

## What is Stress?

**Stress** is a normal, natural, unavoidable feeling caused by the pressures of everyday life!

- **SOME stress is necessary and important.** In fact, it can actually be positive and helpful. Stress energizes us and keeps us on our toes! It helps us accomplish things which in turn makes us feel good about ourselves. It can also add excitement to our lives!
- **But TOO MUCH stress can cause “distress”** — making us feel miserable, sad, sick, and worried. It can even lead to anxiety and depression if we can’t figure out healthy ways of handling it!



Is everyone paying attention?

So here’s the real deal:

The challenge of stress is not whether or not to have it...  
everyone does!

But rather whether or not we know  
healthy ways of handling or “coping” with it!

HOW people deal with stress  
can affect both their Health and Happiness.



## What Causes Stress?

All kinds of things! But a major culprit is **CHANGE**. And one thing we all know for certain is that things never seem to stay the same!

Stress results from both good and bad changes in our lives. For example, both making the team and not making the team can cause stress.



Wow, that's news to me !!

Can you list at least 3 changes that have happened in your life in the last few years?



When you're done, see if any of these changes apply to you:

- Personal loss (such as the death of a person or pet close to you)
- Loss of friendship — through arguments or maybe moving away
- Illness or injury
- Money problems
- New job
- Acquiring step-brother(s) or step-sister(s)
- Siblings moving out, perhaps going to college
- Someone going to jail
- Job promotion
- Trouble at work
- Being fired
- Parents arguing
- Parents separating or divorcing
- Parent(s) remarrying
- New home
- New school
- New baby

# Other Things That May Cause Stress:

## Body Changes...



I'm so embarrassed!  
Everyone is staring at me!

## Too Many Expectations...



If I don't get an "A"  
my dad will kill me!

## Communication Problems...



My mother never listens to me!  
No one does!

## Family Breakups...



Why are MY parents getting a divorce?

## Schedule Overload...



Can I possibly juggle art lessons, ski club and baby-sitting class on Saturdays?

## Frustration...



Where will I get the money to buy the sneakers I really want?

## Peer Pressure...



I know I shouldn't go with them. But it's just so hard to say no...

Also, Relationships...

Increasing Responsibilities...

Conflict...

# Possible Results of NOT Knowing How to Handle Stress

More Illnesses And Diseases...like colds, stomachaches, headaches, high blood pressure, ulcers, and even ♥ attacks.



Arguments With Family And Friends...



Decreased Interest In School...



Being Dissatisfied With Yourself...



Use Of Alcohol Or Other Drugs...



Feelings Of Depression...



Eating Disorders...



## Remember!

Negative reactions to stress are common. But there ARE better ways to cope! To find out more, read on.

# Coping Strategies

(or Positive Ways to Handle Stress)

While there's no magic formula for handling stress, there certainly are **LOTS** of positive ways people can choose to cope. Start by laughing more.

It's the world's **BEST** stress reducer. Then, accept the fact that, much as you might like to, you can't possibly control every situation.

After that, try one (or more) of the following suggestions:



## WORK IT OFF!

If you're angry or upset, do something physical you enjoy, like running or riding a bike. These kinds of activities release chemicals in the brain that can lead to a more relaxed or natural feeling of happiness.

## LISTEN TO YOUR BODY!

If you are tense, have a headache, or a pounding heart...your body is telling you that you've had enough. So **SLOW DOWN!** Also make sure you 1) get enough sleep as even small problems can seem **HUGE** when you are overtired, and 2) eat right. Healthy food and plenty of rest **WILL** make you feel better! Promise!



## TALK IT OVER!

When things get tough, share your feelings with people you trust and respect! Turn to family, friends, coaches, counselors, or teachers. They care, so chances are they'll listen. They can even offer sound advice, a shoulder to lean on, a

hug, or another way of looking at a problem. Really "connecting" with someone else can feel especially good.

