

# How Older Adults Can Manage Stress



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**You might find it helpful to  
keep important information handy.**

Write it below.

**Primary health-care provider**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

**Other health-care providers**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

**Health plan**

Plan name \_\_\_\_\_

ID number \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

**Pharmacy**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

**An emergency contact**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

**Other important numbers**

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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## Are you feeling stressed?

If so, this handbook is for you. This handbook can help older adults understand stress, its causes and how to keep it under control.

### Older adults may have special stressors.

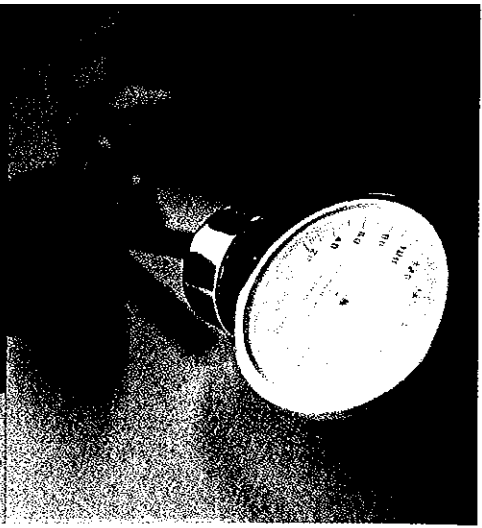
Life changes, such as retirement, a new home or a shift in responsibilities, can be a big source of stress.

This handbook can help you manage stress by helping you learn to recognize and respond to it.

**Learn how you can start managing stress today!**

# What is stress?

It's the kind of tension you feel when you're faced with a new, unpleasant or threatening situation.



## **Stress is a physical reaction to a demand or danger.**

When your body is under stress:

- muscles tighten
- blood pressure rises
- heart rate and breathing speed up
- extra adrenaline rushes through your system to give you the strength you need to deal with the danger or to run away.

This set of reactions is often called the “fight-or-flight” response. It’s a natural survival response that helps your body fight off danger or flee from it.

## **Everyone feels stress sometimes.**

Stress is a fact of life. Some stress can be good for you. It helps inspire you to meet life’s challenges.

## **But too much stress is not healthy.**

It can harm your physical and mental well-being. Too much stress can also damage relationships with friends, family and caregivers.

## **The good news is, you can learn to manage stress!**

By making even small changes to your daily routine, you can help lower stress and improve your overall health.

You can also learn how to better respond to things that cause you stress and even how to avoid them (when appropriate).

**Learn how to manage stress—and keep stress from managing you!**



# It's important to take stress seriously.

Remember, too much stress can affect your health and well-being.



## Stress can affect you physically.

When you don't take steps to relax, tension can build inside your body. Over time, this built-up tension can affect your health in many ways. For example, too much stress can contribute to:

- allergies
- muscle tension
- upset stomach or heartburn
- sore throats, sinus infections, colds and flu
- migraine or tension headaches
- sleep problems
- high blood pressure
- angina (chest pain)
- heart disease and heart attacks
- stroke (brain attack).

## Stress can affect you mentally.

Stress can affect how you think and feel. It can affect:

- memory
- concentration
- problem-solving skills.

Over time, too much stress can lead to depression, a serious mental illness.

Some people may seek relief from stress by abusing alcohol and other drugs. But drugs do not help relieve stress—they are more likely to make problems worse (see page 21).

## Stress can affect the way you feel.

This includes the way you feel about:

- yourself—stress can lead to low self-esteem and lack of self-worth
- other people—stress can make it harder to relate to people in the way you usually would (you may have less patience with some people, or allow others to take advantage of you)
- the world—stress can drain your energy and make you less willing to participate in activities and events around you.

**Stress doesn't have to take control of your life. Learn how you can manage stress.**

# What causes stress?

Different things cause stress in different people. Common causes of stress in older adults include:



## Aging

Getting older brings many changes in lifestyle, relationships and finances. You may no longer be able to do things you used to do. There are many worries that come with getting older—but there are also many rewards. By learning to manage stress, you can enjoy the benefits of getting older.

