

# STRESSED OUT?

Did you know stress can be good for you? That's right – *good for you*. Stress – in forms such as competition, deadlines, and taking risks – creates the challenge and motivation we need to enjoy our lives, to feel a sense of accomplishment, to be fulfilled and happy. However, excessive stress experienced over a long period of time can contribute to physical and emotional problems.

## Stress sources

### **External:**

Change – the number one source of stress is change. If you are moving, starting a new job, getting married or divorced, or even just starting a new diet you will feel some stress. Even when the change is positive, it takes time to adjust.

Overload – another major source of stress is overload. At work or at home. When responsibilities pile up you tend to feel pressured and scattered.

Deprivation – if you have few connections to friends or family, you may be lonely or bored which can result in feeling helpless or hopeless about life.

Frustration – all those obstacles! Sometimes it seems the path to what you want is endlessly blocked. If this goes on for too long you may begin to think nothing will ever solve your problems.

### **Internal:**

Self-discouragement – ever catch yourself calling yourself names? The negative and critical remarks you make to yourself add to your stress level and intensity feelings of low self-esteem.

Chronic anger – some problems don't seem to go away no matter what you do, and when that happens you can get stuck in anger, rage, and hostility if you don't cope with your feelings.

Planning for disaster – facing a special task or event and thinking about all the things that could go wrong? This is stress by anticipation. Imagining a catastrophe can be almost as hard as living through a disaster.

## Stress signs

- Stiff neck
- Chronic tension
  - headaches
- Sleep disturbances
  - Indigestion
- Muscular aches and pains
  - Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
  - Sweaty palms
- Racing pulse or palpitations
- Rapid or uneven breathing

**MANAGE IT,  
DON'T LET IT  
MANAGE YOU!**

## Stress relievers

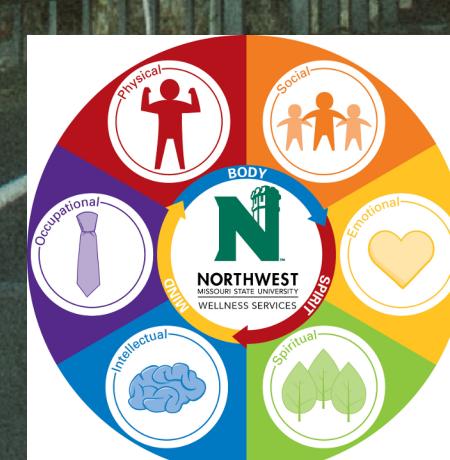
Relax – make time to do things that are relaxing to you. You could take a warm bath or just sit quietly in a room and breathe deeply. Participate in recreational sport activities or practice relaxation techniques such as meditation.

Laugh – tell jokes to someone, watch a funny movie, and find something funny to laugh at every day. Just like exercise, laughter releases chemicals in your body that makes you feel good and humor also helps keep life's problems in perspective.

Exercise – regular exercise helps relieve tension in your muscles and releases brain chemicals that make you feel good. Even a brisk 30 minute walk three to four times a week can reduce your stress and improve your physical condition.

Organize – have a set routine that includes a nutritious diet, plenty of rest, and time for yourself. Jot down appointments, meetings, and other functions on a calendar. When working on a task focus on the individual steps to complete the task so you're not overwhelmed.

Talk – share your thoughts, feelings, and fears with someone. A friend, family member, a member of the clergy, a counselor, or even a support group. Discussing your situation with someone can make it less overwhelming and easier to handle.



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