

Managing stress and staying emotionally healthy includes changing the stressful situations when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, and taking the time for self-care, rest and relaxation.

FOCUSING ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

One of the most positive things you can do when faced with worry or anxiety is to remember what you can affect and what you can't. Far too many of us spend time feeling worried or feeling bad about things we simply can't change. Try this "worry inventory" exercise to help you refocus on things you can control.

Write down all the things that are causing you to feel stress or anxiety. Review the list and organize it into two columns:

1. Things you can change (you have control over changing), and
2. Things you don't have the power to change.

Think about column two as a mental parking lot—a place that allows you to recognize these as sources of stress but gives them less 'mental space' to occupy.

Focus on the items listed in column one. For each of these items, identify one small, feasible thing you can do to either change the situation or how you react or respond to the stressor. Taking action to follow through with these plans will help you to minimize the impact of the stressor on your daily life and over time, small successes will help you feel more confident in your ability to tackle other concerns in the future.

GET STRESS-HANDLING EXPERIENCE

The best way to learn how to manage stress is to get practice. Try putting yourself in a situation that creates some feelings of stress or pressure, but not at levels that are overwhelming.

Because these situations are not life or death or highly intense, the experience can gently prompt you to stretch out of your comfort zone and consider new strategies for coping with the discomfort. As a 'safe zone' you can get practice and build your confidence for managing other stressors in the future.

NURTURE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Knowing you have people in your life that you can turn to for support during stressful experiences can be very helpful. Supportive relationships are beneficial for your health and well-being.

Take time to create and nurture your social network. Make emotional investments in your relationships during periods when you are not experiencing high levels of stress, so you can 'cash them in' when you need them. Take special care to include friends and other supporters who are optimistic and can share their own experiences of having successfully managed stress in their lives.



BE MINDFUL

Meditation has been shown to improve immune system functions, assist with pain control, lower blood pressure and increase your ability to concentrate. Anyone can practice meditation—it's simple, inexpensive and you can do it anywhere. As a strategy for managing stress, meditation can help you to gain a new perspective on stressful situations, be more self-aware and reduce negative emotions.

Try this two-minute stress solution:

30 seconds

- Find a quiet space.
- Get into a comfortable position.

90 seconds

- Close your eyes or focus on an object or image (avoid roaming your eyes).
- Focus on your breathing, taking deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth.

STAY RESTED

Sleep plays an important role in helping us to manage our emotions and ensure physical energy and mental clarity for managing the demands of our daily lives. The following strategies can help you achieve a good night's sleep:

- Keep your bedroom cool, dark and without distractions.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol before bed.
- Tire your body with physical exercise during the day.
- Get help—if things don't improve, seek counselling, guided meditation, relaxation exercises and doctor-prescribed medications to help.

If you need additional support and other strategies, be sure to contact your health care provider.

As an ASEBP covered member, coverage is available for counselling and other types of support. Refer to the psychology benefit section of the [ASEBP Extended Health Care Benefit Guide](#) for information about your coverage.

SOURCES

[Harvard Business Review](#)

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[Mayo Clinic](#)

[Sleep and Mental Health – July 2009 Harvard Health Publications, Harvard Medical School](#)