## Retirement

A change in any routine, whether positive or negative, can lead to stress. For people who have worked all their lives, retirement can be a big adjustment. People may feel lonely without seeing co-workers every day. Or they may feel worried about finances or how relationships will change. They may also worry about what they'll do with all their new free time.

## A change in living arrangements

Many older adults change living arrangements for different reasons, such as moving to a:

- smaller home
- place that offers assisted living
- nursing home.

Adjusting to a new home can bring worries and concerns that contribute to stress.

## Illness

Dealing with any illness—whether it is yours or a loved one's—can be stressful. Illness can affect mobility, comfort, hearing, eyesight and the ability to do daily activities.

## Loss of independence

Financial or health-related circumstances may lead people to be less independent than they used to be. This can be very frustrating and stressful.

## Death of a spouse or loved one

Grief over losing a loved one can be hard to work through. Concerns about how one can go on, fear of loneliness or isolation, and other worries can be a large source of stress.

## Divorce

A divorce is a major life change. Dealing with legal issues and adjusting to a new life are major stressors.





### **Caring for a loved one**

Taking care of a loved one can be physically and emotionally draining. Worrying about the person's health, quality of care and other factors contributes to stress.

### **Lack of social support**

Changes in relationships due to a move or death of a friend can lead to feelings of isolation and helplessness.

### **Mobility issues**

Some older adults may have trouble driving or moving around the way they once did.

### **Regret**

Looking back on life accomplishments and wishing for a different outcome can cause anxiety and stress.

### **Concern about personal safety**

Living alone or in a new environment can bring safety concerns.

### **Financial concerns**

Health costs, retirement, living on a fixed income or a change in living arrangements can lead to worries about money. Concerns about being a victim of fraud can also be stressful.

### **Other common sources of stress**

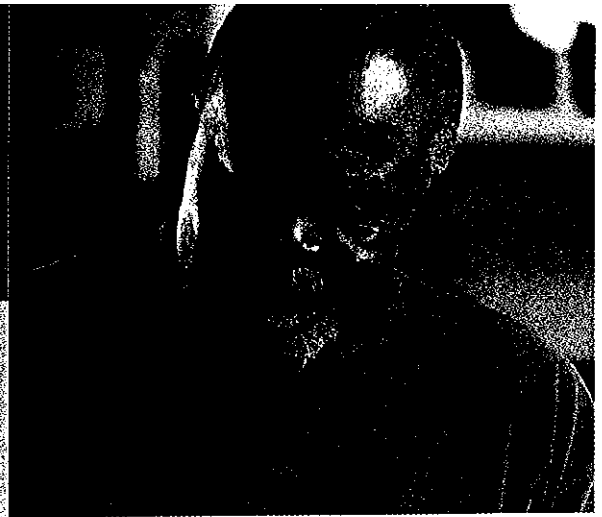
include:

- family conflict
- domestic violence
- major injury
- changing jobs or job responsibilities
- a new marriage
- car crashes
- change in the health of a family member or friend
- unexpected responsibilities, such as caring for a grandchild.



# What are the signs of stress?

Signs of stress vary from person to person. Check any signs you recognize. Use the space on page 9 to add any signs you experience that are not listed.



## Physical symptoms

- nervousness
- nail biting
- cold hands and feet
- clammy hands
- sweating
- muscle tension
- back pain
- lack of energy
- headaches
- high blood pressure
- racing heart
- breathlessness
- chest pain
- change in appetite
- upset stomach
- constipation
- diarrhea
- dizziness
- sexual problems
- trouble sleeping

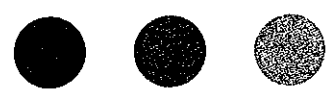
## Emotional symptoms

- confusion
- feeling depressed
- mood swings
- anger
- anxiety
- denial of a problem
- difficulty making decisions
- loneliness
- feeling powerless
- feeling rejected
- feeling trapped
- being easily upset
- worrying frequently

Note: See your health-care provider if symptoms are severe or persistent. Some of the symptoms described on pages 8-9 may have causes other than stress.







