don’t work on your vacation.

Tips: Eat Healthy

a. Eat at regular times. Don’t skip meals. If you snack, choose healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, almonds, walnuts, and whole-grain cereals.

b. Avoid “junk foods” — onions high in fat, and sugar.

Uncle Sam can say it.

5. Relaxation Exercises

Relaxation Response Steps

a. Choose a quiet place that is free of distraction. Turn off the telephone. Ask for privacy.

b. Sit in a comfortable position so there is no extra tension in your muscles. You can drop a bit as you choose to relax. Your feet should touch the floor. Do not lie down. You may fall asleep.

c. Close your eyes gently. Don’t squeeze them closed. Expect to feel very relaxed.

d. Repeat word like “one” or any other one-syllable word. Say it silently and over for 15 minutes. Them is no right or wrong way to do this. You can repeat the word quickly or slowly. Do whatever comes naturally.

e. When thoughts distract you, ignore them. Return to the relaxation phrase.” These other thoughts are supposed to occur. Let them go. This shows the release of stress.
1. What Is Stress?

Stress is the way you react to any change (good, bad, real, or even imagined).

2. Good Health Habits


3. Prevent Burnout

You can get burnout from work or anything that takes more energy than you can give. Burnout is not a one-time event. It builds up over time. The saying, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” applies to burnout.

4. Breathing Exercises

Breathing exercises promote relaxation in 4 ways.

- They tense and relax muscles. Taking a deep breath tenses muscles used for breathing. A deep exhale relaxes them.
- They allow more oxygen to be absorbed. This assists the body’s response to stress. It also helps the body recover from stress.
- They increase the amount of oxygen, which allows the heart to slow down. This helps calm you.
- They give you the chance to pause and plan your response to something that causes stress.

5. Relaxation Exercises

Relaxation Response Steps

1. Choose a quiet place that is free of distraction. Turn off the telephone. Ask for privacy.
2. Sit in a comfortable position so there is no extra tension in your muscles. You can sit on a bit as you choose to relax. Your feet should touch the floor. Do not lie down. You may fall asleep.
3. Close your eyes gently. Don’t squeeze them closed. Expect to feel very relaxed.
4. Repeat the sound like “om” or any other one syllable word. Say it slowly and over for 15 minutes. There is no right or way to do this. You can repeat the sound quickly or slowly. Do whatever comes naturally.
5. When thoughts distract you, ignore them. Return to the breathing. These other thoughts are supposed to occur. Let them go. This shows the release of stress.
Success Over Stress
What You Need To Know

1. What Is Stress?
Stress is the way you react to change (good, bad, real, or even imagined).

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You can get burnout from work or anything that takes more energy than you can give. Burnout is not a one-time event. It builds over time. The saying, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”, applies to burnout.

4. Breathing Exercises
Breathing exercises must relax you in 4 ways.

Eat Healthy

- Eat at regular times. Don’t skip meals. If you snack, choose healthy foods, such as fruits and vegetables, dry whole-grain snacks, and low-fat dairy products.
- Avoid “junk foods” — ones high in fat, sugar, and salt.
- Limit caffeine. It can cause anxiety.
- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.
- This is up to one drink a day for men and 1 drink a day for women and persons 65 and older. One drink is 12 oz. of regular beer, 4 to 5 oz. of wine, or 1 to 1-1/2 oz. of 80-proof whiskey, gin, etc.
- Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water each day.

Stress can make you more productive. It can also help you respond to threats to your safety, such as being near a fire.

High levels of stress, though, can make you less productive. When left unchecked, stress can lead to health problems. These include:
- Heartburn
- Back or neck pain
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- A lowing of the body’s immune system

In fact, the American Academy of Family Physicians states that about two-thirds of all visits to the family doctor are stress-related.

Tips:
- Get enough sleep and rest.
- Do regular exercise. This is good for both your physical and mental health.
- Balance work and play. Plan some time for hobbies and recreation. These relax your mind and are a good break from your worries.

