

# Stress Management

My Educators:

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For questions call **(916) 946-1449**  
or visit us at <https://health.ucdavis.edu/health-education/>

# Welcome

Thank you for attending this health education class. As a group, our goal is to help you build knowledge and skills needed to potentially improve your health.

The facilitator will:

- provide scientific evidence-based information.
- create a safe environment appropriate for a healthy exchange of information.
- respect each individual and demonstrate courtesy and understanding.
- respect the group dynamic.
- manage time appropriately.
- guide the discussion and manage the classroom in a manner that allows for optimal learning and engagement.
- make him/herself available for questions after the class.

Participants are expected to:

- respect the rights, privacy, and property of other participants and UC Davis personnel.
- respect individuals' opinions.
- reserve judgement of others.
- actively participate as appropriate.
- express themselves with courtesy, dignity and sensitivity.
- keep education commitments and arrive for classes in a timely manner.
- follow UC Davis Health rules and regulations for patient care and conduct, including smoking, cell phone and electrically powered equipment regulations and the visitor policy.

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# Introduction

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## AFTER ATTENDING THIS CLASS, PARTICIPANTS WILL


- learn to identify stressors.
- gain knowledge of 3-5 stress reducing tools and techniques to utilize for managing stress.
- receive a list of resources, stress management tools, and techniques.
- practice and gain confidence in these techniques.

## WHY DOES MANAGING STRESS MATTER?

Stress can affect many parts of the body and overall health. It can lead to high blood pressure, chronic headaches, and heart disease among other conditions. In addition, stress can cause an increase in tobacco and alcohol use, overeating or undereating, stomach problems, and difficulty sleeping.

Stress is a part of everyday life. While it may be unavoidable, it is manageable. This class will help you understand the different types of stress, identify sources of stress, offer guidance on how to minimize stress, and provide tools, activities, and resources for managing stress.

What do you do now to manage stress?



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# Types of Stress

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## **EUSTRESS**

Eustress is a term that was created by a doctor, Hans Selye. Eustress is considered a positive type of stress that has helpful effects on health and may motivate a person to achieve a goal or enhance performance.

Examples of causes of eustress:

- Signing up for a fitness challenge
- Preparing for a job interview
- Having a child

## **ACUTE STRESS**

Acute stress is any stress that is felt for a short period of time. Triggers of acute stress may involve events that are unpredictable or leave a feeling of having little or no control.

Examples of causes of acute stress:

- Car breaks down
- An unexpected bill that you may have difficulty paying
- House flooding

## **CHRONIC STRESS**

Chronic stress happens over a long period of time. It may result from a difficult situation that lasts a long time or repeated thoughts about an event.

Examples of causes of chronic stress:

- Life difficulties that require a long time to adjust
- Trying to do too many things at the same time
- Small daily hassles that build up over time

# Stress Management Action Plan



List your top 3 stressors. We will come back to this plan throughout the class to complete the other sections.

YOUR TOP 3 STRESSORS	WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU?	WHAT ACTION ARE YOU GOING TO TAKE?
1		
2		
3		

## The Body's Physical and Psychological Response to Stress

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When a person is experiencing stress, the body responds in multiple ways. Our bodies are trained to respond to stress by releasing the hormones epinephrine, norepinephrine, and cortisol. This is referred to as the “fight or flight response.” Our ancestors may have had stress that resulted in a need for quick movement (imagine being chased by a saber-toothed tiger!). Now, when our body senses stress, it continues to release these same hormones that would prepare us to fight that tiger or run away from it. Below is a list of changes that happen in the body as a result of the “fight or flight” response:

**The body responds to stress in multiple ways**

- Heart beats faster
- Blood pressure increases
- The amount of sugar in the blood increases
- Faster breathing
- Muscles tense
- Blood clots more quickly
- It becomes harder to digest food because blood is flowing away from the gut to the arms and legs

The extent to which an individual responds to a stressful situation depends on many factors. In part, how we react to stress is inherited from our parents. Another factor that impacts how our bodies respond to stress is how often we are exposed to stressful situations. The more an individual is exposed to stressful situations, the more strongly they react to stress and the longer it takes their body to recover back to normal (usual heart rate, lower blood pressure, etc.).