### Behavioral symptoms

- increased use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- neglecting appearance
- arguing with loved ones or friends
- avoiding tasks and responsibilities
- difficulty concentrating
- crying easily
- fidgeting
- being late to work
- overeating or undereating
- snapping at people
- watching more TV
- withdrawing from family and friends

### Other symptoms I experience when I'm feeling stressed:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions and notes

Write any questions you have about your symptoms and share them with your health-care provider. You may also want to write down your health-care provider's advice.

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# When do you feel stress?

Keep a stress journal for one week to help you see what you were doing or what was happening when you felt signs of stress. Understanding what causes your stress can help you think about how to manage these situations.

## Sunday

Signs of stress I felt today:

What happened to trigger these feelings?

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## Monday

Signs of stress I felt today:

What happened to trigger these feelings?

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## Tuesday

Signs of stress I felt today:

What happened to trigger these feelings?

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## Wednesday

Signs of stress I felt today:

What happened to trigger these feelings?

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### Thursday

Signs of stress I felt today:

What happened to trigger these feelings?

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### Friday

Signs of stress I felt today:

What happened to trigger these feelings?

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### Saturday

Signs of stress I felt today:

What happened to trigger these feelings?

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### Additional notes

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# You can learn how to manage stress.

## Accept the things you can't change or control.

When you can't change a situation, it's best to learn how to accept it. When possible, try to find the positive in every situation. For example, if a certain relative causes you stress when visiting family, focus on how much you enjoy seeing the rest of your family.

## Take time for yourself.

It's important to do something "just for you" every day. This can be something as simple as taking the time to read, knit, go for a walk or listen to music. Doing something you enjoy every day can help you lower stress. For ideas, see pages 28-29.

## Keep a journal.

Writing about feelings can help you make sense of them—and explore ways you might improve your life. A journal is also a great place to record memories and your dreams for yourself and your loved ones.

## Take control of things that you can change.

Instead of feeling stressed about something you can control, take action to change the situation. For example, if you've been feeling stressed about losing touch with a friend, don't wait for your friend to call you. Call your friend or send a card to let him or her know you care.

## Share feelings with friends and loved ones.

Keeping feelings bottled up can make them even more intense. Share your hopes, fears and frustrations with loved ones. They can help you find ways to address things that cause stress in your life.

## Learn to say no.

Do not commit to doing things you don't want or have to do. It's OK! Your health and well-being are important, too.

## Stay committed to managing stress!

Almost all stress-reducing activities have immediate benefits. But you'll also feel these benefits over the long term if you stick with your stress management plan.



# Make a plan.

Review what you wrote in your stress journal on pages 10-11. Now think about how you could better respond to the things that are causing you stress.



My stressors	My past reaction	How I could manage this stressor
<i>I worry about falling.</i>	<i>I didn't go out.</i>	<i>I could ask a friend to assist me, or ask my health-care provider for advice on preventing falls.</i>
<i>I worry about not seeing my grandchildren.</i>	<i>I got angry at my son and daughter for not visiting me.</i>	<i>I could calmly explain why it's important to me to spend time with my grandchildren.</i>
<i>I worry when my spouse spends money.</i>	<i>I got very overwhelmed and snapped at my spouse.</i>	<i>My spouse and I could work on a budget so that we know exactly how much we have to spend each month.</i>

# Learn to recognize negative feelings.

They are a major source of stress!



## Feeling negative about yourself or your situation can add to stress.

The way we talk to ourselves can affect how we feel about ourselves and others.

Negative self-talk happens when we criticize ourselves. For example, you might think "I'm too out of shape to play with my granddaughter." Too much negative self-talk can turn minor "faults" or problems into big ones. Negative self-talk can lead to low self-esteem and can raise stress.

How we talk to ourselves affects how we respond to stress—positively or negatively.

## Replace negative thoughts with positive ones.

Each time you catch yourself having a negative thought, stop. Replace the thought with a positive statement about yourself instead.

For example:

- Instead of thinking, "I'm so tired all the time, I can't do anything," try thinking, "Even though I get tired more easily, there are lots of things I can do."
- Instead of thinking, "I don't have anyone to talk to," think, "I should look in my address book and see which friends I haven't been in touch with for a while and give them a call. I'm sure my friends would be happy to hear from me."

