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# Dealing With Stress: Helpful Tips

# What Is Stress?

- **Stress results from the pressures that are a natural part of living our lives.**
- **Changes and events in our lives, both good and bad, can trigger our stress alarm system.**
- **Examples are getting married, being ill, changing jobs, and running late.**

# Learn to Read the Signs of Stress

- **Cold hands**
- **Rapid breathing**
- **Rapid heartbeat**
- **Anxiety**
- **Forgetfulness**
- **Shakiness**
- **Headaches**
- **Muscle tension**
- **Knotted stomach**
- **Increased use of drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes**
- **Chronic irritability, short fuse**
- **Frequent illness or physical complaints**

# Illnesses That Can Be Aggravated By Stress

- **Hypertension**
- **Coronary disease**
- **Ulcers**
- **Asthma**
- **Reduced immunity to infections**

# What to Do if You Need Help

- **Stress is a part of life, but many times the number and types of stresses you have to deal with can feel overwhelming—that is a signal to get help.**
- **Friends . . . family . . . family doctor . . . qualified mental health professional . . . clergy member . . . stress management and relaxation programs . . .**

# Techniques to Control or Reduce Stress

- **Alter the emotional and physiological response (practice meditation, mindful breathing, self-hypnosis, or progressive relaxation).**
- **Eat healthfully on a daily basis.**
- **Get regular physical activity.**
- **Alter those beliefs and assumptions that make stress more probable.**
- **Accentuate the positive.**
- **Alter the environment that is causing the stress (play music to drown out stressful noise).**

# **Quick Tension Reliever 1: Deep Breathing**

- **Get in a comfortable position.**
- **To the count of 5, take a long, slow, deep breath.**
- **Let your belly expand.**
- **As you exhale to the count of 5, imagine breathing out excess tension and breathing in relaxation.**
- **With each inhalation, say to yourself, “I am.” With each exhalation, say to yourself, “Relaxed.”**

## Quick Tension Reliever 2: Stretching

- **While seated at a desk or in a chair, do the following:**
  - Inhale and raise your arms, gently stretching them toward the ceiling. Wiggle your fingers for 10 seconds. Now exhale while you let your arms go limp at your sides.
  - With your legs stretched out before you, alternately flex and point your feet for 10 seconds. Now just point your feet and wiggle your toes for another 10 seconds.



# Summary: How to Deal With Stress

- **Change the beliefs and assumptions that allow you to become stressed.**
- **Manage your lifestyle: Resolve personal conflicts.**
- **Practice progressive relaxation, meditation, and mindful breathing.**
- **Eat healthfully: Avoid foods high in unhealthy saturated and trans fat, cholesterol, sugar, and salt.**
- **Be physically active regularly: Get at least 30 minutes per day (children need at least 60 minutes per day).**
- **Accentuate the positive in your life.**
- **Alter the environment to avoid or lessen the stressor.**