



You're familiar with the symptoms of stress -- a pounding heart, increased perspiration, tight neck and shoulder muscles, anxiety and fear. But you may not know how to prevent or relieve these symptoms. Stress can be triggered by events, ideas, memories, emotions or failed expectations. The following actions can help you counteract the negative effects of stress, according to wellness experts:

Exercise A regular workout can release pent-up frustrations. Experts recommend getting 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. Choose any aerobic activity: walking, jogging, bicycling, swimming, stair climbing or step aerobics.

Keep communicating One of the best ways to fight stress is to discuss your problems with a friend or relative, or write in a journal. Our immune systems get a boost when our feelings are released. It may even lead to a solution to your problem.

Pay attention to your diet and habits A diet of wholesome, healthful foods can help stabilize your moods. Consuming caffeine, sugar, alcohol, nicotine and prescription or illegal drugs can increase your stress, making coping more difficult.

Make time for laughter and fun Surround yourself with happy people who like to laugh. Let the child in you come out, and you'll find laughter is one of the best stress remedies.

Immerse yourself in a favorite activity or hobby Give yourself a block of time to focus on a task or activity instead of on the problems in your life. Gardening, carpentry, sewing, working with clay, painting and drawing are good choices.

Use a variety of relaxation techniques Deep-breathing exercises, progressive relaxation, visualization, creative imagery, yoga, meditation or listening to relaxation tapes can help.

Live in the present Many causes of your stress probably come from thinking about the past or worrying about the future. If you can plant yourself firmly in the present, you can leave worries behind and focus on enjoying the moment.

Whatever your source (or sources) of stress are, your free EAP can help you overcome them. Visit ndbh.com with your company passcode to take a stress assessment to identify what's keeping you up at night and give you tips to tackling worries and woes. Whether it's financial struggles, legal issues, relationship challenges or any number of other stressors, the EAP can help you with counseling, consultations, referrals and behavioral health resources. Call or visit our website to learn more.

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