

STRESS and What You Can Do About It



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CONTENTS

What is Stress?.....	1
Not All Stress Is Bad	3
Things That Cause Stress.....	4
Symptoms of Stress	5
What You Can Do	7
How to Stay Calm	9
Preventing Stress	11
Seeking Help	12
Helping Others	12
Acknowledgements	13
Summary	14

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WHAT IS STRESS?

STRESS is how your **body feels** when you do **something new, or something different, or something you don't like to do.**

It can be scary to start a new job. It can feel weird to live somewhere new. When things like this happen, you might feel nervous, worried or even scared. You might start to breathe faster. Your heart might feel like it is beating harder. Your head might hurt.



When your body feels this way it is sometimes called “stress.” Everyone can feel stress. The things that make people feel stress are not always the same. The way people feel when they feel stress is not always the same either.

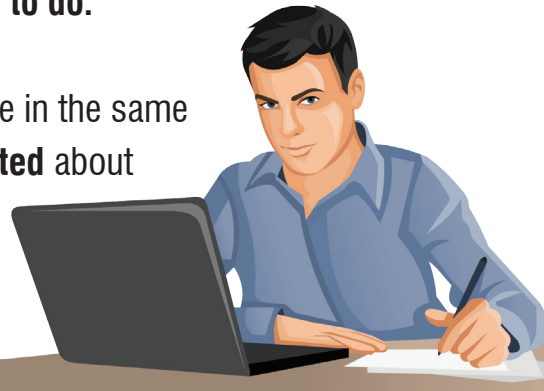
THE FIRST DAY

Becky and Eric are going to take a class to learn how to use the computer better.

Becky is excited about the class. Becky likes computers. She wants to learn more about using them. **When Becky thinks about going to the class she feels happy.**

Eric thinks it is hard to use the computer. He does not want to go to the class. **Eric is nervous about what the teacher will ask him to do.**

Eric and Becky will be in the same class. **Becky is excited** about the class. **Eric is scared** about the class.



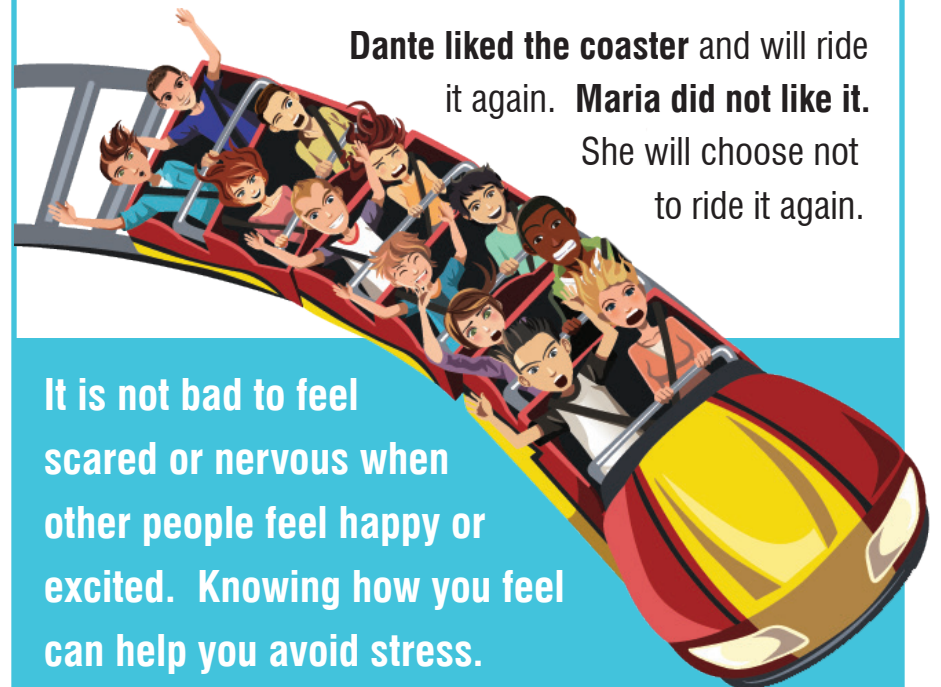
To reduce your stress you need to know:
What things make you feel bad?
What things make you feel good?
What kinds of things make you feel scared or nervous?