Sometimes, it is helpful having this quick reaction to a stressful situation. For example, if a child is stuck under a fallen dresser, having a surge of energy to respond quickly and lift the piece of furniture off the child allows a positive result. With chronic stress, though, the changes that occur in the body can take a toll on overall health.



# The Body's Physical and Psychological Response to Stress

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## IMPACT OF STRESS ON THE BODY

Stress can have both immediate and long term effects on the body. Below are some of the problems that can happen when we experience stress.

### EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

- Feeling anxious or nervous
- Becoming angry easily
- Fear
- Worry
- Feeling frustrated
- Moodiness
- Becoming forgetful

### EFFECT ON MUSCLES

- Back pain
- Jaw pain

### DIGESTION PROBLEMS

- Heartburn
- Acid stomach
- Ulcers
- Gas
- Diarrhea
- Constipation

### OTHER PROBLEMS

- Sleep difficulty
- Repeated headaches, migraines
- Decreased sexual function



# The Body's Physical and Psychological Response to Stress

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## SOME HEALTH PROBLEMS MAY BECOME WORSE OR HARDER TO MANAGE

- Irritable bowel disease (colitis, Chron's disease)
- Asthma
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Diabetes
- Over time, stress may lead to high blood pressure or heart disease

## CHANGES IN HEALTH BEHAVIORS

- Start or increase tobacco use
- Use caffeine, alcohol, other drugs or medications
- Decrease in physical activity
- Changes in eating patterns, like overeating or having a loss of appetite

**Take a moment to list the changes that happen in your body when you experience stress on your Stress Management Action Plan on page 3**

# Stress Management Techniques - Deep Breathing

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On the following pages are stress management techniques and how to practice them. If you choose to try one or more of these techniques, remember to listen to your body and do not do anything that causes discomfort.

## DEEP BREATHING

Deep breathing helps to lessen the “fight or flight” response. It increases oxygen to the muscles and triggers the body’s normal relaxation response.

### DEEP BREATHING PRACTICE 1

- Sit in a comfortable position with your feet planted on the floor
- Relax your eyes or close them if you are comfortable doing so
- Bring one hand to the top of your chest
- Bring the other hand to your abdomen
- Begin clearing your mind of thoughts and focus on your breathing
- There is no need to change anything about your breathing, just notice your breathing sensation
- Breathe in and breathe out
- Count the number of breaths you take during a 10-second interval (use a timer or clock)
- At the end of the 10 seconds, note the number of breaths you counted
- Repeat
- Compare the number of breaths to the first interval – did you take more, fewer, or the same number of breaths?

# Stress Management Techniques - Deep Breathing

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## DEEP BREATHING PRACTICE 2

- If comfortable for you, bring your hands down in a relaxed position
- Remember to breathe at your own pace
- As you inhale, count to three and imagine your belly rising and inflating like a balloon
- As you exhale, slowly count to six pulling your belly button in, and imagine the balloon deflating
- Continue for six deep breaths

## SIX-SECOND PAUSE

When the brain is charged up emotionally, studies have shown that it takes at least six seconds to calm down. Taking a six-second pause helps our brain think more clearly. This pause will help us to stay calm, communicate more clearly, reduce anger and anxiety, and maintain control over our emotions.