# More Ways to Handle STRESS!

## TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR LIFE!

Don't just sit there! Call a friend, find something interesting to do, visit someone, learn something new, write a letter, check out what's going on around town, join a club, or do anything else safe that sounds like fun!



## DO SOMETHING NICE FOR OTHERS!

Doing something nice for someone — no matter how small — makes both of you feel great!

## BALANCE WORK AND PLAY!

And remember to take breaks, especially when you're busy!!! Doing something you like, such as reading a book or playing soccer, helps clear the mind, relax you, and give you new energy!



## AVOID MEDICATING YOURSELF!

Don't rely on alcohol, cigarettes, or other drugs to help you cope. Rely on yourself instead!



continued...



What do you think about THESE suggestions?

### THINK POSITIVELY!

Tell yourself —

- \* I am special!!
- \* I need to take care of myself.
- \* I'm not the cause of other people's problems.
- \* I can love my parents without taking sides.
- \* I can talk to friends, teachers, and counselors..... even ask for help if I need it.

Always remember:

**YOU** are in control! You can handle it!  
You **CAN** manage your own stress!



### LEARN TO RELAX!

Relaxing is healthy, and there are lots of ways to do it!

Here are a few suggestions:

- Take a warm bath
- Laugh a lot!
- Be creative. Try something new — cooking, sketching, gardening, dancing
- Listen to your favorite music
- Find a private place to go and dream!
- Do anything safe and healthy that makes you feel relaxed!

# Importance of Relaxation

You can't be tense and feel relaxed at the same time! So... if you can learn ways to relax (especially in difficult situations), you won't feel as uncomfortable, anxious, or "stressed out." Try and learn more about the following strategies that can help both young people and adults relax...



- **DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES**

For example, inhale deeply through your nose, filling your chest and then your abdomen. Hold your breath, exhaling gradually from the abdomen and then the chest. Repeat 5 times.

- **REHEARSAL STRATEGIES**

Rehearse in advance **HOW** to respond to stressful situations or conversations. Roleplaying different options can decrease anxiety and increase self-confidence.



- **MEDITATION**

Give your mind a needed "break" by trying to focus on only one word or image. Sit up straight, count slowly, and take about 30 deep breaths. During each one, fill the abdomen first, then the rib cage.



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## More Ways To Relax...

- **GUIDED IMAGERY**

Treat yourself to a free, mini, mental vacation! Visualize (that means imagine) a scene you find particularly restful. Then try truly sensing (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) **ALL** of the details.



- **STRETCHING EXERCISES**

“Muscle tension” is an automatic physical response to stress. Stretching loosens tight muscles and helps combat stress.

- **RELAXATION EXERCISES**

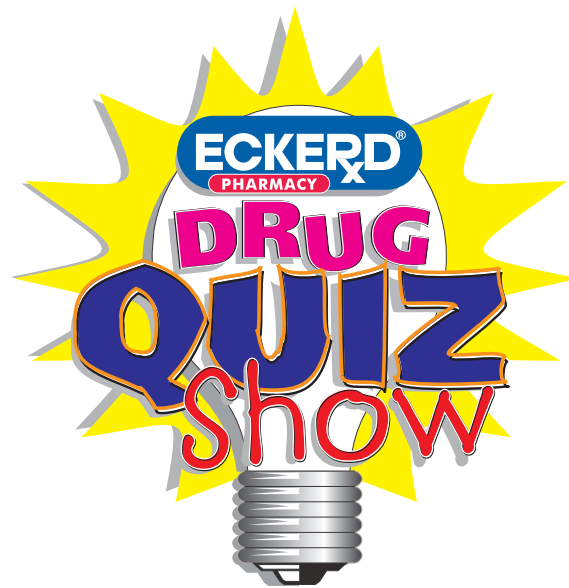
Systematically tighten sets of muscles or body parts (such as thighs or fists). Inhale deeply as you tighten the muscles. Exhale slowly as you release them.



What other ways have **YOU** learned to relax?

Hot tubs...  
Yoga...  
Drawing...  
Drumming...  
Spinning...  
Reading...





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