

General Stress and Anxiety Management
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Imagine walking into a room that is filled with everything on your to-do lists. As you continue to walk further into the room you are greeted by a list of every responsibility you have to yourself, your family, and others. You begin to notice a tightness in your chest and an increase in your heart rate as you worry about the number of things you are responsible for and all the things you have to get done. You know that you need to find an exit, but as soon as you turn your head to look, you see the demands of maintaining a healthy physical and social life mingling in each of the corners of the room. Worry is starting to set in and you find yourself sweating, feeling overwhelmed, and needing to escape. You catch a glimpse of some light in the back of the room and notice a door that says exit. You quickly walk towards this door leaving behind your to-do list, responsibilities, and daily demands only to realize that the only exit is being blocked by the need to maintain a balance between your school, your work, and your home life. You realize there is no escaping and you throw your hands up. This is too much!!

At times we can feel as though life is too much. The demands of our everyday lives can stress us out and cause us to feel anxious. Stress and anxiety are both common to every individual regardless of race, age, and/or gender. We will all experience stress and anxiety at some point in our lives. The question is “How do we manage it”?

First, we need to define stress and anxiety. Stress is our physical, emotional, and mental responses to the positive and negative changes in our lives. Anxiety is the emotion we feel that is often characterized by fear, nervousness, and persistent worry about our everyday lives. Understanding the difference between stress and anxiety will help you understand how to manage both. Below are some general tips to help you manage general stress and anxiety.

Be Aware of the Signs:

The first step to controlling stress and anxiety is to be able to recognize your physical and emotional responses. **Does your heart rate increase? Do you sweat, breath heavily and quickly, or does your blood pressure rise? Are you having trouble sleeping, do you feel**

lethargic, or are you losing weight? Our bodies are not equipped to handle long-term chronic stress and anxiety without experiencing negative consequences. So understanding the signs and symptoms are key to prevent you from reaching your breaking point. Think of it like this, being aware of the signs and symptoms of anxiety and stress is like slamming on your breaks to avoid hitting a car in front of you. It keeps you from wrecking yourself.

Take A Break:

Learning how to take a break from stressors is important. There will always be something that you can be doing. The truth is there will never be enough hours in the day to do everything that you need to get done. Taking a break allows you to defuse stress in the moment and refocus. **Taking a 10-15 minute break to eat a snack, play with a pet, walk outside, and/or sit and breath** can be very beneficial to your overall health.

Get Active:

Being active is a great way to relieve stress and anxiety. Whether you like to **run, walk, do yoga, meditate, practice deep breathing and mindfulness, or attend exercise classes** being active not only helps to alleviate the signs and symptoms of stress it also helps you maintain a healthy lifestyle as well. Activities that require you to be active allow your brain to produce Endorphins--chemicals that act as natural pain relievers and mood elevators-- and by adding an active activity to your schedule the harmful effects of stress and anxiety can be greatly reduced.

Do Something You LOVE:

Taking time for yourself is key in managing stress and anxiety. You have to make yourself a priority. Self-care is the most critical component to combat stress and anxiety. If you enjoy **journaling, spending time with friends and family, listening to music, drawing, reading, etc.** make time to do those things **YOU** enjoy. Katie Reed said it best, “self-care is giving the world the best of you, instead of what’s left of you”.

Lastly, SET BOUNDARIES:

Now I know that this is hard. Especially if you are a giving, caring, or hardworking individual. We often run ourselves down trying to ensure that everything and everyone is taken care of, but **LEARNING TO SAY NO and PRIORITIZING** things in your life based off of importance will do wonders to relieve stress and anxiety.

Stress and Anxiety are part of life. However, knowing how to manage general stress and anxiety is important in order to prevent long-term negative physical and mental health effects that are caused when stress and anxiety go unchecked.

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