

# Managing Stress: *A Checklist for Understanding Stressful or Traumatic Situations*



It is possible to reduce the stress in your life. Here are some helpful tips:

- Acknowledge your stress.
- Be open to learning new ways of coping.
- Stay connected.
- Help others.
- Develop an attitude of hope.
- Find meaning in your life experiences.
- Know your strengths in coping with stress.
  - What skills have you used in the past that you found worked?
  - How can you use these strengths more effectively?
- Set goals from the “here and now.” Ask:
  - What are my goals (for today, this week, this month, this year)?
  - What are my assets and resources?
  - What are the barriers that keep me from my goals?
  - Should I plan to overcome those barriers, or do I need to modify my goals?
- Engage in deep breathing exercises.
  - Take a short break and just breathe.
  - Breathe deep, filling your lungs.
  - Let the air out slowly.
  - Do this once—get immediate relief.
  - Do this five times—it’s even better.
  - Repeat as necessary—it’s painless.
- Be physically active.
  - Even if you are tired from a long day, a nice walk for 30 minutes, a bicycle ride, or even a trip to the gym can be surprisingly refreshing.
  - While a planned, scheduled routine is good, even an impulsive “I need to take a walk” can have significant impact.
- Maintain good sleep hygiene.
  - Set your sleep routine (bedtime and waking).
  - Create an environment that helps you sleep.
    - Dark and quiet space.
    - Comfortable bed.
    - Use the bed for sleeping and sex only.
  - In bed, think about something relaxing.
  - Pay attention to what and when you eat and drink.
  - Watch out for those “naps,” even when you feel sleepy during the day or evening.
  - If you are restless and don’t fall asleep within 20–30 minutes—
    - Get out of bed until you feel sleepy again (usually within 20–60 minutes).
    - Go to another room.
    - Watch TV, read, or write in a journal about how you are feeling.
    - As soon as you feel sleepy again, go to bed.
    - Repeat as necessary.
  - Remember: It may take days or weeks to reestablish your sleep routine once it has been disrupted.

- Eat a healthy diet.
  - Good nutritional balance will help you cope.
  - Eat regular meals and controlled amounts at regular times.
  - Watch out for snacks and for eating later in the evening (can impact sleep).

***Managing Stress Requires Action Now and a Commitment for the Future***

- Skills help most when used routinely (but it can be hard to remember to use the skills).
- Practicing will help you get better at managing stress.
- Practicing bad behaviors will cause you to get better at them, too, so avoid them!
- If you deliberately practice positive skills, you are more likely to remember you have those tools in your toolbox.

*Never be ashamed to seek professional help from a licensed counselor, therapist, or psychologist; he or she may be able to help you build or improve on these life skills.*

**National and State Resources**

National Crisis Hotline  
 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
 Mississippi State Health Department  
 1-866-HLTHY4U (458-4948)  
 2-1-1 Mississippi Community Resources  
 Dial 211 from your phone or 866-472-8265

**Local Resources**

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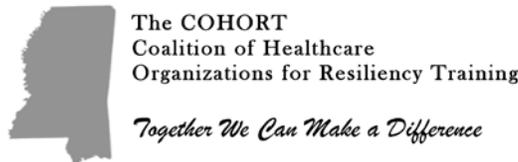
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For more information on stress and trauma, see Extension Information Sheet 2004 *Managing Stress: A Guide for Understanding Stressful or Traumatic Situations*.

**Developed in collaboration with**




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By **David R. Buys**, PhD, MSPH, Extension State Health Specialist, Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion; and **Katrina Akande**, PhD, Assistant Professor, Human Sciences.



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