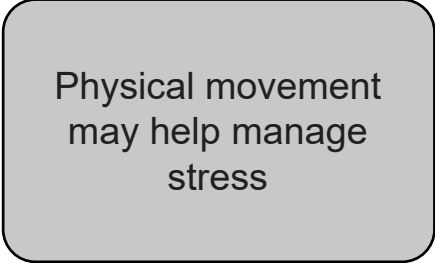
Good times to take a pause

1. Before taking a test
2. When working through a conflict
3. When you want to feel more calm
4. When you feel you are losing your temper

## Stress Management Techniques - Movement

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Physical movement has been shown to help manage stress. Stress can lead to muscle tension, tightness, and soreness in the neck, shoulders, chest, and back. These simple stretching activities may help you reduce the symptoms of stress.



Physical movement  
may help manage  
stress

### **FOLLOW THESE SAFETY GUIDELINES WHEN PRACTICING STRETCHING**

- Warm up before stretching – this helps to loosen muscles. Stretching muscles without warming up first can lead to injuries
- Wear comfortable clothing
- Listen to your body - stretch slowly and gently; don't go beyond what feels comfortable; if you feel pain, stop
- Hold each stretch for 10-30 seconds; it is important to hold steady and not to bounce while stretching
- Remember to breathe!

# Stress Management Techniques - Movement

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## EXAMPLES

### NECK STRETCHES:

- Sit tall with your shoulders relaxed and your head in a neutral position
- Drop your chin to your chest and hold for several breaths before returning to the starting position
- Turn your head to the right for several breaths, then to the left, then back to neutral
- Next, drop your right ear to the right shoulder and hold, then back to neutral, then left ear to left shoulder
- You may also roll your neck forward from right to left and left to right



### SEATED CAT/COW:

- Sit tall toward the front of your chair with your feet on the floor, relaxing the shoulders and gently pulling in your belly. You may want to relax your hands on your thighs.
- As you inhale, arch your back, pulling the chest forward and lifting the chin.
- As you exhale, round your spine and let your head drop forward, tucking your chin. Move forward and back through several breaths.

## Stress Management Techniques - Mindfulness

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Mindfulness is the practice of bringing attention to the present moment. It has been shown to help manage stress. As with all stress management techniques, it is important to practice these exercises regularly. In addition to the examples below, mindfulness may be practiced through chanting, reading of sacred texts or inspirational quotes, journaling, and counseling.



## Stress Management Techniques - Guided Imagery

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Guided imagery involves directing thoughts to guide you to a relaxed state. You can do visual imagery with audio recordings, an instructor, an app or a script to lead you through the process. The key is to use all of your senses in your imagery.

Examples:

- Imagine you are in an outdoor, tropical setting
- Hear the sound of the water (ocean)
- See the beautiful blue ocean
- Notice the sweet smell of the tropical flowers
- Imagine the taste of a cool refreshing beverage
- Feel the warm sand under your bare feet

## Stress Management Techniques - Meditation

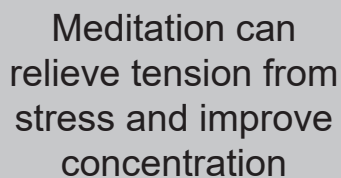
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According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, meditation is “the act or thought of spending time in quiet thought.”

Stress can be eased through meditation. The relaxation response from meditation can decrease metabolism, lower blood pressure, improve heart rate, slow breathing and brain waves, and relieve tension and tightness throughout the body.

Here are additional benefits:

- Freeing the mind of scattered thoughts
- Developing awareness, being present
- Thinking more clearly
- Better concentration
- Increased ability to focus
- Reduced anxiety and stress
- Increase ability to fight off illness
- Reduced chronic pain



Meditation can  
relieve tension from  
stress and improve  
concentration



## Stress Management Techniques - Positive Perception

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Our views are often a part of us before we are even consciously aware of them. Learning to change how we see ourselves helps us find our hidden strengths, or improve weaknesses we don't know we have, to get along better in life.



When facing challenges, look at the big picture. Ask yourself how important a problem will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? Don't try to control things you have no control over. Many things in life are beyond our control, particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing, focus on the things you can control, such as the way you react to problems.

