

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a grey sweater, sits at a desk with her head resting on her hand, looking stressed. A laptop is open in front of her, displaying a bar chart. The background is a blurred office setting.

STRESS SURVIVAL GUIDE

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. People feel stressed for different reasons. Money, work and the economy top the list of most frequently cited sources of stress in America according to the American Psychological Association.

Stress can be thought of in two categories: good stress (eustress) and bad stress (distress). Examples of good stress or eustress include riding a roller coaster, playing sports or having a baby. These situations can create a stress response that can enhance performance, excite and motivate you. Keep in mind that even though you perceive these scenarios as enjoyable they still result in a physical reaction in the body such as increased heart rate, rapid breathing, stomach tension, etc. Distress or negative stress feels more like being overwhelmed, worried or overcome with anxiety. When a situation starts to feel unmanageable or overwhelming, it's time to take steps to manage stress for health's sake. With the holiday season, a new year and changes to our day-to-day routine upon us, this is a great time to exercise your coping strategy mental muscles.

Can you control stress? Yes! Well, you can control how you feel about stress and reframe how you tackle stressful situations. The Mayo clinic offers the following tools to place in your resiliency toolbox.

Housed in your resiliency toolbox:

1. Identify Stress Triggers
2. Time Management Tips
3. Coping Strategies that start with A

1. IDENTIFY YOUR STRESS TRIGGERS

Your personality, experiences and other unique characteristics all influence the way you respond to and cope with stress. Situations and events that are distressing for you may not bother someone else, or stressors for other people may not trigger you.



To begin resiliency training: identify your stress triggers.

For a week or two, record the situations, events and people who cause you to have a negative physical, mental or emotional response. Include a brief description of each situation, answering questions such as:

- Where were you?
- Who was involved?
- What was your reaction?
- How did you feel?

Then evaluate your stress inventory. Did someone say something distressing? Did a bill arrive in the mail and cause financial worry? Did you arrive to work, and your long to-do list left you feeling overwhelmed?

Tackle your stress triggers

Once you've identified your stress triggers, consider each situation or event and look for ways to resolve it.

Suppose, for instance, that you're behind at work because you leave early to pick up your son from school. You might check with other parents or neighbors about an after-school carpool. Or you might begin work earlier, shorten your lunch hour or take work home to catch up in the evening.

Often, the best way to cope with stress is to find a way to change the circumstances that are causing it.

2. SHARPEN YOUR TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

In addition to addressing specific stress triggers, it's often helpful to improve time management skills — especially if you tend to feel overwhelmed or under pressure at work. For example:

Set realistic expectations. Work with colleagues and leaders to set realistic expectations and deadlines. Set regular progress reviews and adjust your goals as needed.

Make a priority list. Prepare a list of tasks and rank them in order of priority. Throughout the day, scan your master list and work on tasks in priority order. Cross off the to-do list as you complete your items to feel a sense of accomplishment.

Protect your time. For an especially important or difficult project, block time to work on it without interruption. Also, break large projects into smaller steps.

Keep perspective

When your job is stressful, it can feel as if it's taking over your life. To maintain perspective:

Get other points of view. Talk with trusted colleagues or friends about the issues you're facing at work. They might be able to provide insights or offer suggestions for coping. Sometimes simply talking about a stressor can be a relief.

Take a break. Make the most of workday breaks. Even a few minutes of personal time during a busy workday can be refreshing. Similarly, take time off when you can, whether it's a two-week vacation or



an occasional long weekend. Also try to take breaks from thinking about work, such as not checking your email at home in the evening or choosing times to turn off your cellphone at home.

Have an outlet. To prevent burnout, set aside time for activities you enjoy — such as reading, socializing or pursuing a hobby.

Take care of yourself. Be vigilant about taking care of your health. Include physical activity in your daily routine, get plenty of sleep and eat a healthy diet. Get comfortable with setting boundaries and saying “no” to requests that create nervousness for you.

Know when to seek help

If none of these steps relieves your feelings of job stress or burnout, consult a mental health provider — either on your own or through an employee assistance program offered by your employer. Through counseling, you can learn effective ways to handle job stress.

3. ARM YOURSELF WITH STRAIGHT A’S

Apply the 100-0 principle to the stressor

Give 100 percent and expect zero percent in return, and you will never be disappointed.

Avoid the stressor

Learn how to say “no” to a situation that is causing your stress.

Avoid and keep distance from people and situations who spark a visceral tension response.

If your social media feed, news or notifications leave you feeling low, unplug and take pause from allowing that information to influence you.

Account for the stressor

Manage your time. If you find yourself constantly feeling pressure from procrastinating; learn to schedule more time to allow for plenty of task time.

Express your emotions and feelings in a respectful way as opposed to bottling up your feelings.

Adapt to the stressor

Reframe the problem in order to find a solution. Ask yourself: How important is this situation in the long run?

Practice gratitude; write down and focus on what you are thankful for.

Journal or take in a new joyful hobby,

Create space for moments of awe. Take your walk during the sunset to take in the beautiful view. Seek out nature to observe the beauty.

Practice breathing techniques along with a motivating motto. “I am stronger than I realize.”

Accept the stressor

Accept what you can’t change or control.

Forgive. It takes energy to feel angry; can you free yourself of the anger with forgiveness?

Practice being positive. Speak to yourself in an encouraging fashion, do not criticize yourself.

Assist when dealing with a stressor

If you are feeling blue, seek support. Call your company EAP, reach out to your health care provider or tell a family or friends that you need assistance.

Call your EAP for resources to help manage stress or reach out to a mental health provider to help manage your health.



Knowledge is power. Exercise your mind with the quick quiz below:

What are 3 ways to build resiliency?

- ☐ **Identify stress triggers**
- ☐ Eat a yummy treat to make yourself feel good
- ☐ **Manage your time**
- ☐ Have a glass of wine to take the edge ooff
- ☐ **Learn coping strategies**

What is the 100-0 principle?

- ☐ **Give 100 percent, expect zero percent in return**
- ☐ Give 50 percent and expect 50 percent in return
- ☐ Give a little and expect a lot in return

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