## If you keep having negative feelings about yourself or others, seek help.

Share your feelings with loved ones, or seek help from a health-care provider. (See sources of help on page 30.)

Friends I can talk to:

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Lasting negative feelings could be a sign of something more serious than stress, such as depression. Talk with your health-care provider right away if negative feelings are severe or long lasting.



# Change the negative to positive!

Use the space below to practice replacing any negative thoughts you've had with positive ones.



Negative thought:	Positive thought:
<i>I'm always forgetting things.</i>	<i>Sometimes I forget things, but it's not a big deal. If I make lists, I'll be fine.</i>
<i>No one needs me anymore.</i>	<i>My family may be busy, but they love me and look to me for guidance and emotional support.</i>

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# Take care of your overall health.

Follow your health-care provider's advice about:



## Health-care appointments

Have regular checkups and screenings as recommended. Talk to your health-care provider about stress and how it affects you.

If you have any health conditions that are causing you added stress, such as diabetes or osteoporosis, discuss these as well. Your health-care provider may have suggestions for ways to help you feel more comfortable—and confident—about managing your medications and following your treatment plan.

## Diet and exercise

Eating well and staying physically active can help you improve your overall health as well as help you feel good about yourself! It's never too late to start an exercise program. (See pages 18-19.)

## Sleep

Older adults need about the same amount of sleep as younger adults (about 6-9 hours), but they often have trouble sleeping. Here are some tips that can help:

- While lying in bed, make a list of all the things you have to be thankful for.
- Don't drink alcohol or caffeinated beverages in the evening.
- Take a relaxing, warm bath or shower before going to bed.
- Go to bed at about the same time every night.

## Medications

Be sure to follow your health-care provider's advice about medications. Report all side effects, such as dizziness. Here are some other tips:

- Use a medication organizer to help you keep track of medications.
- Ask the pharmacist for help reading labels, if needed.
- If you're having trouble using safety caps, ask for a different cap (keep all medications out of reach of children).

## My next health-care appointment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions I have for my health-care provider:

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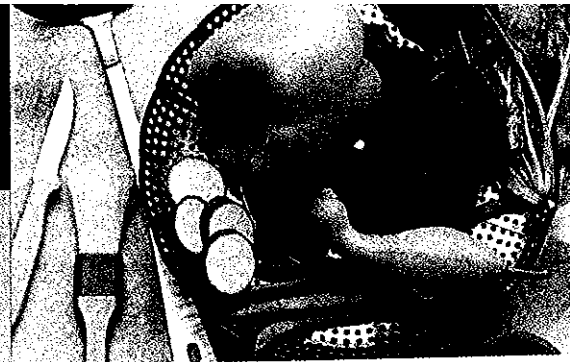
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# Eat well.

It can be tempting to make unhealthy choices when under stress. But a healthy diet can help give you the energy you need in stressful times.



## Choose healthy foods.

- Eat a variety of foods that are rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber.
- Limit fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and added sugars (in food and beverages).
- Choose lean, low-fat or fat-free items when possible—for example, with milk and meats.

How many calories you need depends on your age, size, gender and how active you are. Ask your health-care provider what's best for you.

## Cut back on caffeine.

Caffeine is a stimulant found in drinks such as tea, coffee and soft drinks. It can worsen the impact of stress on your body (for example, by increasing anxiety or stomach upset). It can also affect sleep. Ask your health-care provider if there is caffeine in the medicines you take.

## Avoid overeating.

Many people turn to food when they are under stress. But eating unhealthy foods or overeating can lead to weight gain and other stressful health problems.

## Follow your health-care provider's advice.

If you have a health condition that requires a special diet (such as heart failure, diabetes or high cholesterol), follow your health-care provider's advice. Some foods can affect certain conditions, making them worse—and add to stress.

## Don't skip meals—especially breakfast.

Skipping meals can make you feel tired and cause headaches. Some people may have digestive problems or other conditions that make it easier to eat 4 or 5 small meals during the day rather than 3 regular meals. Follow your health-care provider's advice.

