

MANAGE YOUR STRESS



Understand Stress and How to manage it

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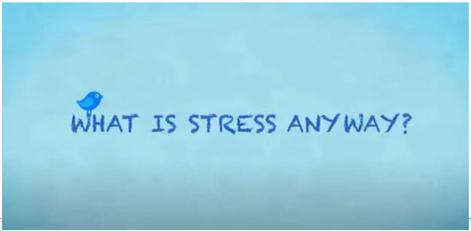
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What is Stress?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnrqG4BBsOA> (4:40)



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What is Stress?

Stress is a feeling following with a response that can happen to anyone when he or she has to handle **a change** or **a difficult situation**.

Stress can come from outside, such as family, friends, work, and school. It can also come from ourselves. People may expect too much of themselves and then feel stressed if they feel that they have "failed."

We can feel stress that is brief, such as being called on in class or trying out for a team. Or it can last longer, such as after a death in the family or a divorce. For some people, such as those living in poverty, stress may come from long-lasting situations.

Starting School after vacation



Having exams or homework



Daily routine changed



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Why do I freak out when I am stressed?

When our brain thinks we are in danger, it responds to help us stay safe. This is called our fight/flight/freeze response.

Imagine you're in a forest. Suddenly, an angry bear appears between the trees and runs towards you....You would.....?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bdo0liscqsk> (2:00)



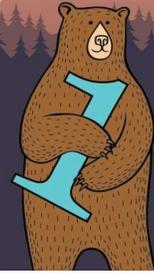
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These responses are automatic, which means you don't consciously choose which one you do in any situation.

You might react in different ways in different situations. People tend to favour one response over others most of the time.

For example it might seem very silly to 'freeze' when there is a bear about, but it's useful when faced with a predator who struggles to see prey that isn't moving!

We live in a world that is full of stress. So even though you're not being chased by a bear, stuff like homework or fighting with friends can trigger your fight/flight/freeze response.



The same parts of the brain that interpret being attacked by a bear also process the stress you feel when doing math homework!

If it keeps getting activated, your stress response gets stronger!

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What are signs of stress?

Ways you can experience fight/flight/freeze

In modern-day life with modern-day stress and anxiety, your response might look like:

- Panic (flight response)
- Being irritable (fight response)
- Not reacting at all (freeze response)
- Getting into an argument (fight response)
- Isolation or withdrawal (flight or freeze response)
- Procrastination or avoidance (flight or freeze response)

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What are physical signs of stress?

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Understanding your Window of Tolerance for Stress

The Window of Tolerance is a term created by a psychiatrist named Dr. Dan Siegel to help you understand how your body reacts to stressful times and events. It's a way to reflect on what happens when our bodies and minds are stressed or feel threatened. Often, we may feel responses or reactions in our bodies before we notice what we're feelings or thinking.

• <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6nu3iqj8ldc> (4:51)

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Reflecting on your Window of Tolerance

It's helpful to check in with yourself regularly to reflect on things going on in your life and create time and space to notice how different situations and challenges are impacting you. It's important to note that your goal isn't to get rid of being above or below the window (it's common to move outside your window sometimes), but to use your self-awareness to get back inside your window when you notice you're outside of it. With more self-awareness and practice, you can make your Window of Tolerance bigger so that you can be inside it more often.

- What physical sensations tell you that you're above / within / below your Window of Tolerance?
- What can help you to get back to your window if you're above it (high energy or hyperaroused)?
- What can help you get back in your window if you're below it (low energy or hypoaroused)?

•Remember a time when you were "in" your window. How did that feel?

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What can you do to help with stress?

If you are feeling stressed, anxious or just struggling to deal, there are lots of coping strategies you can try.

- Breathing exercise
- Mindfulness
- Get creative
- Use your imagination
- Talk it out!

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Breathing Exercise

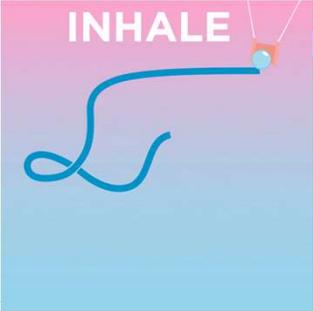
Why does breathing help you feel calm?

Believe it or not, your body and brain communicate with each other all the time!

When we are stressed, our breathing patterns become fast and chest-focused.

When we are calm, our breathing patterns are slow, even and stomach-focused.

Taking slow, calm breath is one way for your body to communicate to your brain that you are safe and it's ok to calm down.



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Mindfulness

Why does mindfulness help you feel calm?

Our mind has a unique ability to venture into the past or future!

For example, we can stress over a fight with had with a friend yesterday or worry about a test we have next week.

But our body is always in the present moment.

Mindfulness is about grounding and reconnecting with your body so your mind can also be in the present moment.

Mindfulness strategies are all about being 'present' by connecting with one or more of your five senses. They are sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.

The 5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique
Ease your state of mind in stressful moments.




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Get Creative

Our brain loves to be creative. Activities that allow you to express yourself aren't just fun; they can be quite healing as well – which is why things like 'art therapy' exist.

1. Things like creative writing, dancing, music and art can alter your brain waves and create different mental and emotional states, especially if you get 'absorbed' in the activity.
2. This activities can act as distractions, which are sometimes a helpful way to break a worry cycle or help shift your mood.
3. Allowing you time to process and gain insights into your thoughts, feelings or behaviors.

me: lacks motivation to finish assignment

also me: spends 3 hours making the perfect tiktok video



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Use Your Imagination

Why do imagination and daydreaming help?

