

WAYS TO KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE AND MANAGE STRESS



➔ Why?



Stress happens when you perceive you don't have the resources to meet

the perceived demands on your life. Your interpretation of each situation is key to how your body reacts. Eating right, regular exercise and relaxation techniques can help you keep things in perspective and manage stress.



How Does Stress Affect Your Body?



When you are stressed, your body responds as though you are in danger. It makes

hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster, and give you a burst of energy. This is called the fight-or-flight stress response. This occurs with both physical and emotional threats. It occurs with perceived danger, whether that danger is real or not.



What can You do to Decrease Stress?

A relaxation response puts your body at rest, and counteracts many symptoms of the fight-or-flight response. Relaxation techniques are used to trigger this response.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

It's important to recognize your own triggers and warning signs. Use relaxation techniques prior to or at the outset of perceived stress, rather than waiting until stress levels are very high. Also, relaxation takes practice! The more you use the techniques, the faster your body will respond with the relaxation response. Relaxation techniques are most effective when used regularly.

Breathing

Slow, deep breathing is a simple but effective form of relaxation. It can be used along with other relaxation techniques as well. When taking slow, deep breaths, our bodies are better able to exchange carbon dioxide for oxygen, which results in a slower heart rate, lower blood pressure, and, consequently, a feeling of relaxation.

- Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. Keep your shoulders relaxed. Your abdomen should expand, and your chest should rise very little.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth. As you blow air out, purse your lips slightly, but keep your jaw relaxed. You may hear a soft "whooshing" sound as you exhale.
- Repeat this breathing exercise for several minutes.

In some individuals, deep breathing may actually increase anxiety. If you experience this, stop the breathing exercise and seek medical assistance as needed.

STRESS WELL STEPS TO SUCCESS



Guided Imagery

Guided imagery uses the power of the mind to evoke positive emotions. It works, quite simply, by imagining a relaxing scene in great detail. It utilizes all of your senses — vision, taste, sound, smell, and touch — to build images in the mind that your body feels are as real as external events.

Guided imagery can actually stimulate changes in heart rate, blood pressure and respiratory patterns, because of the deep, physical mind-body connection.

To practice imagery, imagine yourself in any setting that helps you feel calm. As you imagine your scene, try to involve all of your senses. What does it look like? How does it feel? What special scents are involved? Do you hear the roar of a fire, the splash of a waterfall, or the sounds of birds chirping? Make your vision so real you can even taste it!

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) works by increasing awareness of the tension that occurs during stress, and then consciously releasing that tension. This process creates a feeling of relaxation—both physically and emotionally.

To practice PMR, tense up a group of muscles, so that they're tightly contracted. Hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds, and then relax the muscles normally. Then, consciously relax your muscles even more. This process of moving from intense tension to deep muscular relaxation helps interrupt your body's fight-or-flight response when you're experiencing fear or stress.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation is a systematic method of focusing your attention. Mindfulness has been shown to improve both mental and physical health, including stress relief, chronic pain, and blood pressure.

- Choose a mental device to help you focus. Silently repeat a word, sound, prayer, or phrase (such as "one," "peace," "Om," or "breathing in calm"). You may close your eyes if you like or focus your gaze on an object.
- Disregard distracting thoughts or concerns about how well you're doing. Any time your attention drifts, simply say, "Oh, well" to yourself and return to silently repeating your focus word or phrase.



**STRESS
WELL**



Did You Know?

Drinking alcohol may seem to provide some positive relief, but studies show alcohol actually increases the stress response.

Source: [Very Well Fit](#), [Harvard Health](#)

Contact your health & wellness center for more information
and to discuss your individual stress well habits today!