"How can I manage stress better?"

Use these coping strategies to deal with stress.

Finding ways to manage our stress can be difficult. We all have different ways of coping with stressful situations, but they are not always healthy methods. Your responses can either make the situation better or worse depending on how you react in that moment. Use the lists below to determine how healthy your coping skills are or if you tend to lean towards the negative responses. Not all of these strategies will work for everyone. Find something that works for you. Here are three types of coping strategies:

Appraisal-focused: Evaluating one's beliefs and changing behavior, such as denial

Problem-focused: Reducing a stressor by developing a new skill to handle a problem

Emotion-focused: Altering one's emotional reaction to a situation

Positive coping skills

- Spend time with supportive family or friends.
- Eat healthy meals.
- Exercise for 30 minutes most days of the week.
- Set boundaries and learn to say "no."
- Start a gratitude journal.
- Listen to music.
- Join a social group.
- Garden or work around the house.
- Go out with a friend.
- Make a list of all the positive things in your life.
- Paint, draw or color. Do something artistic.
- Take a shower or a bath.
- Stop and take time to think before reacting.
- Organize your space.
- Pray or meditate.
- Prioritize tasks.
- Practice forms of deep relaxation like yoga, meditation, deep breathing or visualization.
- Take a break or vacation.
- Talk to someone you trust.
- Watch a movie.
- Play a game.
- Brainstorm solutions.
- Lower your expectations.
- Post an inspirational quote nearby.
- Learn to be flexible.
- Read.
- Go for a hike.
- Practice time management.
- Play with a pet.
- Reward yourself when successful.
- Find a hobby or activity you can do a few times a week.
- Write a list of pros and cons to make better choices.
- Volunteer, set small realistic goals, try something new.
- **Take time for yourself!**

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Review the list of negative responses and make note of your typical reactions. Can you replace any with a positive coping skill that is appraisal, problem or emotion-focused?

Negative reactions or negative responses to stressors:

- Yelling and screaming
- Driving fast
- Negative self-talk and self-criticism
- Using alcohol, drugs, or tobacco products to sleep or relax
- Being aggressive and/or violent
- Avoiding family, friends, or skipping work/school
- Over indulging
- Over spending
- Missing sleep to get more things finished at night
- Procrastination
- Blaming others
- Isolating yourself
- Criticizing
- Refusing help from others
- Denial
- Being stubborn
- Self harm
- Sabotaging yourself
- Gambling
- Eating too much or too little
- Lying
- Letting others take advantage of you

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