

Stress Management

How to reduce, prevent, and cope with stress

Look at how you currently cope with stress

Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy, helpful or unproductive? Unfortunately, many people cope with stress in ways that compound the problem.

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking
- Drinking too much
- Overeating or under eating
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others

If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it's time to find healthier ones. There are many healthy ways to manage and cope with stress, but they all require change. You can either change the situation or change your reaction. When deciding which option to choose, it's helpful to think of the four A's: **A**VOID the stressor, **A**LTER the stressor, **A**DAPT to the stressor, **A**CCEPT the stressor.

Since everyone has a unique response to stress, there is no "one size fits all" solution to managing it. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control. Stress-management techniques include relaxation techniques, time-management skills, counseling or group therapy, exercise, and maintaining an overall healthy lifestyle.

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"Give your stress wings and let it fly away"

-Carin Hartness