THE ROLLER COASTER

Dante and Maria are going to an amusement park that has roller coasters and fun rides. Dante loves to ride roller coasters. Maria does not.

Dante and Maria get on the roller coaster. The roller coaster goes fast. **Dante enjoys the ride.** He puts his hands in the air to feel the wind.

Maria does not like the ride. She is scared. She is sweating. She holds on tightly. She closes her eyes.



Dante liked the coaster and will ride it again. **Maria did not like it.** She will choose not to ride it again.

It is not bad to feel scared or nervous when other people feel happy or excited. Knowing how you feel can help you avoid stress.

NOT ALL STRESS IS BAD

Good STRESS can make you want to do a good job.

Stress can also be good. **Sometimes stress can help you learn new things.** It can also help you do things you thought you could not do.

When you **feel excited or proud** about something you are doing, it can be **good stress**. This might be what you feel when you do well at your job or finish a project you have worked hard on.

Frustration and anger can turn good stress to **bad stress**. When this happens, you may need to **take a break**. Knowing when you feel this way can help you reduce your stress.

HOW STRESS CAN TURN FROM GOOD TO BAD

Ray likes to help the animals at the shelter. Ray is proud of the job he does. This is good stress.

Mr. Lee is in charge of the shelter. He thinks Ray does a great job. Mr. Lee asks Ray if he can help three days a week at the shelter. Ray says yes.

Ray forgot he has to go to swim practice. Yesterday, Ray had swim practice first then went to work at the shelter. He was running late. At the shelter, Ray was tired and had a headache. This is bad stress.



THINGS THAT CAN CAUSE STRESS

Here are some things that make many people feel stress:

- You do not know how to tell someone what you are feeling.
- You do not know how to answer a question.
- You hear sounds and noises that hurt your ears.
- You have a fight with a friend.
- The place you are in is too busy.
- Someone asks you to do your job differently from the way you like to do it.
- Your schedule changes.
- You have too much to do.
- When something bad happens like someone you love dies, when you are very sick or when you have to move from one home to another.

