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Ways to help ease the stress in your life

Everyone feels stress from time to time. Some people describe it as tension or pent-up energy.

Some stress can be healthy. It can help motivate you or keep you safe when you feel a threat. For instance, a car cuts in front of you on the highway. You slam on your brakes and avoid a crash.

But severe or long-term stress can cause health problems, like a rise in blood pressure. It can affect the heart and immune system. And it can also lead to trouble sleeping and controlling diabetes and asthma.

Stress management tips

You may not be able to entirely remove the stress in your life. But the good news is that there are ways to control and reduce it. Here are some you may find helpful.

Breathe

That's right. Before reacting, take a minute to pause. Breathe in and out. Let your mind take a break, so it can process what's going on. You'll then be better able to respond.

Set priorities

It can help to think and plan ahead, instead of reacting and rushing around at the last minute. Make a list of tasks you need to do, and prioritize what is most important. Then set about accomplishing them.

Set limits

Yes, you want to tackle that extra work project. And maybe you made promises to run errands for your family. But try to end that knots-in-your-stomach feeling. Notice when you strive to take on more than is humanly possible. Be realistic so you can head off undue pressure and stress.

Exercise

We all know how exercise can improve your health. But it can also help you feel better by lowering your stress. Take a walk, run, golf, swim, dance, do yoga. Just stay active. It has a calming effect and releases "feel good" hormones.

Ease your fears

The mind often worries about things that will likely never happen. Take a breath and focus your attention on the present. Ask yourself how likely it is that something you can't handle will happen.

Talk to someone

Talking to someone you trust can do wonders for lowering stress. It may even help you solve a problem. But talk to your doctor or seek counseling if your stress becomes overwhelming.

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