

Stress Reduction and Management

What is Stress? Stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world.

What Causes Our Stress? The first step towards reducing and managing your stress level is to identify what aspects of your life are causing you stress. Some of the most common culprits are family, appearance, and career.



Family While it may be difficult for you to acknowledge that your family is causing you stress, denying it will only further your problems. Many people feel guilty admitting that family members are stressing them out. They feel that they should always be there for their family members, and they should never complain or distance themselves from a family member who is having a hard time. There is a difference between "being there for someone" and completely "saving the day" and taking on someone else's problem as if it were your own. You have to put yourself first. Tell them that you are overwhelmed. Tell them that you can't handle it all the time. Give yourself some boundaries so that you do not get intermeshed in other people's stresses to the point that they become your own. It's all about creating a healthy and manageable balance in your life. Apply the same philosophy to your relationships with friends.



Appearance Superficial as it sounds; many people attest that their physical appearance is a major cause of stress. In our culture, there is so much importance placed on the way we look. For example, many women have a very difficult time aging, and some men are very stressed out about going bald. If you are stressing out over the way you look, you need to realize – either through introspection or therapy – that there are so many more important facets to life. You can change your body image and improve your self-esteem without changing your appearance at all, and your life will be much better as a result.



Career Your professional life may be the cause of your stress. Maybe you have to work long hours. Maybe your job is very hectic and demanding. If you are not satisfied with your profession, be proactive! Look for another job that is more suited to your skills and abilities, or go back to school so that you can become what you want to become. Where there's a will, there's a way.

How Can We Reduce and Manage Our Stress? You can't always control the circumstances that life throws your way, but you *can* control how well you take care of yourself. Taking proper care of your body, soul and mind can keep you in optimum shape for handling stress. The following are some important basic self care strategies that can keep you functioning well and ready for life's challenges.

1. **Get Enough Sleep:** Sleep is very important for your emotional and physical wellbeing. Lack of sleep can negatively impact your ability to handle stress, be productive and function properly.
2. **Maintain Proper Nutrition:** Many people aren't aware of this, but a poor diet can actually make you more vulnerable to stress!
3. **Exercise Regularly:** Exercise provides a stress release and keeps your body healthy.
4. **Maintain Social Support:** Social support can keep you healthier and happier, creating a buffer against stress.
5. **Find Hobbies:** Having some "down time" is important, and hobbies can provide a nice distraction from stress and help you stay "in the moment" which is also a great way to relieve tension.
6. **Pamper Yourself:** Taking care of your body on the outside with a spa treatment, for example, can work wonders for your internal state.
7. **Keep Your Mind Sharp:** By keeping your mind sharp, you are more equipped to solve the problems and take on the "challenges" that life presents.
8. **Have the Right Attitude:** Looking at things from an optimistic frame of mind can not only decrease your stress level, but bring you more success in life and more.
9. **Process Your Emotions:** A great way to process emotions is the act of journaling. When you write about your feelings, and potential solutions to your problems, you can reduce stress in your life.
10. **Maintain a Spiritual Practice:** Research shows that a lifestyle including religion or spirituality is generally a healthier lifestyle.

Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun – plus the resilience to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on.

An EAP counselor is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergency and urgent assistance. To schedule an appointment, receive a community referral or for inquires our office is open 7:30 am to 6:30 pm PST.