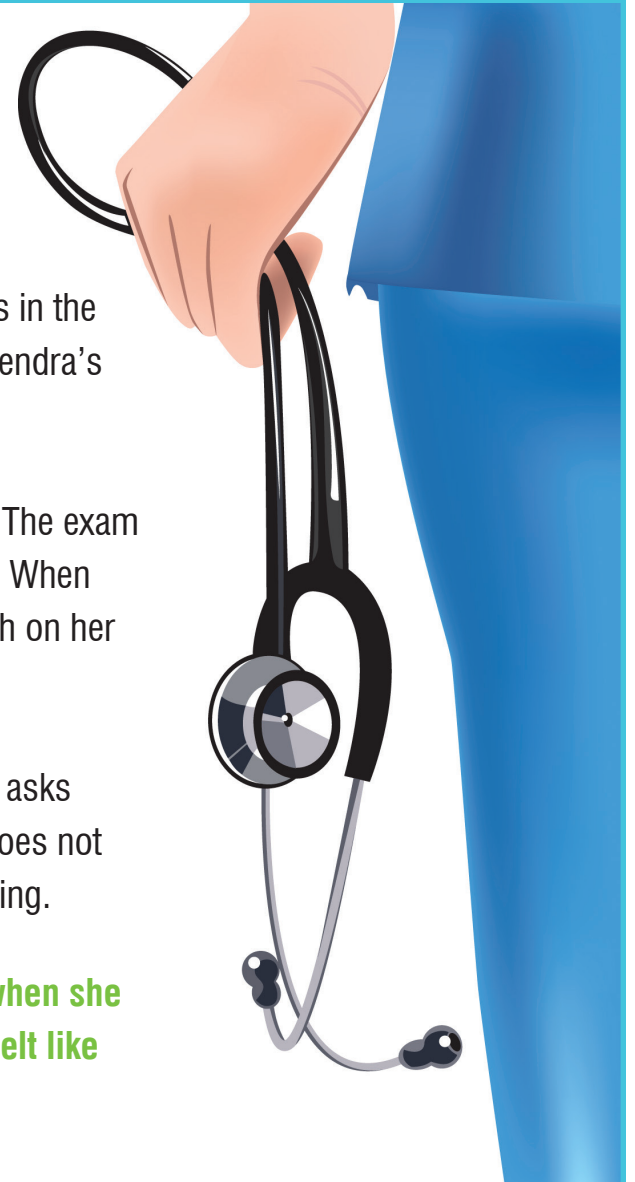
THE DOCTOR'S VISIT

Kendra does not like to go to the doctor. She feels nervous. The nurse calls out names very loudly and it hurts Kendra's ears. The lights in the office are very bright and they hurt Kendra's eyes.

It is Kendra's turn to see the doctor. The exam room table has scratchy paper on it. When Kendra sits on the paper it feels rough on her skin.

The doctor comes into the room and asks Kendra how she is feeling. Kendra does not know how to explain what she is feeling.

Kendra was feeling a lot of stress when she went to the doctor. Have you ever felt like this? What did you do?



SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

What does stress feel like? Your body lets you know through special feelings called symptoms.

Symptoms can be **physical (in your body)** or **emotional (in your mind)**. You might start sweating a lot because you are nervous. Your hands might shake because you are scared.

Symptoms like these are not always caused by stress. Some symptoms, like sweating or a fast heartbeat, can happen when you exercise. Your stomach can have a funny feeling when you have the flu. **Understanding what is causing your symptoms** will help you realize if they are because of stress or not.

Pay attention to your body and the way you feel. You will start to notice when you are feeling bad because of stress. It feels **different** from when you are sick.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Tense muscles in
neck and shoulders



Face feels hot
(Flushing)



Fast or strong
heart beat



Stomach ache or
upset stomach



Having trouble
sleeping



STRESS TEST

Do you get upset when something happens that you did not know would happen?

Yes

No

Do you find it hard to take care of yourself?

Yes

No

Do you have jobs that are too hard to do?

Yes

No

Do you get angry a lot?

Yes

No

Are you nervous about things happening to you?

Yes

No

Do things bother you a lot?

Yes

No

Have you noticed any physical or emotional symptoms of stress?

Yes

No

If you answered **yes to most** of these questions, you could be experiencing stress.

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

Feeling sad and not interested



Wanting to be alone



Feeling worried



Hard to concentrate



Feeling angry and frustrated



WHAT YOU CAN DO

You have learned what stress is and how to know if you are feeling stress. The next thing to learn is how to calm down when you feel stress.

When you feel the symptoms of stress the first thing you should do is **stop** what you are doing. Say to yourself, “**It’s time to relax.**” Then, do something to help yourself **calm down**.

STOP



The first thing to do when you feel stress is to stop. **Think of a stop sign or a red light.** Stop what you are doing when you feel stress.

THINK



Say to yourself, “**It’s time to relax.**” Think about things you can do to help yourself relax and stay calm. Choose one of those things to do.

RELAX



You can **relax** your muscles. You can count to ten and take deep breaths. You can do something you enjoy or think about a place you like to go.

A NERVOUS FEELING

Paul lives alone in his apartment. Paul gets nervous during thunderstorms. Doing word searches helps Paul to relax and feel less stress.

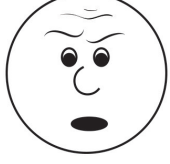
One afternoon, it looks like there will be a thunderstorm. Paul's heart rate goes up and his palms get sweaty. Paul is becoming stressed. Paul remembers to STOP, THINK, and RELAX.

