

## Surviving Stress Prevention Strategies

We all experience stress. It's so normal it's almost invisible. The good news is that there are many ways to tame the stress monster. The first step is to recognize it. Then you can learn to master it. Experiment with these tips to see which ones work for you. And remember, you can always work with your Recovery Coach to identify other ways to deal with stress.

**Sidestep avoidable stressors:** You can find ways to avoid a lot of stressful situations. For example, if shopping with your partner stresses you, then agree not to shop together. If the noise at work increases your stress, negotiate with your boss about wearing headphones to help manage the stress.

**Find the right time for major life changes:** If you plan on getting a job, dating again, and moving out on your own all at the same time, you are in for a lot of stress. Plan major changes in your life in a way that you can take a 'breather' in between. Taking breaks between big events can really help.

### Try other things

**Develop a positive attitude:** Preventing stress is easier when you have a positive attitude. Even if you can't control a situation you're in, you can be in control of your attitude about the situation.

**Exercise:** Exercising is a good way to reduce stress. Start by getting more active each day and see if you can work up to exercising regularly a few times a week.



*Feeling overwhelmed is normal, but there are work arounds.*



*Meditation or being still helps some people prepare for the day.*

**Eat and sleep well:** Getting a good night's sleep and eating nutritious meals will help you be healthy. And when you're healthy, you'll be less stressed.

**Reward yourself:** When you overcome a challenge, give yourself a reward! You can take a break and relax, or download that song you've been wanting.

*You can't prevent all stress. It's important to have a management plan. This is you being your own best back-up.*

**CREATE A LIST OF WHAT YOU DO, OR WHAT YOU WILL DO, TO TAKE CHARGE OF THE STRESS IN YOUR LIFE.**

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## Stress Management

### WHEN YOU STAY IN CHARGE

**Visualize expected events:** Take time to imagine an upcoming event. Picture what it will look and feel like. Think about what you want to say and do. Then when the event happens, you will have had some practice and feel more confident.

**Have a back-up plan:** Does it look like you are going to lose your job or fail a class? Do you have a major money concern? Imagine how this will impact your life and create a back-up plan that will help you be safe. Who can help? What do you need the most?

**Relax with deep breathing:** If you're feeling really stressed, slowly take a deep breath and hold it for a couple of beats. Then exhale, really slowly. 1-2-3-4-5. Repeat. Deep breathing helps many people relax.

**Ask for help:** Ask for help if you have to do something that feels overwhelming. Grab a buddy. Take a friend. Strategize with your Recovery Coach. Most people will be happy to help out.

**Relax by clearing your mind:** Take a break in a quiet place and invite your mind to relax by focusing on one peaceful image or thought. What image will you use? Relax your muscles: Stress causes your muscles to get tense. Tightening and then relaxing different muscles is one way of relaxing them. Notice what happens when you tighten a muscle - say in your forearm - for a few seconds, and then relax it slowly. Feel the difference.

**Relax with stretching and exercising:** Stretching can be done anywhere and anytime. And exercise, like taking a walk, is also a great way to stretch muscles and get you thinking about different things.

**Think positively:** When faced with a difficult situation, put things into perspective. Ask yourself "What does this situation mean in the grand scheme of things? Is it really such a big problem?"

**Practice calmness:** Plan to listen to some quiet music for a few minutes each day; take a long bath or shower; some people find prayer or meditation helpful. It might take a little while to get quieted down. Stick with it.