Tips to Help Prevent Burnout
- Set career and personal goals that can be achieved.
- Attempt to do well, but don’t try to be perfect.
- Follow good health habits. (See topic 2.)
- Try not to stress yourself too thin. Delegate tasks at work and at home to lessen your load. Learn to say, “No.”
- Prioritize what you need to get done in a day, a week, etc.
- Reduce long work or study hours, if you can. The more you do and the less you rest, the more likely burnout will occur.
- If you feel overwhelmed with your workload, discuss this with your boss.
- Discuss feelings and problems you are having with your family, friends, and coworkers. Contacting helps to ease feelings of frustration that feed burnout. If things don’t get better, get help.
- Take regular 5 to 10 minute breaks. Take mental breaks from stressful situations, too. Learn to medicate and to practice relaxation techniques. (See topic 6.)
- Make time for leisure activities that you enjoy. Do these daily or at least every week.
- Plan one or more vacations during the year. Don’t work on your vacation.
- Take a breath slowly and deeply through your nose. Allow your abdomen to expand pushing up your other hand. After your abdomen is full of air, allow it to relax.
- Let your mind be free. The next step is to take a deep breath in a breath slowly and deeply through your nose. Allow your abdomen to expand pushing up your other hand. After your abdomen is full of air, allow it to relax.
- Hold the air for 3 seconds.
- Pace your lips and exhale through your mouth. Make a hissing, whistling sound.
- Keep talking long, slow, deep inhalations through your nose and let out long, slow exhalations through your mouth.
- Focus on the sound and feeling of deep breathing. Continue for 3 to 5 minutes.

5. Relaxation Exercises 

Deep Natural Breathing Steps

1. Sit in a chair, arms on your sides, legs uncrossed.
2. Keep your eyes open in your muscle.
3. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen.
4. Take a breath slowly and deeply through your nose. Allow your abdomen to expand and push up your other hand. Your abdomen is full of air. Add the next step is to take a deep breath in slowly through your nose. Allow your abdomen to expand pushing up your other hand. After your abdomen is full of air, allow it to relax.
5. Hold the air for 3-seconds.
6. Purse your lips and exhale through your mouth. Make a hissing, whistling sound.
7. Keep talking long, slow, deep inhalations through your nose and let out long, slow exhalations through your mouth.
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4. Keep talking long, slow, deep inhalations through your nose and let out long, slow exhalations through your mouth.
5. Focus on the sound and feeling of deep breathing. Continue for 3 to 5 minutes.
Progressive Relaxation Steps

1. Sit in a chair and close your eyes. Rest your forearms on the sides of the chair. Place your palms downward.
2. Take a few slow, deep breaths.
3. Focus on any muscle tension you feel, but do nothing about it.
4. “Tense” and tighten a muscle group (as listed below) for 5 seconds. Then tell yourself to “relax” and let the tension dissipate for 30 seconds. Do this for each body part.
5. Bend both arms at the elbows and raise. Make a fist with each hand. Relax.
6. Bend your head back against a soft surface. - Tighten your abdomen briefly.
7. Lift and extend your lower legs. Relax.
8. Squinch your eyes. Relax.
9. Tuck your chin against your chest. Relax. Note: Don’t hold your breath during the tensing phase. Don’t tighten any body region that is weak or injured.
10. Keep breathing slowly and deeply.
11. Focus on the overall feeling of relaxation. Let your body go limp. Let your head and shoulders drop forward.
12. Imagine that you feel an energizing warmth flowing through your body.
13. Slowly open your eyes. Note how refreshed you feel.

There are also biofeedback machines for home use. One example is a relaxometer. It is the size of a transistor radio. You attach two small electrodes to the pulse of your hand. Sounds are relayed through earphones to gauge your relaxation level.

