

Managing Stress Reactions

Sometimes past experiences can affect the way we react to stressful situations. Identifying helpful coping strategies for dealing with stress can help you manage these reactions, especially during challenging situations.

Increase your awareness

Pay attention to how your body feels. Your body's cues can let you know when you are starting to have a stress reaction before you become upset or uncomfortable.

Allow for "time outs"

When you are feeling stressed, take a break. Distance yourself from the setting, either physically or mentally. Sometimes stepping back can help you see the situation from a different angle.

Practice relaxation techniques

Take three slow deep breaths or count slowly to 10. Try these techniques until you feel better. You might need to take more deep breaths or count to 10 a second or third time.

Positive self-talk

Remind yourself of things you do well and that these emotions will pass (e.g. "I can get through this," "I will be OK").

Maintain good self-care

Give your body what it needs, including sleep, exercise, and a healthy diet.

Survey your skills

Once you feel calm, take a moment to think about what strategies worked well. Write down some strategies that you can use in the future.

Access support from others

Talk and spend time with people who care about you. Sometimes a supportive friend can have good suggestions or remind you that you are loved.

Plan a strategic distraction

When you know a period of intense stress is around the corner, plan a time to do something you enjoy – a fun weekend activity with family or friends, reading a book, watching a movie, or just hanging out.