Here is an example of how to change perception:

When in a traffic jam, instead of getting frustrated and mad, take the opportunity to pause. Enjoy some alone time and listen to your favorite radio station. You may not be able to control the traffic, but you can control how you respond to it. Make it a positive experience!



# Stress Management Techniques - Self-Care

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Research supports that self-care is important for our own well-being. Self-care has been defined as paying attention to your own physical and psychological wellness. Self-care activities can be as simple as soaking in a warm bath to bigger activities, such as buying yourself an item you have wanted for a long time.

## EXAMPLE OF SELF-CARE BEHAVIORS:

- Read a book, poem, inspirational quote
- Soak in a warm bath
- Listen to soothing music
- Take a walk
- Get a massage
- Do yoga
- Laugh
- Be in nature
- Buy flowers
- Go to a movie
- Take a nap
- Go fishing
- Play with animals
- Watch an old movie
- Play cards, checkers, etc.
- Go for a drive
- Call a friend
- Enjoy a sauna, steam, spa
- Go golfing
- Fly a kite
- Paint
- Go on a date
- Ride a bike
- Plan a day activity
- Buy a gift for yourself

What are some things you enjoy doing for yourself?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Take a moment to make a plan for what actions you are going to take to manage stress on your Stress Management Action Plan on page 3**

# Stress Management Tools

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# Stress Management Apps

<p><b>BREATHE2RELAX - DEEP BREATHING APP</b></p>	<p><b>FREE</b> iPhone and Android</p>
<p>Breathe2Relax is a stress management tool that helps you learn diaphragmatic breathing. This can break that “fight or flight” response that so many people experience when they have a panic attack. The breathing exercises also aid in mood stabilization, anger control, and overall anxiety management. View the different areas of the body that can hold on to stress and use breathing to let go of it.</p>	
<p><b>CALM - MEDITATION APP</b></p>	<p><b>FREE WITH LIMITED FEATURES</b> iPhone and Android</p>
<p>Use the principles of mindfulness and meditation to ease your mind and keep anxiety at bay. The serene interface is just the beginning. Once it opens, there are relaxing sounds and sleep stories. Enjoy guided meditations at various lengths to help with everything from building self-esteem to calming anxiety. Each day, subscribers will get the “Daily Calm,” which has a 10-minute program to help you welcome the day or unwind at the end of it.</p>	
<p><b>AURA - MINDFULNESS APP</b></p>	<p><b>FREE WITH LIMITED FEATURES</b> iPhone and Android</p>
<p>Aura is a mindfulness app for the stressed and the anxious. The app starts you off with a new three-minute meditation every day and reminds you to actually do it. You can choose when and even where you receive the reminders. You also get your own gratitude journal to reflect on the good things in your life.</p> <p>The meditations, which last from 3 to 10 minutes, are designed to help regardless of your mood or what you’re struggling with. Aura also includes a social community by allowing you to connect with teachers and other members.</p>	



## 4 There are ways to manage stress.

The effects of stress tend to build up over time. Taking practical steps to manage your stress can reduce or prevent these effects. The following are some tips that may help you to cope with stress:

- **Recognize the Signs** of your body's response to stress, such as difficulty sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, being easily angered, feeling depressed, and having low energy.
- **Talk to Your Doctor or Health Care Provider.** Get proper health care for existing or new health problems.
- **Get Regular Exercise.** Just 30 minutes per day of walking can help boost your mood and reduce stress.
- **Try a Relaxing Activity.** Explore stress coping programs, which may incorporate meditation, yoga, tai chi, or other gentle exercises. For some stress-related conditions, these approaches are used in addition to other forms of treatment. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy and relaxing activities. Learn more about these techniques on the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) website at ([www.nccih.nih.gov/health/stress](http://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/stress)).
- **Set Goals and Priorities.** Decide what must get done and what can wait, and learn to say no to new tasks if they are putting you into overload. Note what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do.
- **Stay Connected** with people who can provide emotional and other support. To reduce stress, ask for help from friends, family, and community or religious organizations.
- **Consider a Clinical Trial.** Researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), NCCIH, and other research facilities across the country are studying the causes and effects of psychological stress, and stress management techniques. You can learn more about studies that are recruiting by visiting [www.nimh.nih.gov/joinastudy](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/joinastudy) or [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov) (keyword: stress).