Taking your own pulse is also a self-biofeedback method. Feel your pulse at your wrist or on the side of your neck. Count how many times you feel your pulse beat in 10 seconds. Multiply that number by 6. This is your estimate pulse rate. Take your pulse before and after each relaxation technique. Your pulse rate should be lower after you do relaxation exercises.

Thought Stopping
Use this when you are obsessed with negative thoughts. If work problems dominate your thoughts, picture an “off-duty” sign for the stop sign.
1. Isolate the stressful thought.
2. Close your eyes. Briefly focus on the stressful thought.
3. Count to three.
4. Shout “Stop!” (Or if you are in earshot, picture a stop sign, flashing red light, or the word “Stop” in bold letters.)
5. Hold your breath 8–10 seconds, repeat steps 2 to 4.
6. Go back to your normal activity. You should feel better.

“Rehearse” for Stressful Events
Stage actors rehearse their lines before a play. You can rehearse how you want to handle events, etc. that cause stress for you. Doing this can help you relax when the event or situation actually takes place. Follow these steps:
1. Close your eyes and unwind. Release all the tensions in your muscles.
2. For a minute or two, focus on relaxing.
3. After 30–60 seconds or so, think that you are really taking part in the event that causes stress for you.
4. Focus again on feeling relaxed.
5. Picture the event once again. Picture as many details as you can. What is the setting? What are you wearing? Who else is there?
6. Imagine feeling calm as you handle the stressful-event with success.
7. Imagine a positive outcome. See your boss tell you that you did a good job, etc.

Biofeedback Biofeedback uses special machines to monitor stress responses, such as heart rate, sweating, and labored breathing. While hooked up to biofeedback devices, you learn to control your body’s automatic responses to stress. Then you can do the same thing without the machines.

6. Biofeedback

7. Thought Control Techniques

8. Other Tips to Manage Stress

9. Reasons to Call Your Doctor or Provider

For any of the problems listed below, call your doctor or health care provider. You will get advice on what to do.

- Anxiety
- Nervousness
- Crying spells
- Confusion about how to handle your problems
- You abuse alcohol and/or drugs (illegally or prescribed)
- You have been a part of a traumatic event in the past (e.g., armed combat, airplane crash, rape, or assault) and you now have any of these problems:
  - Flashbacks (you relive the stressful event)

What to Do About These Conditions

- Painful memories
- Nightmares
- Feeling startled and easily startled
- Feeling emotionally numb and detached from others and the outside world
- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Anxiety and/or depression
- You suffer from a medical illness that you are unable to cope with or that leads you to neglect proper treatment
- You withdraw from friends, relatives, and coworkers and/or yell at them even when you are only slightly annoyed.

For More Information, Contact: National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
800.222.4636 • www.cdc.gov/niosh

Tips

- Count to ten when you’re so upset you want to scream. It helps you time so you can think about what’s bothering you. This helps to calm you significantly.
- Own a pet. Studies show that having a pet, such as a dog or cat, appears to cut down the effects of stress on health.
- Have a cup of warm herbal tea. Sit slowly and savor its soothing warmth and aroma.
- Change things around you to get rid of or minimize exposure to things that cause stress.
- Budget your time. Make a “to do” list. Rank order daily tasks. Don’t commit to doing too much.
- View changes as positive challenges.
- Sometimes a problem is out of control. When this happens, accept it until changes can be made.
- Talk out problems. Talk with a friend, relative, or member of the clergy. Someone else can help you see a problem from another point of view.
- When you feel you are getting nowhere with a problem, escape for a little while. Take a walk, read a book, visit a museum, or take a drive. Leaving a situation for a short time helps you develop new attitudes.

More Tips

- Laugh a lot. Laughing releases tension. It’s hard to feel upset in the middle of a belly laugh.
- Take a shower or bath with warm water. This will soothe and calm your nerves and muscles.
- Listen to soothing music in a quiet, calm place. Focus on the calmness of the music. When the music ends, you should feel more relaxed.
- Reward yourself with things that make you feel good. Add to your stamp collection. Buy flowers. Picnic in the park. Give yourself some “me” time.
- Help others. This takes the focus off of you and puts it on the needs of others.
- Have a good cry. Tears can help cleanse the body of substances that form under stress. Tears also release a natural pain-relieving substance from the brain.