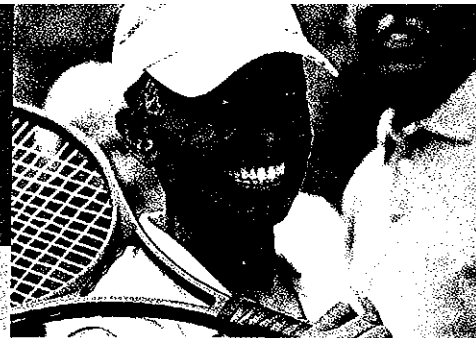
## Learn more.

For more information on nutrition, talk to a dietitian or your health-care provider. You can also learn more about nutrition at [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov).

See page 21 for information about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

# Stay physically active.

Exercise can help lower stress!



## Get enough physical activity.

Regular physical activity is important at any age. It can also help reduce some of the effects of aging. Be sure to consult your health-care provider before starting an exercise program. Ask about the types of activities that are right for you.

If you have a health condition that affects your mobility, ask your health-care provider what kinds of activities you can do. If you see a physical therapist, be sure to do the recommended exercises to help you stay as active as possible.

## Remind yourself of the benefits!

Even small increases in your daily activity can make a difference. Not only can exercise improve your overall health and well-being, but it is a great way to relieve physical and mental tension.

## Choose activities you enjoy—and that are most beneficial.

The best way to stick to an exercise program is to make sure you like the activities you do. It could be something as simple as gardening or walking. Ask your health-care provider about:

- activities that fit your specific needs (for example, weight-bearing exercises may help with osteoporosis)
- good stress-reducing activities (for example, stretching can help you strengthen your body and mind).

## Try to find an exercise partner or group.

Having a partner or class helps you commit to your program—and it's a good way to stay in touch with others. Ask about group activities at your local senior center.

## Follow safety rules for starting your exercise program.

- Remember to talk with your health-care provider before you begin.
- Wear proper footwear and protective equipment for your activities.
- Warm up with stretching and walking exercises before each session.
- Don't overdo it. Increase the amount of exercise you do gradually.
- Cool down by walking and stretching after each workout.

**Being physically active helps your body relax in a natural way!**

# Track your progress.

Keep track of your physical activity.  
Celebrate your progress!



Date	Time	Activity	My thoughts
<i>July 8</i>	<i>8:00 a.m.</i>	<i>walked to park with friend</i>	<i>We kept a good pace and had fun talking while we went. Time went quickly!</i>

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# Exercise your brain, too.

Mental activity can help keep your mind sharp!



## Word puzzles

Word puzzles, such as crossword puzzles, are a great way to challenge your brain.

Look in your newspaper in the comics section for a daily challenge. (Check large-print newspapers or puzzle books if you have trouble with fine print.) Many online newspapers also have free puzzles you can do on the Internet or download.

## Card or board games

Many games require you to have a strategy, or to use your memory. You can play games with a friend or group of friends. There are also lots of card games you can play by yourself! Look on the Internet to find rules for different types of solitaire games.

## Other activities

Writing is another way to help you exercise your mind. You can write:

- letters and e-mails to friends and loved ones
- stories about your past, to be shared with children and grandchildren or other loved ones
- poetry.

## Game nights

Find out if your community or one near you offers game nights for seniors. Check with the local library, recreation center or senior center.

## Games I can play with others:

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## Games I can play by myself:

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# Avoid alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Using these substances can cause problems that may increase stress—not reduce it.



## Alcohol

People often turn to alcohol when they're feeling stressed because they think that it will help them relax. Some people turn to alcohol due to loneliness (for example, if they've lost a spouse). But alcohol can't make emotional and physical tension go away.

Alcohol is a depressant. It slows down the body's central nervous system. Regular use can lead to depression and even more stress. As you age, the effects of alcohol can increase.

Abusing alcohol can lead to even more problems, including alcoholism.

Alcohol can also have adverse effects with certain medications. Be sure to follow your health-care provider's advice for consuming alcohol (if at all).

## Tobacco

It is never too late to quit smoking!

When people first start smoking, tobacco acts as a stimulant. But later, it works as a depressant and tranquilizer.

The nicotine in cigarettes and other tobacco products is an addictive drug that can lead to a variety of stressful problems at any age.

Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease and many other serious health conditions—these risks increase as you get older. If you already have these conditions, quitting can still help!

