



## Stress and Resilience



In simple terms, stress is a physical and/or psychological response to a particular problem or situation. Resilience is the ability to cope with it.

Let's first look at stress, what it can do to you, and why effective stress management is so important.

While a small amount of stress can almost be considered an incentive or a catalyst that helps you overcome a problem, too much stress can negatively impact both your physical and emotional well-being. It can make it difficult to properly function in your daily life.

Exactly how to manage stress is unique and specific to each individual, but the end goal remains fairly uniform; a balanced, fulfilling life that includes time and energy for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun.

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You need to find the technique that works best for you, but here are some useful suggestions as you start your journey toward effective stress management.

**Identify the source** – what is it that causes your stress? It may be an obvious thing like a divorce, trouble at work, financial difficulties. But your own thoughts, feeling, and reactions to the situation may also be a contributing factor.

#### **Practice the 4 A's of stress management**

- **Avoid unnecessary stress.** A surprising number of stressors in your life can be easily eliminated.
- **Alter the situation.** If a situation can't be avoided, perhaps it can be altered somewhat to make it less stressful.
- **Adapt to the stressor.** If you can't alter the situation, perhaps it's time to change your expectations or attitude.
- **Accept what you can't change.** If you can avoid, alter, or adapt to a situation, sometimes acceptance is the most logical approach.

**Get physical** – physical activity can be a major stress reliever. The endorphins released by exercise may improve your mood, and the activity itself may act as a distraction from your concerns.

**Make contact** – regular contact with trusted friends, family, or workmates is a natural stress reliever that can counteract the body's "fight or flight" response to stressful situations.

**Get some "me" time** – it's easy to get so caught up in a busy lifestyle that you forget to take care of your own needs. Look at a little fun and relaxation as a necessity, not a luxury.

**Manage your time better** – poor time management can be a major cause of stress. Don't over-commit yourself. Prioritize your daily tasks, and break the larger projects into smaller, more manageable steps.

**Maintain a healthy lifestyle** – taking good care of yourself is vital to effective stress management. Make sure you eat well...reduce your caffeine and sugar intake...avoid cigarettes, alcohol, and drugs...and get plenty of sleep.

**Relieve stress in the moment** – sometimes, you find yourself in situations where you need a burst of instant stress relief. The fastest way to reduce stress is by taking a deep breath and a slow exhale.

Why do certain individuals seem better able to cope with stressful times than others? It may be because they have developed a higher level of resilience. The more resilient you are, the better you may be able to cope with setbacks, function in difficult situations, and tolerate the stress and anxiety that sometimes accompany daily life.

Every time you survive a hardship, overcome an obstacle, or cope with a challenge, you are building your resilience.

Not only will building resilience help you to cope with stress, it also has many other potential benefits. It can also help you to:

- Stay focused and productive.
- Feel less afraid of new experiences.
- Manage and tolerate strong emotions outside your comfort zone..
- Strengthen your relationships and improve your communication skills, even in pressure situations.
- Improve your self-esteem.
- Be confident you'll eventually find a solution to a problem, even when one isn't immediately apparent.

Stress is an unavoidable part of modern life. If left unchecked, stress can limit your ability to truly enjoy life.

But you don't need to live with crippling stress. If you build your resilience and learn effective stress management techniques, you can face the pressures of life with confidence, optimism, and control.