

STRESS MANAGEMENT

What is stress management?

We all respond to stress differently. But if you feel like the stress in your life is overwhelming, it’s time to take action. Stress management can teach you healthier ways to cope with stress, help you reduce its harmful effects, and prevent stress from getting out of control.

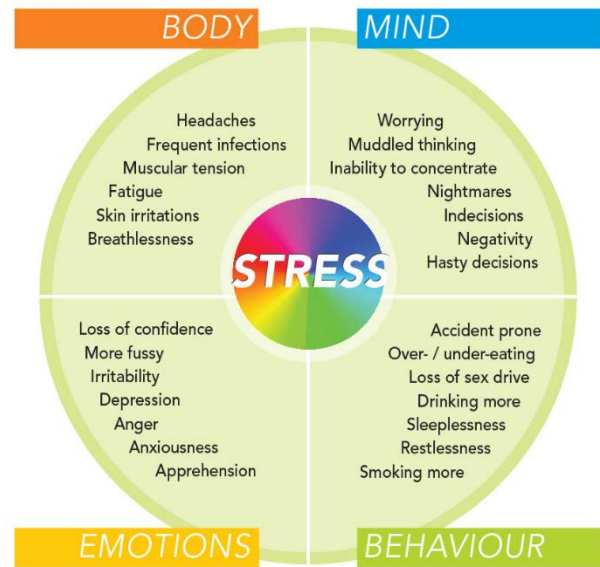
Where is your stress coming from?

A stress journal can help you identify the regular stressors in your life and the way you deal with them. Each time you feel stressed, keep track of it in your journal. As you keep a daily log, you will begin to see patterns and common themes.

Symptoms of stress

Stress can affect you in many ways, including physically, emotionally, mentally or behaviourally. If you have several of the following symptoms, you should consider ways of better managing your stress:

Strategies for Managing your Stress

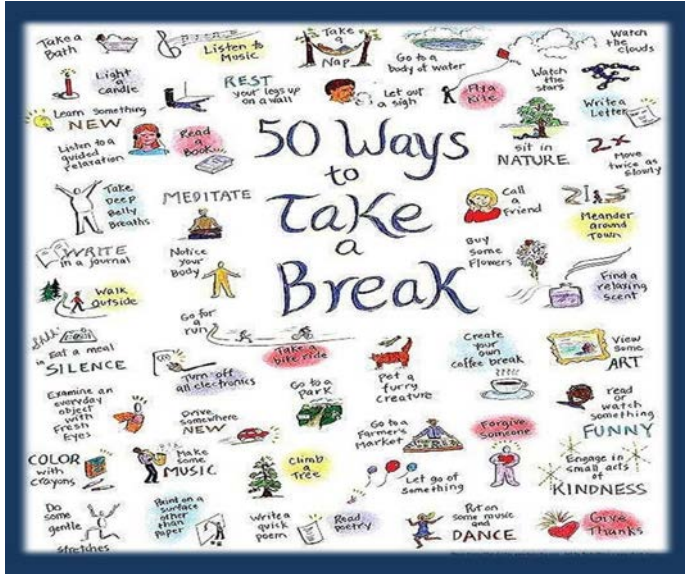


1. Exercise is great for reducing stress but you don’t have to be an athlete or spend hours in a gym to experience the benefits. Here are a few ideas to get you moving:

- Put on some music and dance around
 - Use the stairs rather than an elevator
 - Follow a Yoga or stretching routine on Youtube
2. Reach out and build relationships, there is nothing more calming than communicating with someone who makes you feel safe and understood. Sometimes when we are stressed we prefer to be on our own, but here are some ideas to get you interacting:
- Help someone else by volunteering
 - Have lunch or coffee with a friend
 - Call or message an old friend
 - Meet new people by taking a class or joining a club
 - Come to Student Counselling



- Try where you can to avoid unnecessary stress, you may be surprised by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.
 - Learn how to say “no”, set your boundaries and don’t take on more than you can handle.
 - Avoid people who stress you out or tend to put you down
 - Identify which situations or people make you feel emotionally drained
- If you can’t avoid a stressful situation, try to see if there are any ways that you can change it:
 - If something or someone is bothering you, be more assertive and communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way, instead of bottling your feelings up.
 - Be willing to compromise
 - Manage your time better, you will find it easier to stay calm and focused. (Student Counselling can help you with this ☺)
- How you think about a stressor can have a huge impact on how you experience the stress:
 - Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Eg. Instead of thinking about your upcoming exam as something terrifying, try to think of it as a way to challenge your new abilities.
 - Look at the big picture. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over?
 - You may need to adjust your expectations. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection.
- Very often stress is unavoidable. At these times the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are:
 - Rather than stressing out over things that you cannot change, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to stressors.
 - Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.
- Make time for relaxation:
 - Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. This can include breathing exercises. This is your time to recharge.
 - Do something you enjoy every day
 - Keep your sense of humour. The act of laughing helps reduce stress in a number of ways
 - Come up with a list of healthy ways to relax and recharge. This can include things like going for a walk, enjoying a cup of tea, listening to music, taking a bubble bath or even listening to music



- Adopt a healthy lifestyle and build your physical reserves:
 - Eat a healthy diet, this will better prepare you to cope with stress
 - Reduce caffeine and sugar, you’ll feel more relaxed and you’ll sleep better as well
 - Avoid stimulants – nicotine, alcohol, excessive caffeine and other stimulants – e.g. Red Bull
 - Get enough sleep, feeling tired will increase your stress and may cause you to think irrationally



- Use this checklist to track your progress. Compare how you feel on days when you make lots of ticks on the checklist to those when you make few or none.



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STRESS MANAGEMENT SELF-HELP CHECKLIST

POSITIVE CHOICES I MADE TODAY:	MON	TUES	WEDS	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN	NOTES
Updated my stress journal								
Exercised for 30 minutes or more								
Talked face to face with a good listener								
Avoided unnecessary stress, such as a stress-inducing person or situation								
Altered a stressful situation by expressing my feelings and/or managing my time better								
Adjusted my attitude to a stressor by reframing the problem, focusing on the positive, or looking at the big picture								
Accepted the stressors I can't change								
Did at least one activity from my 'stress relief' toolbox								
Avoided self-medicating with alcohol, food, or drugs								

Reference: *Stress Management: How to Reduce, Prevent, and Cope with Stress*
<http://helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-management.htm>

References:

- "Stress Management": How to Reduce, Prevent, and Cope with Stress. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Aug. 2015.
- "Exercising to Relax - Harvard Health." Harvard Health. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Aug. 2015.

This is an initiative of the **Student Counselling Centre**, Durban University of Technology, Lower Library Complex, Steve Biko Campus
 Telephone: 031 373 2266
 Website: www.dut.ac.za