

Self-Care for Stress

We tend to think of stress as being about events. But in reality, stress is about our reaction to events. An event that you find stressful may seem like an exciting challenge to someone else.

Stress generally falls into two categories:

- ▶ **External stress** is caused by events going on around you, such as changes in routines, money worries, deadlines, conflicts with family members, and important life events.
- ▶ **Internal stress** comes from within, and occurs because of your values, beliefs, self-image, and desire to meet personal goals and live up to expectations.

It's important to remember that not all stress is bad. Stress may be the result of a positive life event (such as a new baby). Stress can also motivate you to make healthy changes in your life.

Whether you are dealing with external or internal stress, how you react makes a huge difference in its impact on you. These self-care tips may make stress easier to handle:

- ▶ **Determine what you can control.** When you are stressed, list everything that is contributing to it. Separate these items into those you can control and those that are outside your influence. Focus on what you can control and the steps you can take to improve these concerns.



- ▶ **View a stressful event as an opportunity.** Try to think of a stressful event as a challenge that you need to overcome. Instead of focusing on the negative aspects, look for opportunities to grow from the experience.
- ▶ **Stay focused on the big picture.** Don't get too overwhelmed with small details or "what might have been." Instead, focus on your long-term plans and goals. See the stressful event as a temporary setback, not an impassable obstacle.

When dealing with stress, it may also help to:

- ▶ Eat regular, healthy meals with plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- ▶ Exercise for a total of 30 minutes per day
- ▶ Spend time with people who make you laugh
- ▶ Get seven to eight hours of sleep per night

If stress seems constant or if you are having a hard time managing day-to-day tasks, it's important to seek help. LifeMatters is available to provide 24/7 assistance. Call anytime.

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