

Managing Stress During Hard Times

Stress is the way your body responds to experiences and events. It helps you rise to a challenge in addition to preparing you to meet tough situations with focus, strength, stamina and heightened alertness. Negative stress, however, can prevent you from feeling and performing well. While reactions to negative stress are unique to each person, common emotional symptoms may include anxiety, irritability, increased forgetfulness, and difficulty making decisions. Physical reactions to stress is often associated with headaches, upset stomach, increased arthritis pain, tightness in the chest, and problems with sleep. Since there is no “one size fits all” solution to managing stress, it is important to experiment with different stress reduction strategies to ease negative stress. In addition to focusing on what makes you feel calm and in control, two common strategies for managing stress include **changing the situation** and **changing your response to the situation**. If there is a situation that you can identify that causes stress, avoid it if/when possible. For example, if the crowds and chaos of the State Fair make you feel anxious to the point that you do not like to go, stay home instead. In unavoidable situations, you may have to change your reaction. Accept it for what it is, focus on what is really important or on what you can do, and adapt as best you can so that you can move forward. You can reduce stress in your life by making healthy lifestyle choices and taking care of yourself:

- Take deep breaths and count to 10 before you react/speak.
- Set aside relaxation time
- Connect with a support system
- Do something you enjoy every day
- Keep your sense of humor
- Stay physically active
- Do not get overwhelmed with the big picture: break down big problems into smaller parts
- Find light at the end of the tunnel
- Get temporarily lost in music or a book
- Seek therapy from your pet

Source:

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References:

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