

Managing stress during the pandemic

Stress results from situations that tax our physical and emotional resources.

Excessive and constant stress can negatively affect us. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on our lives and we are facing challenges that are stressful.

Stress makes it difficult to think clearly or concentrate on tasks, our bodies may develop aches, feel tired, lose energy, irregular sleep, experience palpitations or difficulty in breathing and as a result, we feel unwell. This will affect our work, personal relationships and make us unhappy. Sometimes, we may even have thoughts of harming ourselves or thinking that we would be better off dead.



What should you do if you are stressed?

1. Share your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust e.g. a friend, relative or colleague.
2. Engage in a hobby e.g. painting, gardening, singing or cooking.
3. Maintain a healthy diet of vegetables and fruits. Avoid sweets and oily food. Fish and chicken are healthy options for non-vegetarians.
4. Spend at least 15-20 minutes exercising every day.
5. Sleep for at least six to eight hours at night. Maintain a consistent sleep routine.
6. Avoid drinking alcohol, consuming tobacco or other substances to fall asleep or cope with stress.
7. Find a psychiatrist or psychologist who can help you or join online support groups to share and hear about similar experiences from others. To find out more about service providers and platforms visit our website.

Some coping techniques



Slow or deep breathing is a basic strategy for relaxation or managing physical symptoms of stress. Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. Then do this two-step exercise:

Step 1: Use counting to slow the breath. Breathe in as you count- One, Two, Three - hold your breath for a second. Then breathe out- One, Two, Three. If you find it difficult to breathe exactly to the counts, just relax and breathe slowly.

Step 2: Place your hands gently on your tummy and feel your tummy rise as you breathe in and go down when you breathe out. Avoid pressing your tummy.

Remember, breathe in through your nose and focus on your breath.



Stop when you feel relaxed.

If you experience your heart beating very quickly, uncomfortable feelings in fingers or mouth, chest pain or any other physical discomfort while you are doing this breathing exercise, it may mean that you are breathing too fast; slow down the rhythm.

What's around you? (5,4,3,2,1 method)

This is a way for you to practice keeping your mind focused on the present moment when you are feeling overwhelmed. By directing your attention to what you see, smell, hear, taste and touch you give yourself time to calm down.

Step 1: Look around you.

Step 2: Name 5 things/colours you can see, 4 different sounds you can hear, 3 different textures you can feel (cloth/hair/toy/wood), 2 smells, and 1 taste.

Step 3: Describe each of these to yourself in detail.

Step 4: Hold on to the ones which give you comfort.

Maintain a stress journal

Some people find journaling helpful because it takes their worries out of their mind and puts it onto paper.

Step 1: Write down the situation/circumstance in which you feel stressed, how you feel about it, and what you did or could do to make yourself feel better.

Step 2: Refer to the journal when you are stressed to see what worked for you earlier.

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