

Stress-Depression connection

Stress can be + or -, our bodies are equipped to adequately handle stress in small doses for short periods of time, when stress becomes chronic; it changes our body/brain chemistry.

Chronic negative stress becomes distress. Prolonged distress can lead to depression.

How we view stressful situations has a lot to do with how we view life/self-talk/ingrained messages we have believed.

Changing how we think can equip us to handle stress more effectively, thereby minimizing the negative effects of stress.

Unresolved anger can lead to stress. Anger turned inward leads to depression. Learning how to recognize, accept, and deal with angry feelings helps to reduce stress and promote wellness.

Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems.

Too little stress (boredom) can have negative effects on our living. The ultimate goal is to find a rhythm in life.

To identify stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses:

1. Do you explain away stress as temporary (I just have million things going on right now) even though you can't remember the last time you took a breather?
2. Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life? (Things are always crazy around here) or as a part of your personality? (I just have a lot of nervous energy).
3. Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events, or view it as entirely normal and unexceptional?

Stress journal

Learning healthier ways to deal with stress: There are many healthy ways to cope with stress, but they all require change. You can either change the situation, or change your reaction (attitude).

The Four A's

Change the situation:	Change your reaction:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Avoid the stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Adapt to the stressor
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Alter the stressor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Accept the stressor

#1 – Avoid unnecessary stress - not all stress can be avoided, and it's not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed.

- **Learn how to say “NO”** – know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, refuse to accept added responsibilities when you're close to reaching them. Taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.
- **Avoid people who stress you out** – If someone consistently causes stress in your life and you can't turn the relationship around, limit the amount of time you spend with that person or end the relationship entirely.
- **Take control of your environment** – if the evening news makes you anxious, turn the TV off. If traffic's got you tense, take a longer but less-traveled route.
- **Avoid hot-button topics**- If you get upset over religion or politics, cross them off your conversation list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it's the topic of discussion.
- **Pare down your to-do-list** – analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the “should” and the “musts”. Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

2. Alter the situation – If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Figure out what you can do to change things so the problem doesn't present itself in the future. This often involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your life.

- **Express your feelings instead of bottling them up** – If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will likely remain the same.

- **Be willing to compromise** – When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.
- **Be more assertive** – Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them.
- **Manage your time better**- Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused. But if you plan ahead and make sure you don't overextend yourself, you can alter the amount of stress you're under.

3. Adapt to the stressor:

- **Reframe problems** – Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some time alone.
- **Look at the big picture**- Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over?
- **Adjust your standards** – Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with "good enough."
- **Focus on the positive** – when stress is getting your down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts.

4. Accept the things you cannot change

- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable** – Many things in life are beyond our control—particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- **Look for the upside**- As the saying goes "What doesn't kill us makes us stronger." When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.

- **Share your feelings-** Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist. Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the situation.
- **Learn to forgive** – Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.

Make time for fun and relaxation:

Healthy ways to relax and recharge:

- Go for a walk
 - Spend time in nature
 - Call a good friend
 - Sweat out tension with a good workout
 - Write in your journal
 - Take a long bath
 - Light scented candles
 - Savor a warm cup of coffee or tea
 - Play with a pet
 - Work in your garden
 - Get a massage
 - Curl up with a good book
 - Listen to music
 - Watch a comedy
- Set aside time for relaxation - include this in your daily schedule
 - Connect with others-spend time with positive people who enhance your life.
 - Do something you enjoy every day- make time for things that bring you joy.
 - Keep your sense of humor- this includes the ability to laugh at yourself.

Adopt a healthy lifestyle

- Exercise regularly - at least 30 minutes three times a week.
- Eat a healthy diet- include a hearty breakfast to jump start your day.
- Reduce caffeine and sugar- these provide a temporary high and end in a crash in mood and energy.
- Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs- self-medicating is only a temporary escape from stress and usually compounds the stressful situation.
- Get enough sleep- this fuels your mind and your body to better cope with stressful situation.

