

WELLNESS CONNECTION

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HEALTHY HARMONY - Know When to Get Help for Stress



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You have likely heard the phrase, “change is inevitable”. Assuming this is true, then stress is also inevitable because it is our body’s natural reaction to change. Experiencing stress during change can be both positive and negative. Positive stress can occur when you start a new job, go on a first date, or buy a home. These types of situations are not risk-free – some stress is involved, but they also include excitement. Negative stress can have an effect on your mental and physical health in ways that can have serious long-term effects. It is beneficial to be able to deal with both positive and negative stress. There are a wide range of resources available to manage

stress and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has a [great resource for managing stress](#).

Recognizing the signs of stress is one of the most important steps in managing it. Signs of mental stress include feeling anxious, angry, depressed, withdrawn, or unable to focus. Physical signs of stress include headaches, muscle tension, or sleeping too much or too little. Mental Health America has a [16-question Stress Screener](#) to help you understand how stress may be putting you at risk of having health issues.

If you have signs of stress, there are ways to manage it. Being intentional about planning and preparation can help mitigate those feelings of angst and anxiety. Providing your body with healthy food by including a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, and proteins are an excellent way to combat stress. Creating to-do lists or preparing for a difficult conversation (e.g., rehearsing it aloud to yourself, writing it down on paper) will also reduce levels of stress. Getting plenty of exercise – walking, running, gardening, yoga, stretching – are all ways to get your body moving and take your mind off of the stress you may be feeling.

Maybe you are more interested in relaxing with deep breathing or meditation as a way to manage stress. Check out the [System Office Wellness On Demand](#) section of our website for [Box Breathing](#), [Body Relaxation Meditation](#), and both [desk](#) and [standing stretches](#).

Stress WILL happen and it affects every one of us. When you are struggling with managing stress, it is important that you **get help**. Depression, anxiety, or a feeling of hopelessness are more serious signs of stress. Talk to a family member, friend, pastor, HR person, or health care provider and let them know you are struggling. Free and confidential employee assistance [resources](#) are also available through your university benefits.

