

Stress & Depression

COPING SKILLS



do you know
your **risks?**

Stress Can Be Good

When you become stressed, your body reacts by releasing various chemicals that have an immediate impact on your functioning levels. It can help motivation levels, warn of danger, provide a sudden boost of energy, sharpen certain senses, and even temporarily boost the immune system.

Problem Stress

Stress becomes a problem when it interferes in how we want to live our lives. Chronic stress can cause serious health problems such as: decreased immune function, heart disease, high blood pressure, sleep problems, digestive issues, obesity, memory problems, depression, anxiety, muscle soreness, and more.

**Call the Behavioral Health Services
directly at 1.877.221.9295.**

Recovery can, will, and DOES happen.

The “Relaxation Response”

The body has a built-in mechanism called the “relaxation response” to counteract the hormones in your body that are created when you are feeling stressed.

Once the response is triggered, it causes physical and emotional changes such as:

- slower heart rate and lower blood pressure
- slower breathing
- lower muscle tension
- calmer mood and clearer mind

Triggered regularly, the “relaxation response” has been scientifically proven to effectively treat a wide range of stress-related disorders. It can also help with any diseases that are made worse by stress.

Included in this pamphlet, are a couple of ways to trigger the “relaxation response.”

Relaxation Exercises

1. Pick a “focus word” that holds meaning for you in some way. A common word is “peace.”
2. Sit comfortably without distractions and close your eyes.
3. Relax all your muscles as much as you can. Calm your breathing.
4. Start saying your focus word out loud at a constant, even pace.
5. Slow down the pace and transition to saying it only in your mind.
6. When other thoughts enter your mind, simply say, “Oh well,” and refocus on your word.
7. Do this for 5 to 20 minutes.

Sources: massgeneral.org/bhi/basics/rr.aspx
mayoclinic.com/health

“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.”

– William James

know your **options**

Progressive Relaxation

- Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes.
- Focus first on your feet. Tense all the muscles in your feet as hard as possible. Keep them tense for 10 seconds, if you can.
- Relax your feet and feel all the tension release for 30 seconds.
- Tense again and release.
- Move up from your feet and repeat the same steps for every muscle in your body (calves, thighs, butt, abs, etc.)
- This exercise should take approximately 10 to 20 minutes to complete.

Mindfulness

This can be done anywhere from your home to waiting in line at the store.

1. Before you go out, put any small object in your pocket (small figurine, coins, pen, clothespin, keys, etc.)
2. When faced with stress, put the object in your hand and begin to focus all of your attention on it.
3. Ask yourself: How does it feel? Is it rough or soft? Does it have sharp or curved edges? What do you notice about it?
4. When other thoughts enter your mind, simply say, “Oh well,” and refocus on the object.
5. Do this for two to five minutes. If needed, repeat.