## 5 If you're overwhelmed by stress, ask for help from a health professional.

You should seek help right away if you have suicidal thoughts, are overwhelmed, feel you cannot cope, or are using drugs or alcohol to cope. Your doctor may be able to provide a recommendation. You can find resources to help you find a mental health provider by visiting [www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp).

### Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Anyone experiencing severe or long-term, unrelenting stress can become overwhelmed. If you or a loved one is having thoughts of suicide, call the toll-free **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>) at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The service is available to anyone. All calls are confidential.

### For More Information

For more information on conditions that affect mental health, resources, and research, visit [www.mentalhealth.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.gov), or the NIMH website at [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov). In addition, the National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus service has information on a wide variety of health topics, including conditions that affect mental health.



#### National Institute of Mental Health

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Website: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)



## Resources

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BOOKS	
<b>Don't Sweat the Small Stuff: P. S. It's All Small Stuff</b>	<i>Michael Mantell</i>
<b>The Mayo Clinic Guide to Stress-Free Living</b>	<i>Amit Sood, M.D., M.Sc</i>

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS OR CLASSES	
<b>Sierra 2 Center</b>	<a href="http://www.sierra2.org/events">www.sierra2.org/events</a>
<b>Silver Sneakers</b>	<a href="http://www.silversneakers.com">www.silversneakers.com</a>

VIDEOS	
<b>The 5 Minute Vacation</b>	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LAmYS6kb7k">www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LAmYS6kb7k</a>
<b>The 5 Minute Miracle - Daily Guided Meditation</b>	<a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utfw-rJUvy4">www.youtube.com/watch?v=utfw-rJUvy4</a>

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	
<b>American Psychological Association</b>	<a href="http://www.apa.org">www.apa.org</a>



## Additional Learning Opportunities

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Classes are available on a variety of health topics. Most classes are free. We offer weekend and evening classes as well. Online classes are also available.

To view our complete class schedule, go to <https://health.ucdavis.edu/health-education/>

### THREE WAYS TO SCHEDULE:

1. Self Schedule on MyUCDavisHealth App
  - Go to Make an Appointment
  - Choose Health and Wellness Classes
2. Call our office to register at **916-946-1449**
3. Email your request to register for a class to **hs-healtheducationclass@ucdavis.edu**

Include in your email:

- First and last name
- Date of birth
- Medical record number (if known)
- Class name
- Class location
- Class date and time



# References

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The following references were used to create this booklet:

American Psychological Association <http://www.apa.org>

GoalBook <http://goalbookapp.com/toolkit/strategy/6-second-pause>

Greater Good Magazine [http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips\\_for\\_keeping\\_a\\_gratitude\\_journal](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_keeping_a_gratitude_journal)

Hawk, C. & Evans, W. (2013). *Health Promotion and Wellness: An Evidence-Based Guide to Clinical Preventive Services*. Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins: Philadelphia, PA.

Healthwise.net

Stress Management: Imagery Exercise

Breathing Exercises for Relaxation

Doing Meditation

Relaxing Your Mind and Body

Mayo Clinic <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/in-depth/meditation/art-20045858>

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Sarafino, E.P. & Smith, T.W. (2011). *Health Psychology: Biopsychosocial Interactions* (7th ed.). Wiley: Hoboken, NJ.

University of California, San Francisco <http://healthyheart.ucsf.edu/prevention-stressmanagement.shtml>

Varvogli1, L. & Darviri1, C. (2011). Stress Management Techniques: evidence-based procedures that reduce stress and promote health. *Health Science Journal*