If you smoke, get help to quit. Visit the American Cancer Society at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) or call 1-800-ACS-2345 (1-800-227-2345) for more information and help.

## Other drugs

- Never use illegal drugs. If you do, get help to stop.
- Only take prescription medications as prescribed for you. Never take someone else's medications.
- Do not abuse over-the-counter medications, such as sleeping aids, cold medicines or pain relievers. Take these only as recommended by a health-care provider.

If you have a drug problem, seek help right away! Call the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment's Referral Service at 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD).



# Do things that are important to you.

Some of the best stress busters are activities that you find meaningful and productive—but not stressful!



## Do something you really enjoy.

See pages 28-29 for help finding activities you can easily do every day.

## Make time to see friends and family.

One common stressor for older adults is loneliness and isolation. To prevent feeling this way, make an effort to see friends and family regularly.

For example:

- Get together with your grandson.
- Make dinner for your daughter.

If you can't get out, or if you don't live near family, stay in touch by phone, letters or e-mail.

Find ways to meet new people, too. Most communities have social activities for older adults. Check your local library for details.

## Take up a hobby or learn a new skill.

There are many activities that provide a creative outlet, lessen fatigue and refresh your mind and body. Consider:

- music
- drawing or painting
- creative writing
- needlepoint
- carpentry
- cooking
- gardening
- learning to use the Internet.

Look into adult education programs sponsored by your community's recreation department.

## Volunteer.

Older adults have a lot to offer based on their life experiences! Volunteering in your community is a great way to stay in touch with people and make a positive difference. Consider volunteering at:

- a local school or child-care center
- a health-care facility
- your local library
- your place of worship.

## Do something you've always meant to do but "never had time."

Give yourself the gift of doing something for yourself that you've always put off. It's never too late to try something new.

**If any activity begins to cause you stress, consider trying something different.**

# Make a commitment to have fun!

Use this chart to write down activities you think you'd enjoy. Then try them! By putting your intentions on paper, you're more likely to follow through.



Activity	Where I can do this	When I can do this	Notes
<i>knitting</i>	<i>knitting group at the community center</i>	<i>Mondays and Fridays</i>	<i>had fun and met new friends</i>
<i>photography</i>	<i>at the park near home</i>	<i>every morning</i>	<i>signed up for a class</i>

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# Practice relaxation techniques.

Training yourself to relax can help you manage—and even prevent—stress.



## Understand the benefits of relaxation.

In addition to helping you manage stress, regular relaxation can help improve your concentration and overall well-being.

## Find a quiet, relaxing place where you can be alone.

Relaxation techniques work best when you have no or few distractions. Most techniques take about 10-20 minutes. But you can do these for longer if you like.

## Practice daily.

Taking the time to practice relaxation techniques once or twice a day works best. But do whatever works for you. You can practice:

- before breakfast, to ease into the day
- in the middle of the day, to take time out from a busy day
- at the end of the day, to help you unwind and prepare for a restful sleep.

## Be consistent.

When you find a technique that works well, stick with it and make it part of your daily routine.

## Keep trying.

Not every technique works for everyone. Pages 25-27 provide several different techniques you can try.

Also, don't worry if you do not notice a major change immediately. You may need to practice for a few weeks before you begin to feel the benefits.

If you need help with the techniques described on pages 25-27, ask your health-care provider or a therapist or counselor. He or she can provide detailed instructions to help you improve these techniques.





# Relaxation techniques you can try

## Deep breathing

One of the easiest ways to relieve tension is with deep breathing.

1. Lie on your back with a pillow under your head. Bend your knees (or put a pillow under them) to relax your stomach.
2. Put one hand on your stomach, just below your rib cage.
3. Slowly breathe in through your nose. Your stomach should feel like it's rising.
4. Exhale slowly through your mouth, emptying your lungs completely and letting your stomach fall.
5. Repeat several times until you feel calm and relaxed. Practice daily.

Once you are able to do this easily, you can practice this technique almost anywhere, at any time.

