



MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTRE MANITOBA

Tips for Wellness | Reducing Stress

Stress is a normal part of life. In fact, a certain amount of stress is necessary. Without stress we would have little or no motivation for meeting life's challenges. Stress can, however, become too much for us to handle when the demands placed on us outstrip our ability to cope. Pressures at home, at work, in relationships, and in finances can take a large toll on our health and well-being. If we are juggling several stressors at once, our health and quality of life can be seriously impacted.

Typically, a stress reaction will happen when we are under pressure or if we perceive a threat. Our mind sends a signal to our body that we are in danger. Stress hormones are released into our system which give us the strength and the energy to either fight or to flee from the stressor. We may find our heart racing, our breathing becoming faster and an acute sense of panic arising. This response is a built in survival mechanism called "fight or flight". This is a normal reaction to threats or danger.

If our stress reaction is activated regularly, our physical, mental and emotional systems will become overwhelmed. Over time, our energies become depleted making us more vulnerable to illness, anxiety and depression. We may turn to quick fixes such as food, alcohol, overwork, or shopping to temporarily to get relief from our discomfort. Unfortunately, unhealthy coping behaviours will aggravate the problem and lead to more stress.

Self-awareness and self-care will be essential components in a plan to reduce stress. We need to know what causes us stress.



If we can point to specific reasons for stress, then we can develop coping strategies reduce the risk of feeling threatened or overwhelmed. We will improve all aspects of our health and well-being by taking care of ourselves and reducing stress.

Symptoms of Stress May Include Feeling:

- Overwhelmed by difficulties
- Unable to cope and keep control
- Unable to focus and remember
- Exhausted, difficulty sleeping
- Frequent headaches, rapid heart beat, upset stomach, tension
- A loss of appetite or overeating
- Under pressure
- Short tempered, irritable, anxious

Causes of Stress:

- Stress is most often caused by situations involving change when you feel you are not in control. These may be positive or negative changes, but are likely to be making more demands on you than usual.
- Ongoing stress may be caused by long-term difficulties, such as financial issues, unemployment, and relationship challenges.
- Concerns or issues from the past can build up over time and cause stress reactions. Unresolved grief or trauma can continue to generate stress and will need to be addressed.

Tips to Reduce Stress:

- Avoid causes of stress. Clear your mental and physical clutter, reduce what you know stresses you, and avoid competing with others. Remove yourself if you can't remove the stress and find quiet time.
- Manage your time. Do only one thing at a time, and focus on a single priority.
- Accept what you cannot change. Focus on what you can control.
- Learn to say 'no'. Be more assertive and realistic about what you can and cannot do.
- Learn to relax. Relaxation is the natural answer to stress. Make the time.
- Talk to someone Talking with someone and supporting others is much better than being isolated
- Ask for help.



Techniques that Work Well Include:

- Breathing exercises
- Meditation and guided visualization
- Laughter
- Physical exercise (try to incorporate 30 minutes into your day)
- Keeping a journal
- Regular and healthy sleep patterns
- Practice of gratitude and optimism

Get Help:

It may be that nothing seems to work to manage or reduce stress. Don't give up and don't not go it alone! There are services available which help people to discover the underlying causes and triggers of stress. Talking to a peer worker, counsellor, therapist, doctor or another health specialist will help lessen the burden that stressful pressures create.

Resources at MHERC

STRESS AND RELAXATION EXPLAINED [video] | An Introduction to Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques, Healthvues, This DVD explores all aspects of stress reduction, including: how stress is a natural part of our lives; different types of stresses and their symptoms; chronic and acute health risks associated with stress; responding positively to stress and anxiety; real life case study; sample of immersive, nature-based guided imagery relaxation exercise; mind/body medicine overview; benefits of relaxation therapies; choosing the best techniques; physical and cognitive relaxation techniques; demonstration of effective relaxation exercises.

STRESS RELIEF [sound recording] | Relax the body, calm the mind, restore balance, resolve difficult situations, Martin L. Rossman 2010.

THE RELAXATION AND STRESS REDUCTION WORKBOOK

Martha Davis Elizabeth Robbins Eshelman, and Matthew McKay, 2008.

Resources in Community

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION | Classes and Resources
<https://mbwpg.cmha.ca/resources/mental-health-resource-guide-for-winnipeg>

YMCA, YOGA, MEDITATION FITNESS

<https://www.ymca.ca/Locations>

COUNSELLING IN MANITOBA

<http://www.adam.mb.ca/counselling-resources>