Paul stops looking at the window. He closes his eyes. He takes a deep breath. He counts to 10. Paul thinks about something he likes to do. He enjoys circling words in word search books. Paul finds his book and looks for words. He is feeling less stress.

Are there activities you enjoy doing that could help you relax when you feel stress? Write them down.

WHEN DO YOU NEED TO CALM DOWN?

Are you feeling a lot of stress or a little? Look at this chart. If you are at a level 3, 4 or 5 it is time to use Stop, Think, Relax.

Level	Like when...	Makes me...
1	There is a change in your schedule or plans	
2	Someone is rude to you.	
3	You have to do something you don't like to do.	
4	You move to a new home or lose something special.	
5	You get fired from a job.	

Use the extra space in these boxes to write the things that make you feel a little stress or a lot of stress.

HOW TO STAY CALM

These activities can help you ease your stress and stay calm.

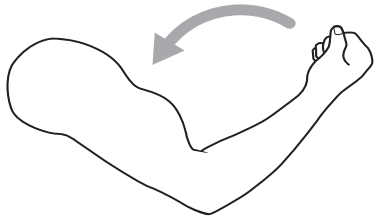
RELAX YOUR MUSCLES

RIGHT ARM

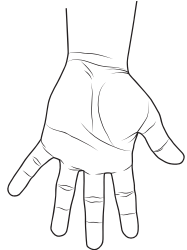
Put your right arm out and make a fist with your hand.



Bring your fist up to your shoulder to make a muscle. Count to 5.



Lower your right arm and relax your arm and hand.

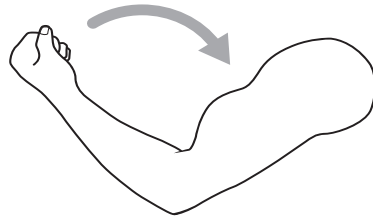


LEFT ARM

Put your left arm out and make a fist with your hand.



Bring your fist up to your shoulder to make a muscle. Count to 5.

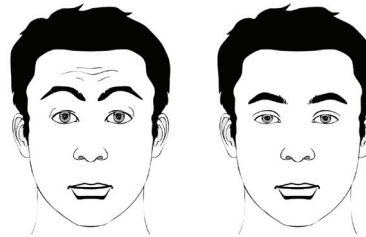


Lower your left arm and relax your arm and hand.



FOREHEAD AND FACE

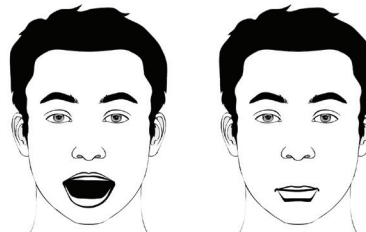
Raise your eyebrows high. Count to 5 then relax



Close your eyes shut tight. Count to 5. Open your eyes.

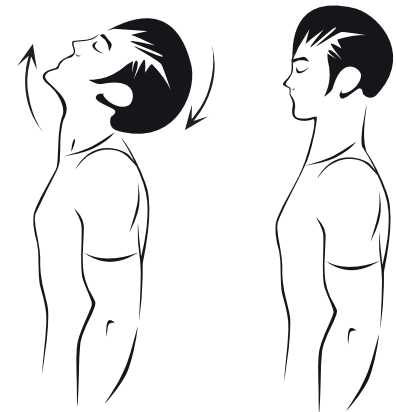


Open your mouth wide, like a yawn. Count to 5. Relax.

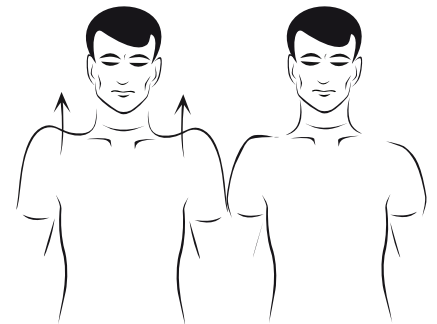


NECK AND SHOULDERS

Move your head back slowly. Count to 5 then relax.