## Awareness breathing

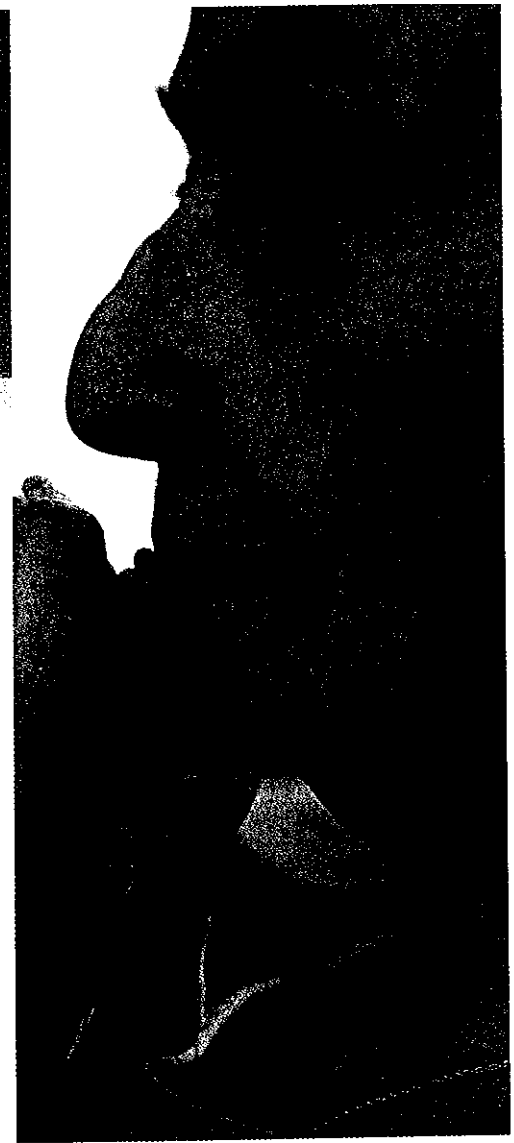
This is similar to deep breathing, but you focus your mind on a specific issue during the exercise.

1. Get in a comfortable position, as in step 1 of deep breathing. Think about what's causing you to feel tense for a few seconds. Then put these thoughts out of your mind.
2. Relax your arms and shoulders.
3. Slowly exhale.
4. Follow steps 3-5 for deep breathing.

### A quick method:

This can be done any time and anywhere, without interrupting your schedule.

1. Relax your arms and shoulders.
2. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath and exhale. Repeat.
3. Concentrate on your breathing—put aside all stressful thoughts.





## Other relaxation techniques

### Progressive muscle relaxation

This is an easy technique that can help you relax the major muscle groups in your body.

1. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Sit in a favorite chair or lie down.
2. Begin with your facial muscles. Frown hard for 5-10 seconds and then relax all your muscles.
3. Work other facial muscles by scrunching your face up or knitting your eyebrows for 5-10 seconds. Release. You should feel a noticeable difference between the tense and relaxed muscles.
4. Move on to your jaw. Then, move on to other muscle groups—shoulders, arms, chest and legs—until you've tensed and relaxed your entire body.

### Meditation

This is the process of focusing on a single word or object to clear your mind. As a result, you feel calm and refreshed.

1. Wear loose, comfortable clothing. Sit or lie in a relaxing position.
2. Close your eyes and concentrate on a calming thought, word or object.
3. You may find that other thoughts pop into your mind. Don't worry—this is normal. Try not to dwell on them. Just keep focusing on your word or object.
4. If you're having trouble, try repeating a word or sound over and over. Some people find it helpful to play soothing music while meditating.
5. Gradually, you will begin to feel more and more relaxed.



## Visualization

This uses your imagination, a great resource when it comes to reducing stress.

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
2. Imagine a pleasant, peaceful scene, such as a lush forest or a sandy beach. Picture yourself in this setting.
3. Focus on the scene for a set amount of time, then gradually return to your other activities.

You can also seek professional assistance for help with relaxation. Common practices include:

## Biofeedback

This method uses medical instruments to measure stress levels in your body. The instruments may include:

- an electromyograph (EMG)—measures muscle tension and relaxation
- an electroencephalograph (EEG)—uses sensors placed on the scalp to measure brain wave activity
- galvanic skin response (GSR) units—record changes in sweat response on the skin's surface to measure nervous system changes.