Your brain loves to have adventures and imagine things!

Worrying is one way your brain uses its imagination. But daydreaming is the flipside of worrying.

In fact, when you imagine something, the same parts of your brain 'light up' as if you actually experienced it.

So, if you imagined positive future events or a safe, relaxing place, or if you daydreamed about your family, friends, or partner, it could increase happiness.



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Talk it Out!

If you are feeling anxious, asking for help might make you feel even more worried. If you are feeling depressed, you might feel like things are hopeless and getting help won't make a difference.

Your feelings are valid, but they aren't necessarily true. Asking for help can make a big difference, even when it doesn't feel that way!



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Helping Children Cope with Exam Stress!



When your child faces exams, often scheduled close together, they are under incredible pressure. They'll need your understanding and support.

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What does exam stress look like?



- ✔ Blaming others, anger or frustration
- ✔ Problems going to sleep or waking up
- ✔ Mild chest tightness or pain
- ✔ Skin breakouts
- ✔ Increased smoking, drinking or drug use
- ✔ Feeling cranky and irritable (increased yelling, crying, swearing, lashing out)
- ✔ Difficulty making decisions
- ✔ Racing heart and sweating
- ✔ Nausea or minor stomach upsets
- ✔ Teeth grinding, nail biting and fidgeting
- ✔ Losing touch with friends
- ✔ Feeling or thinking negatively about the future

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Why do children experience exam stress?

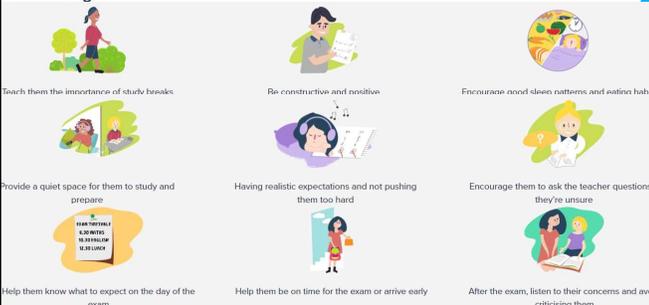
Stress is a negative reaction to excessive pressure or other demands.
Exam stress can be caused by:



- Fear of 'failure'
- Pessimism and thinking the worst
- Unrealistic expectations
- Feeling unprepared
- Ending or starting a new school year or term
- Performance anxiety

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One of the challenges as a parent is that exams are something your child has to do on their own. But you can support them by trying the following:



- Teach them the importance of study breaks
- Re-constructive and positive
- Encourage good sleep patterns and eating habits
- Provide a quiet space for them to study and prepare
- Having realistic expectations and not pushing them too hard
- Encourage them to ask the teacher questions if they're unsure
- Help them know what to expect on the day of the exam
- Help them be on time for the exam or arrive early
- After the exam, listen to their concerns and avoid criticising them

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Parenting Tool: The Importance of Validation

Validation is a parenting tool that lets your child know **that you understand and accept their thoughts and feelings**. If your child does not feel heard or understood they may react by using emotions and behaviors to get your attention.

It can be hard for parents to want to validate their child's feelings and behaviors sometimes when they seem strange, out of control, or dangerous and especially if they are aimed at you. It helps to remember that **when you are validating your child's feelings you are not saying you agree with or like their behavior**. Validation only means that you are listening and trying to understand your child's point of view without judgement.

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Parenting Tool: The Importance of Validation

How do I start to use validation?

Step 1:
Stop what you are doing and think about the situation

- Take a moment before responding.
- Watch the situation.
- Calm yourself down before acting.
- Decide what your goal is.
- Try not to react with strong emotions.

Step 2:
Look at your child with new eyes

- Be aware of your old ways of communicating and come up with new ways of thinking and responding.
- Remember your child is doing the best they can in the moment.
- Try to find out what emotion your child is feeling. If you don't know, can you ask?
- Think about what might be causing your child's current behavior.
- Think about what your child is going through. Is this situation bringing up difficult memories for your child?

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Parenting Tool: The Importance of Validation

How do I start to use validation?

Step 3:
Explore what might be getting in the way

- Think about past or current concerns you bring to the situation. Has this event triggered old memories or feelings in you?
- Be aware of your thoughts and feelings about the situation.
- Decide if you are judging your child or yourself in this moment.

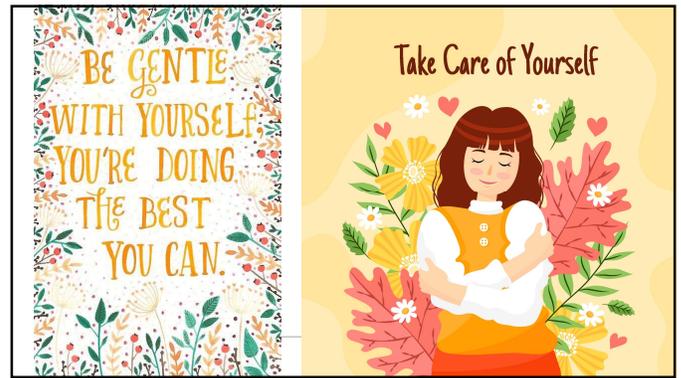
Step 4:
Make a validating statement

- Practice making statements that calm you and your child.
- For example, "It makes sense that we're frustrated. This is a tough situation."
- Show your understanding and acceptance of your child.
- For example, "I'm okay with you being frustrated right now."

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