

How Can You Lower Your Stress?

- Long-term stress can make you feel worried, sad, and tired
- It can make it hard to sleep, remember things, and focus. It can also make you feel bad
- Learning good ways to deal with stress can help you feel better and bounce back faster

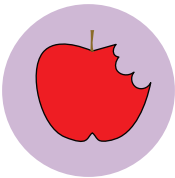


Tips for Lowering Your Stress Levels



Breathe & Relax Your Body

- Try slow breathing: breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 4, breathe out for 4
- Relax your muscles: squeeze them tight for 5 seconds, then let go
- Pay attention to what you see, hear, and feel to calm your mind



Improve Sleep & Eating Habits

- Try to follow good sleep habits (see "How Can You Get Better Sleep?")
- Drink plenty of water—not drinking enough can make stress worse
- Try to eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein to keep your energy up



Take Care of Yourself

- Take short breaks every day: go for a walk, listen to music, or just sit quietly
- Do an activity that requires focus to take your mind off your stress like puzzles, art, hobbies, or cooking
- Planning fun activities—even small ones—can help when you feel stressed. It gives your brain something good to look forward to and helps your mood



Stay Connected

- Spend time with friends, family, or pets for emotional support
- Talk about what's bothering you. It helps to not keep it inside
- Join a support group or talk to a therapist if stress feels like too much



Move Your Body

- Exercise helps lower stress and makes you feel good
- Try daily walks, yoga, or stretching—even 10 minutes helps
- Aim to finish intense workouts 2 hours before bed so your body can relax



Control Your Stress

- When you have a big job to do, break it into smaller parts to make it easier
- Write down what makes you feel stressed to understand it better. Do this in ten minutes or less to avoid thinking about it too much
- Watch less news and spend less time on social media



How Can You Lower Your Stress?

Things You Should Avoid

AVOID



Skipping meals



Drinking alcohol to feel less stressed



Keeping feelings inside

Relying on caffeine



Giving yourself too much work

- **Skipping meals or relying on caffeine for energy** – these make your body and mind even more stressed
- **Drinking alcohol or smoking to feel better when stressed** – this makes you feel more stressed later on
- **Keeping feelings inside** – talking to others helps process stress
- **Doing too much without taking rest** – this can make you very tired and stressed

Wrong Ideas People Often Believe About Stress

"If I take a vacation, my stress will go away."

TRUTH: Taking breaks helps, but to deal with stress every day, you need good habits, not just short trips away.

"If I don't feel stressed, I must not have any stress."

TRUTH: You might not feel stressed, but things like headaches, feeling very tired, or stomach problems could mean you have long-term stress.

"Stress is always bad for you."

TRUTH: Some stress can be good! A little stress can help you focus and want to do things. But too much stress for a long time can make your body and mind feel bad.

When to Talk to Your Health Professional

- If stress makes your head or stomach hurt, or makes it hard to breathe
- If stress makes you feel sad all the time or you don't want to do things you used to like
- If stress makes you fight with people a lot, do badly at work or school, or stay away from people you care about
- If stress makes you want to drink alcohol, use drugs, eat too much, or run away from problems



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