A skilled instructor can help you use this information to control your reaction to stress in everyday situations.

## Hypnosis

This method can be used to bring about a relaxed, stress-free state in a person. It can also be used to break stress-related habits such as overeating, smoking and abusing alcohol and other drugs.

You can also learn how to perform self-hypnosis from a trained professional. This is similar to visualization. It helps you enter a deep state of relaxation.

## Massage

Massage can be deeply relaxing. It can help relieve stress, tension and muscle pain. It can also help reduce anxiety. After massage, the body feels relaxed and refreshed.

You can also learn how to do self-massage on your head, neck, shoulders, arms, legs, feet, etc. from a trained professional.



# Take time out to do things you enjoy—you're worth it!

Having fun is a great way to lower stress!  
Check off things you like to do, or think of some others.



Listen to music.

Music I like: \_\_\_\_\_

Take a walk.

Places I can go: \_\_\_\_\_

Visit or call a friend.

People I can call or visit: \_\_\_\_\_

Go to a social event at your place of worship.

Date/Time/Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Watch a movie with a friend.

People I can ask: \_\_\_\_\_

Visit a library or museum.

Library/museum hours: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

# How will you spend your "me" time?

Use the chart to make time for you!

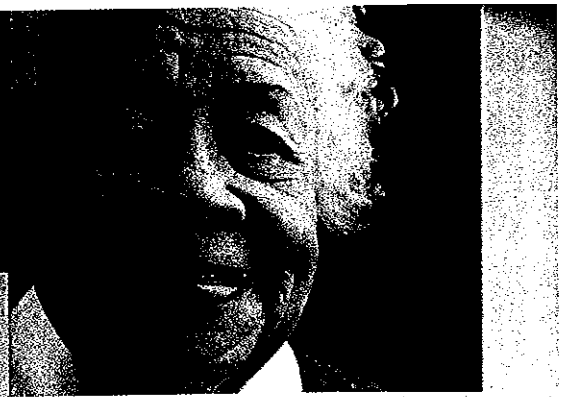


Activities I enjoy	Days/time I can do them	My thoughts
<i>Playing cards with friends</i>	<i>Tues. &amp; Thurs. mornings</i>	<i>I love my card mornings. We laugh a lot!</i>
<i>Movie night with a friend</i>	<i>Sat. nights</i>	<i>I'm enjoying getting out of the house and seeing my friend.</i>

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# Get help when you need it.

If you're having any trouble managing stress on your own, get help! Some sources include:



## Your local senior center or library

It's not always clear where to get information about common concerns. Ask for resources to help you with questions about:

- financial assistance
- medical insurance
- concerns about credit card or insurance fraud
- transportation
- social and physical activities in your area.

## Your local health-care facility

Many health-care facilities offer stress management courses and sponsor support groups.

## Mental health centers

These provide a variety of services, such as emergency help and outpatient treatment.

## State and local mental health associations

These organizations are good sources of information and advice on stress. If cost is a problem, they may be able to help you find care based on your ability to pay.

Write or call your nearest mental health association for information.

## The U.S. Government

Contact:

- National Institute of Mental Health  
1-301-443-4513  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
- Administration on Aging  
1-202-619-0724  
<http://aoa.gov>

## Other professionals and services

Don't overlook these important sources of help, support and information:

- your health-care provider
- leaders at your place of worship
- social workers
- counselors and therapists
- psychologists
- nurses
- your local office or agency on aging
- veterans' hospitals and clinics.

You can also look in the yellow pages and community services sections of your phone book under "Senior Citizens" and "Elder Services."

## Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

It shows you are strong enough to admit you need help. Getting professional help can help you get stress under control.



## **You can learn to manage stress!**

### **Understand what causes stress in your life**

—and take steps to learn how to handle stressful situations.

### **Take care of yourself**

by practicing healthy habits, such as eating well, staying active and getting enough rest.

### **Do things you enjoy**

—by yourself and with others. Choose activities you find relaxing and stress-free.

### **Take time to relax**

every day. Practice relaxation techniques to help you feel calm and reduce stress.

**Start managing stress today!**

