

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Face Your Stress Head On!

Life is filled with unexpected ups and downs. Whether you're worried about a problem at work or dealing with a personal issue at home, stress can hinder your ability to move forward. By understanding how stress affects you and impacts your life, you will be better prepared to meet stress head on and move forward successfully.

In this issue you'll learn how to:

- Recognize the warning signs
- Laugh your stress away
- Utilize exercise to manage stress
- Reduce tension through relaxation
- Cope with stress by making healthy decisions
- Achieve work-life balance

What is Stress?

Stress is what you feel when you react to pressure from others or from yourself. Pressure can come from anywhere, including school, work, activities, friends and family members. You can also feel stress from the pressure of wanting to perform well or wanting to feel like you belong. Stress comes in many forms and everyone feels stress.

Managing stress effectively can bring a sense of well-being to your everyday life, help you navigate issues at work in a positive fashion and improve your interactions with others—no matter the situation.

Go Online Today!

Log on to access *Stress Management* and other helpful resources in the *Spotlight* section. Log on now and register with your program's toll-free number.

Western Health Advantage

1-800-424-1778



Log on now!



What percentage of doctor visits are related to stress?

- A. 10-25 percent
- B. 40-50 percent
- C. 75-90 percent

Check your answer on the bottom.

Now That's an Idea!

Breathe In!

Need to shake that stress quickly? Take some deep breaths! Experts agree—deep breathing is one of the best stress-relieving techniques out there. When stressed we're naturally prone to start taking shallow breaths, which actually increases feelings of tension.

Take a minute and breathe deeply. Inhale through your nose for four seconds and exhale through your mouth for six seconds. Repeat five to 10 times and you'll feel your stress melt away—really!

Take the Healthy Approach to Stress Management

If your coping methods aren't helping you achieve greater emotional and physical well-being, it's time to find healthier ones. There are many ways to cope with stress, but they all require some level of change. When deciding which option to choose, it's helpful to think of the four A's: Avoid, Alter, Adapt or Accept.

Avoid unnecessary stress:

- *Learn how to say "no."* Know your limits and stick to them.
- *Take control of your environment.* If the evening news makes you anxious, pick up a book instead.
- *Pare down your to-do list.* Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

Alter the situation:

- *Express your feelings, don't bottle them up.* If something is bothering you, communicate your concerns.
- *Be willing to compromise.* When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same.
- *Be more assertive.* Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them.
- *Manage your time better.* When you're stretched too thin, it's hard to stay calm and focused. If you plan ahead, you can reduce the amount of stress you're under.

Adapt to the stressor:

- *Reframe problems.* Try to view stressful situations from a positive perspective.
- *Look at the big picture.* Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it worth getting upset over?
- *Adjust your standards.* Set reasonable standards for yourself and others.
- *Focus on the positive.* When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life.

Accept the things you can't change:

- *Avoid controlling the uncontrollable.* Many things in life are beyond our control. Focus on the things you have personal control over.
- *Look for the upside.* When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth.
- *Share your feelings.* Talk to a trusted friend, family member or professional.

Living Healthy Working Well®

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Give Your Body a Boost!

Increase your resistance to stress by improving your physical health. The better you feel, the more equipped you will be to handle life's curveballs.

Exercise regularly. Physical activity reduces stress. Make time for 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Nothing beats aerobic exercise for releasing pent-up stress and tension.

Eat a healthy diet. Well-nourished bodies cope with stress better. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with nutritious meals throughout the day.

Reduce caffeine and sugar. The temporary energy boost that caffeine and sugar provide can also give you the jitters. Reduce coffee, sodas and sugary snacks in your diet and you'll feel more relaxed and less stressed.

Avoid alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. Self-medicating may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary and usually makes the situation causing the stress worse.

Get enough sleep. Adequate sleep fuels your mind as well as your body. Fatigue increases your stress levels and decreases your ability to think clearly.

