



Managing stress

Stress occurs when demands exceed our ability to cope. While some stress is inevitable, if it continues it can affect your physical and psychological health. You can reduce the effects of stress by identifying its source, understanding and accepting what you can control and what you can't, and learning effective management skills. Stress affects each of us differently, and the most effective ways to relieve it are different for each person. Some techniques for relieving stress include:

- **Exercise.** Regular physical activity is one of the most effective stress management techniques.
- **Pleasant activities.** A hobby or other healthy leisure activity that is meaningful to you can help you relax and take your attention from worries.
- **Physical relaxation.** This includes breathing exercises, muscle relaxation exercises, massage, aromatherapy, yoga, and the traditional Chinese relaxation exercises such as tai chi.
- **Mindfulness activities.** These include learning how to focus on the present and to not live in the past or the future. Mindfulness meditation is the key. You may find this through meditation at a local yoga or Buddhist centre. Read Jon Kabat-Zinn's books.

In addition to relieving the impact of stress, it is also important to reduce the sources of stress in your life. Some strategies to do this include:

- **Time management techniques.** Scheduling and prioritizing your commitments can help provide balance and structure.
- **Healthy lifestyle choices.** Getting plenty of rest, eating well, not smoking, and limiting how much alcohol used are all important in reducing stress.
- **Support from friends and family.** People who have a strong social support network are better able to handle life's challenges.
- **Changing our thinking.** Recognizing patterns of interpreting or anticipating events can determine whether we increase or decrease our distress.

Take a look at some of the other advisory statements on this site to help you explore other options for reducing and managing the stresses in your life.