For More Information, Contact:


Anxiety

- Nightmares
- Crying spells
- Confusion about how to handle your problems
- You abuse alcohol and/or drugs (illegally or prescribed)
- You have been a part of a traumatic event in the past (e.g., armed combat, airplane crash, rape, or assault) and you now have any of these problems:
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Biofeedback uses special machines to monitor stress responses, such as heart rate, sweating, etc. While hooked up to biofeedback devices, you learn to control your body's automatic responses to stress. Then you learn to do the same thing without the machines.

Biofeedback is taught at centers that specialize in this technique.

Progressive Relaxation Steps

1. Sit in a chair and close your eyes. Rest your forearms on the sides of the chair. Place your palms downward.
2. Take a few slow, deep breaths.
3. Focus on any muscle tension you feel, but do nothing about it.
4. "Tense" and tighten a muscle group (as listed below) for 5 seconds. Then tell yourself to "relax" and let the tension dissolve for 30 seconds. Do this for each body part.
   - Bend both arms at the elbows and wrists.
   - Make a fist with each hand. Relax until the tightness is felt.
   - Tuck your chin against your chest. Relax.
   - Tighten your abdomen. Relax.
   - Lift and extend your lower legs. Relax.
   - Squint your eyes. Relax.
   - Tuck your chin against your chest. Relax.
   - Don't hold your breath during the tensing phase. Don't tighten any body region that is weak or injured.
5. Keep breathing slowly and deeply.
6. Focus on the overall feeling of relaxation. Let your body go limp.
   - Let your head and shoulders drop forward.
7. Imagine that you feel an energizing warmth flowing through your body.
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Your pulse rate should be lower after you do relaxation exercises.

Thought Stopping

Use this when you are obsessed with negative thoughts. If work problems dominate your thoughts, picture an "off-duty" sign for the stress stop sign.

1. Isolate the stressful thought.
2. Close your eyes. Briefly focus on the stressful thought.
3. Count to three.
4. Shout "Stop!" (Or, if others are in earshot, picture a stop sign, flashing red light, or the word "Stop" in bold letters.)
5. Count three to five return, repeat steps 2 to 4.
6. Go back to your normal activities and think about other things.

More Tips

- Laugh a lot. Laughter releases tension. It’s hard to feel stressed in the middle of a belly laugh.
- Take a shower or bath with warm water. This will soothe and calm your nerves and muscles.
- Listen to soothing music in a quiet, calm place. Focus on the calmness of the music. When the music ends, you should feel more relaxed.
- Help others. This takes the focus of you and puts it on the needs of others.
- Have a good cry. Tears can help cleanse the body of substances that form under stress. Tears also release a natural pain-relieving substance from the brain.

For any of the problems listed below, call your doctor or health care provider. You will get advice on what to do.

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- Nervousness
- Crying spells
- Confusion about how to handle your problems
- You abuse alcohol and/or drugs (illegal or prescription)
- You have been a part of a traumatic event in the past (e.g., armed combat, airplane crash, rape, or assault) and you now have any of these problems:
  - Flashbacks (you relive the stressful event)
  - Nightmares
  - Feeling startled and/or cranky
  - Feeling "emotionally numb" and/or detached from others and the outside world
  - Trouble falling asleep and/or staying asleep
  - Anxiety and/or depression
- You suffer from a medical illness that you are unable to cope with that or leads you to neglect proper treatment.
- You withdraw from friends, relatives, and coworkers and/or yell at them even when you are only slightly annoyed.