Bring your shoulders up toward your ears. Count to 5. Relax.



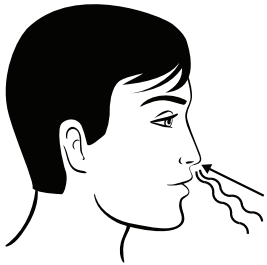
HOW TO STAY CALM

These activities can help you ease your stress and stay calm.

DEEP BREATHING

BREATHE IN

Breathe slowly through your nose. Feel the breath in your chest and stomach.



BREATHE OUT

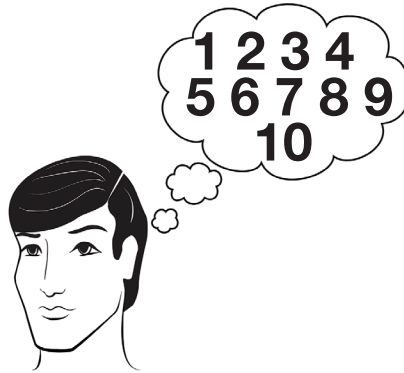
Slowly let the air out of your mouth.



Keep breathing slowly in and out until you feel that you are calmed down.

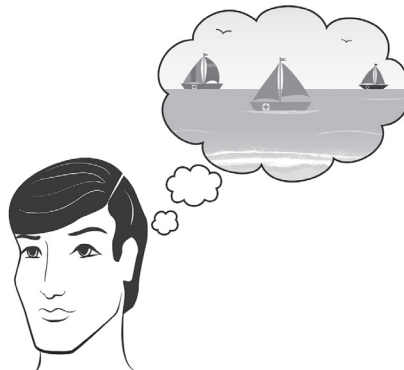
CALM THOUGHTS

COUNT TO 10 SLOWLY



THINK ABOUT A PLACE YOU LIKE TO GO TO

Imagine your favorite place. Try to remember the way you feel when you go there.



OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT CAN HELP LOWER YOUR STRESS

GET MOVING

Go for a walk or get some exercise in a gym.

LAUGH

Watch a funny video or movie.

TAKE TIME OUT

Find a quiet place, close your eyes, and try to only think about being relaxed.

LISTEN TO MUSIC

Find music that makes you feel calm and listen to it on a CD or the radio.

BE CREATIVE

Try doodling or drawing and painting pictures. You could also write down how you are feeling in a journal.

PREVENTING STRESS

There are things you can do to not feel stress or feel less stress.



THINGS YOU CAN DO TO KEEP YOUR BODY HEALTHY:

Get regular exercise.

Get enough sleep and rest.

Eat healthy foods. Do not eat junk food.

Try to drink at least 8 glasses of water every day.



FIND FAMILY MEMBERS OR FRIENDS YOU CAN TALK TO:

Tell your friends and family how you are feeling.

Ask your friends and family how to avoid stress. Talk to each other about fun things.

Use the internet or social media to stay in touch with friends.



JOIN A GROUP THAT YOU CAN HAVE FUN WITH:

Find a club or group of people in your area that do things you enjoy. Go to their meetings and events.

Ask your friends to join the group with you.

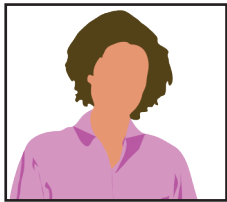
Do fun things with friends.

Circle the things you would like to try to stay healthy and have less stress.

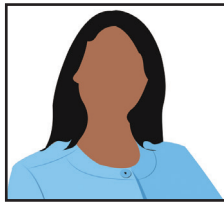
SEEKING HELP

When you think you are feeling too much stress you should ask for help.

