
A Practical Guide to Help You Cope with Common Stress Reactions

Give yourself permission to feel what you are feeling. Acknowledge your feelings as they arise. Remember you are having normal reactions and it takes time to heal. The strength of these feelings should lessen over time as you gradually replace worry and anxiety with more positive thoughts and feelings about the future.

Gain perspective. Assess the impact of events on you and those around you. If you and your loved ones are safe, that gives you some distance to process the events. Take the time to really understand that you are an observer, not a participant. It's normal to be affected, to feel concern and anxiety, but it's important to separate from feelings of immediate danger.

Manage anxiety. Ask yourself what specific worries are troubling you most and then seek information to address them. Having that information eliminates the fears created by anxiety.

Recognize and reframe negative thinking. Don't get caught in a spiral of destructive thoughts that only add to your stress. Reframe your thinking by focusing on the positive things in life that are unaffected by the event.

Take a media break. Minimize your exposure to all types of media. While getting the news informs you, being overexposed can augment your distress. Instead, seek out things you enjoy to lift your spirits.

Take care of yourself. Get enough rest and eat regularly. Keep up your exercise routine if you have one. Don't abuse drugs or alcohol - they can hinder and delay recovery. Make your environment as pleasant as possible.

Maintain as normal a schedule as possible. Make as many daily decisions as possible. This will give you a feeling of control over your life. However, delay making major life decisions until your symptoms decrease significantly.

Tune in to how your loved ones are doing. Be supportive and compassionate. If you notice a change in your partner, child, or friend's usual activities, behaviors, or moods, discuss them. Understanding their feelings will help you manage yours.

Know your limits. As much as possible, avoid stressful situations for a while.

Practice relaxation. Meditate if you know how. If not, visualize a quiet scene. You can't always get away, but you can hold a vision in your mind - a quiet country scene for example, will temporarily take you out of the turmoil of a stressful situation.

Take one thing at a time. For people under tension, an ordinary workload may suddenly seem overwhelming. This is a temporary condition and you can work through it, taking it one step at a time. Allow time for a task. Do each job more deliberately and thoughtfully.

Remember, you can always seek professional help.

You don't have to go through this experience alone.