

## When Stress Doesn't Stop



While stress is a normal, and even healthy, part of life—not all stress is the same. Acute stress is short-term and triggers the body's stress response (fight, flight, or freeze) as a survival mechanism. This is where those automatic physiological and emotional responses come into play, like quick breathing, sweating, racing heartbeat, muscle tension, or freezing up—to signal the body to protect itself. Once the acute stressor subsides, the body returns to normal baseline.

In the case of chronic stress however, the body's stress response is put into overdrive and it is difficult to return to relaxation and normalcy. This experience of persistent distress can lead to more serious physical and emotional health issues, including sleeplessness, digestion troubles, high blood pressure, and may contribute to anxiety and depression.

### Conduct Regular Self Check-Ins

Awareness is important. Take the time to sit down and check in on mood, feelings, energy levels and behavior patterns. Notice if any changes in sleep, eating habits, and concentration have occurred. Recognizing signs of stress and

acknowledging the different ways stress is affecting health and well-being can help in creating specific coping strategies for your needs.

### Practice Digital Mindfulness

Turning off notifications, charging phones outside of the bedroom at night, and sticking to a reasonable time limit each day for phone usage are just a few strategies to help prevent information overload, reduce stress triggers and give the mind much-needed rest.

### Stick to a Sleep Schedule

Consistent sleep routines help reset the body clock, and make it easier to stay and fall asleep. To help improve sleep quality, a nighttime relaxation ritual might be beneficial. This may include a mini-meditation, bath, book reading, or aromatherapy.

### Keep Perspective

Taking a deep breath, connecting with a loved one, enjoying a simple pleasure, having a good laugh, and practicing gratitude are all little ways to help feel more grounded in the face of stress. Patience is hard, especially when things feel uncertain or out of control, but it helps to keep perspective while working through difficult situations.

If chronic stress is impacting your everyday life, it may help to talk to a professional mental health clinician through your assistance program. Call or email for additional resources and support.



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