If you **feel stress and feel like you cannot make yourself better**, you should **find someone** who can help you. People who can help are:



Family Members



Caregivers



Counselors



Doctors

HELPING OTHERS

“I get by with a little help from my friends.”
—John Lennon, singer

How can you help other people who are feeling stress?



TALK WITH THEM

Ask things like:

“Is there something bothering you?”

“Can I help you with something?”



BE A GOOD FRIEND

Call this person once a week, or visit them often to say hello and talk about how they feel.



TELL SOMEONE

If you are worried about your friend, tell a caregiver or someone who can help. These people know how to help people who have a lot of stress.

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We would like to hear what you think about this book.. Please tell us what you learned, or how we can make it better by taking a brief survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/RLPNGB9 Or scan this from your mobile device.



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Stop, Think, Relax model created by Robin A. Chapman and Karen J. Shedlack, *McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School* and Jeanne France, *McLean Hospital*

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SUMMARY

STRESS is how your **body feels** when you do **something new**, or **something different**, or **something you don't like to do**.

Your **body lets you know** it is feeling stress. Stress may make you have tight muscles or a stomachache. Stress may make it hard for you to concentrate or make you feel angry.

When you feel stress, you should **Stop, Think and Relax**. You should ask yourself how you are feeling. If you are feeling a lot of stress, you should find ways to stay calm.

You can stay calm by **relaxing your muscles**. You can also take **deep breaths** and **count to 10**.

You can **prevent stress** by staying **healthy**, **talking** with family and friends and **finding fun activities** to do with other people.

If you have **too much stress**, or you know someone who has too much stress, you can **ask people** like family members or doctors **for help**.

DO YOU FEEL STRESSED?

Tear out this card and keep it with you. It will help you remember what to do when you feel stress and how to stay calm.

STOP, THINK AND RELAX



Stop what you are doing.



Think about how to relax.



Take a break and relax.

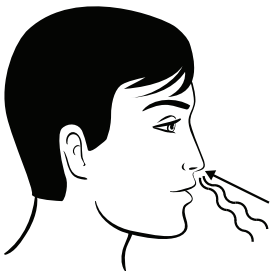
Decide how you are feeling:

Level	Like when...	Makes me...
1	There's a change in your schedule or plans.	
2	Someone is rude to you.	
3	You have to do something you don't like to do.	
4	You move to a new home or lose something special.	
5	You get fired from a job.	

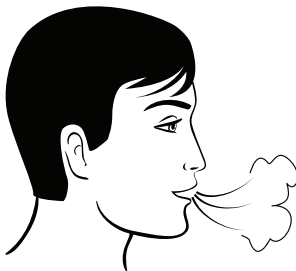
QUICK STRESS RELIEVERS

Try these steps to help you ease your stress and stay calm.

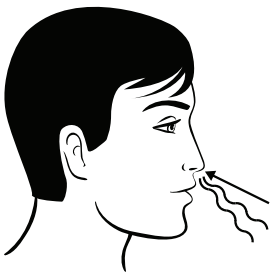
BREATHE IN



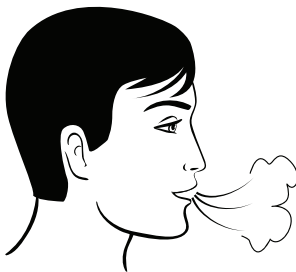
BREATHE OUT



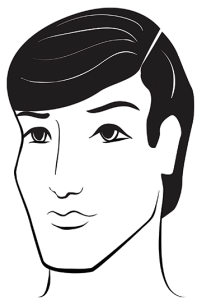
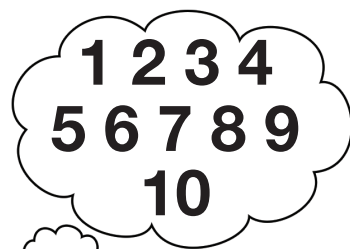
BREATHE IN



BREATHE OUT



COUNT TO 10



Repeat these steps
until your stress
level is below three.



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