



# TAKECHARGE

WELCOA'S SELF-CARE BULLETIN

## MAKE YOURSELF MORE RESILIENT!

### Key Strategies to Manage Stress

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Plain and simple, you can't avoid stress. And while some stress can be beneficial, too much of it can be harmful. When the body senses a threat (or stressor), it goes on high alert, and once the threat passes, the body quickly recovers. However, with unrelenting or too many stressors, your body might be on a constant state of high alert, leading to poor concentration, bad moods, professional burnout, and mental and physical health problems. When stress becomes chronic, it's difficult for your body to function properly. Chronic stress can be linked with health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and anxiety. This is why it's so important to learn how to manage your stress.

#### RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS

The first step in effectively managing stress is to recognize your body's signals. Your body sends signals that it's stressed, including difficulty concentrating, headaches, cold hands, tight muscles, a nervous stomach, clenched teeth, feeling on edge, fidgety, irritable, or withdrawn. Of course, there are individual differences in how people react and deal with stress. Some people are more resilient than others. Stress affects them less or more temporarily, and they might even perform better under stress. Fortunately, resilience can often be learned and there are some simple, practical things that people can do that may make a noticeable difference. Here are some strategies to get you started.

**Once you know the signs, address them.** Learn to not only recognize but also to name these feelings, either



to oneself or to a friend. Then, take action to counter their effects. For example, deep breathing, stretching, going for a walk, writing down your thoughts and taking quiet time to focus can help induce relaxation and reduce tension.

**Make self-care a daily habit.** Make taking care of yourself a daily routine. It's not selfish or self-indulgent, but it might require saying "no" to requests or prioritizing yourself along with your responsibilities. Start with small changes in your routine to help build resilience to stressful circumstances. Work in time to exercise, eat healthy foods, participate in relaxing activities and sleep. In fact, including a regimen of exercise, which for some may include yoga or meditation, can be very important when feeling stressed. Also, take time to notice the "good minutes" in each day or to do something that you enjoy, such as reading a book or listening to music, which can be a way to shift your attention and focus on the positive rather than the negative.

**Stay socially connected.** Stay in touch with family, friends, and social groups in your life. This will help prevent feelings of isolation and “going it alone”. Having or being a person to talk with can be reassuring and calming. Make a point to regularly schedule time and activities with your family and friends.

**Put on a new perspective.** Experts call changing the way we think about and respond to stress “reframing.” For example, you can view sitting in traffic or around the house as an opportunity to enjoy music, podcasts, or pleasant views. Reduce anger in response to rude or aggressive behavior by imagining what might be happening in that person’s life. Keeping situations in perspective is an important way to boost stress resilience.

**Seek help if you need it.** Talk to a health professional if stress is affecting your well-being, you feel you cannot manage the stress you’re experiencing, or stress has caused you to engage in or increase substance use.

Recognizing your body’s stress responses and learning to respond to those signals can help build the emotional, intellectual, and physical strength that comprise resilience. Whatever works for you, make taking care of yourself part of your daily routine. Work in time to exercise, eat healthy foods, and get good quality sleep. This will help make you more resilient to life’s stresses!