Tips

- Count to ten when you’re so upset you want to scream. It helps you time so you can think about what’s bothering you. This helps to calm your thoughts and focus on the present.
- Own a pet. Studies show that having a pet, such as a dog or cat, appears to cut down the effects of stress on your health.
- Have a cup of herbal tea. Sit slowly and quietly enjoy the warmth and aroma.
- Change things around you to get rid of or manage your exposure to things that cause stress.
- Budget your time. Make a “to do” list. Rank order daily tasks. Don’t commit to doing too much.
- View changes as positive challenges.
- Sometimes a problem is out of control. When this happens, accept it until changes can be made.
- Talk out troubles. Talk with a friend, relative, or member of the clergy. Someone else can help you see a problem from another point of view.
- When you feel you are getting nowhere with a problem, escape for a little while. Take a walk, read a book, visit a museum, or take a drive. Leaving a situation for a short time helps you develop new attitudes.

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7. Thought Control Techniques
Focus: Use this when you are obsessed with negative thoughts. If work problems dominate your thoughts, picture an “off-duty” sign for the stop sign.
1. Isolate the stressful thought.
2. Close your eyes. Briefly focus on the stressful thought.
3. Count to three.
4. Shout “Stop!” (Or, if you are in a car, picture a stop sign, flashing the red light, or the word “Stop!” in bold letters.)
5. Take four light breaths, repeat steps 2 to 4.
6. “Rehearse” for Stressful Events
Stage actors rehearse their lines before a play. You can rehearse how you want to feel during events, etc. that cause stress for you. Doing this can help you relax when the situation actually really takes place. Follow these steps:
1. Close your eyes and unwind. Release all the tension in your muscles.
2. For a minute or two, focus on relaxed feelings.
3. After the minute or two, think that you are really taking part in the event that causes stress for you.
4. Focus again on feeling relaxed.
5. Picture the event once again. Picture as many details as you can. What is the setting? What are you wearing? Who is else there?
6. Imagine feeling calm as you handle the stressful event with success.
7. Imagine a positive outcome. See your boss tell you that you did a good job, etc.

8. Other Tips to Manage Stress
- Laugh a lot. Laughter relieves tension. It’s hard to feel sad in the middle of a belly laugh.
- Take a shower or bath with warm water. This will soothe and calm your nerves and muscles.
- Listen to soothing music in a quiet, calm place. Focus on the calmer of the music. When the music ends, you should feel even relaxed.
- Help others. This takes the focus off you and puts it on the needs of others.
- Have a good cry. Crying can bring the body to the natural state that follows stress release.
- Sometimes a problem is out of control. When this happens, accept it until changes can be made.
- Talk out troubles. Talk with a friend, relative, or member of the clergy. Someone else can help you see a problem from another point of view.
- When you feel you are getting nowhere with a problem, escape for a little while. Take a walk, read a book, visit a museum, or take a drive. Leaning a situation for a short time helps you develop new attitudes.

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- You abuse alcohol and/or drugs (illegal or prescription) to deal with stress
- You have been a part of a traumatic event in the past (e.g., combat, assault, crime scene, rape, or “assaulted” when you are not even a victim of the stressful event)
- Feelings easily startled and/or cranky

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**Progressive Relaxation Steps**
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2. Take a few slow, deep breaths.
3. Focus on any muscle tension you feel, but do nothing about it.
4. “Tense” and tighten a muscle group (as listed below) for 5 seconds. Then tell yourself “relax” and let the tension dissolve for 30 seconds. Do this for each body part.
   - Bend both arms at the elbows and wrists. Make a fist with each hand. Relax. Exhale. Tighten your abdomen. Relax.
   - Lift and extend your lower leg. Relax. Tighten your lower leg. Relax.
   - Squinch your eyes. Relax.
   - Tuck your chin against your chest. Relax. Hold don’t hold your breath during the tensing phase. Do not tighten any body region that is weak or injured.
5. Keep breathing slowly and deeply.
6. Focus on the overall feeling of relaxation. Let your body go limp. Let your head and shoulders drop forward.
7. Imagine that you feel an energizing warmth flowing through your body.
8. Slowly open your eyes. Note how refreshed you feel.