



## Emotional Wellbeing and Stress



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE

### Stress Terminology

- Stress is a normal response to situational pressures or demands and is a part of everyday life
- Toxic Stress - strong, frequent, or prolonged activation of the body's stress response system.
- Stressor - the internal/external source of stress.
- Distress - negative, bad stress that can be harmful to the body. (e.g., doing poorly on a test)
- Eustress - positive, good stress that comes from situations that are enjoyable. (e.g., winning a game)

**Stressors** are what activate the stress response in your body while **stress** is the neurological and physiological shift in response to the perceived threat. Examples of stressors include:

**Internal stressors:** self-criticism, identity, body image, the future.

**External stressors:** work, money, family, time, experiences of discrimination.

### How does stress present itself

- Mind**  
(negativity, impaired judgment)
- Body**  
(fatigue, headaches, breathing)
- Emotions**  
(indifference, depression)
- Behavior**  
(substance use, restlessness)



### Effects of stress on the body

- Muscle tension
- Shortness of breath and rapid breathing
- Increased heart rate & blood pressure
- Pain, bloating, and other gut discomfort
- Loss of sexual desire and ability to conceive

### Too much stress can be unhealthy

*When stress becomes toxic it can have harmful effects on an individual. Ideally our body's stress response would be quick but short. Over time we increase in sensitivity – we get activated more often and with less stimuli. We have trouble getting back to a baseline and that has health consequences for us over time*

**Signs of too much stress.** *The following are examples of changes in normal behavior that can be a sign of too much stress: Poor sleep; feelings of anger or anxiety; poor eating habits; substance misuse; falling behind in school; feelings of isolation and loneliness; and conflicts in relationships, both peer and family relationships.*

## How to deal with stressors

### IDENTIFY:

- ✓ Use mindfulness to observe how your body is responding
- ✓ Look for times when you “turn off” emotionally
- ✓ Track your disagreements
- ✓ Watch for other people’s reactions to you

### REDUCE OR LIMIT:

- ✓ Draw boundaries
- ✓ Learn socially acceptable ways to say no
- ✓ Have a plan on how you interact with the stressor
- ✓ Take out any “extras”

### Help youth recognize stress:

- ✓ Irritability and anger
- ✓ Changes in behavior
- ✓ Trouble sleeping
- ✓ Neglecting responsibilities
- ✓ Eating changes
- ✓ Getting sick more often

## Healthy ways to cope with stress

- ✓ Acknowledge what you can and can’t control
- ✓ Keep a log/journal for your worries
- ✓ Stay present
- ✓ Let go of shame, blame, and guilt and practice self-kindness
- ✓ Self-care
- ✓ Stay active & get rest
- ✓ Reduce or eliminate sugar/caffeine/alcohol

## Cultivate resilience

*Being resilient doesn’t mean that a person won’t experience trouble or distress. People who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives commonly experience emotional pain and stress. Resilience isn’t necessarily a personality trait, it involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that **anyone can learn and develop**. Like building a muscle, increasing your resilience takes time and intentionality.*

- ❖ **Building connection includes:** prioritizing relationships by connecting with empathetic and understanding people and focus on finding trustworthy and compassionate individuals who validate your feelings. Become part of a group/civic engagement/faith-based/hobbies/workout
- ❖ **Foster wellness** by taking care of your body, learn to practice mindfulness, and avoid tapping into negative outlets (i.e. drugs/alcohol)
- ❖ **Embrace healthy thoughts** by keeping things in perspective, accepting change, keeping a positive outlook, and learning from your past.
- ❖ **Find purpose** by helping others through volunteering or other acts that can foster self-worth and create a sense of purpose, **focus on create goals for yourself** and look for opportunities for self-discovery. Even through struggle there is growth.

The key to thriving is balance. Regularly engaging in thought patterns and behaviors that replenish physical, mental and emotional reserves will help you maintain balance.

- ❖ Practice these activities to thrive:
- ❖ Reflect
- ❖ Meet a variety of people
- ❖ Express your gratitude every day
- ❖ Get out of your comfort zone
- ❖ Take purposeful breaks

**“SEEK HELP, YOU ARE NOT ALONE.”**