

Stress Management

You have a lot more control than you think. In fact, the ultimate goal of stress management is to “take charge” of those things you can control. Taking charge of your emotions, thoughts, habits, problem-solving, and schedule will help manage the stress levels in your life. The ultimate goal isn’t to have no-stress; it is to have a balance in life – with time for work, family, friends, fun, and relaxation plus the resilience to meet life’s challenges.

The second goal of stress-management is to recognize those things that you cannot control. Acceptance of these areas, rather than struggling to maintain control, is important in effective stress-management. “Life happens” and there is very little we can do about most external forces. The struggle to fix things that we can’t or shouldn’t is overwhelming and exhausting and takes energy from other areas of our life – often decreasing our capacity for pleasure, fun, productive work, and good relationships.

Start with identifying the sources of your stress.

External Sources of Stress	Internal Sources of Stress
<p>Work Changes and Demands Supervisors The company and the stability of the company Employment stability Employment or unemployment situation Education requirements Deadlines Office politics</p>	<p>Your thoughts and feelings about changes in work and education requirements Your reactions to work or school Your productivity and scheduling at work and school Your capacity to focus, concentrate, and set limits at work and school Your capacity to problem-solve at work and school Your involvement in office politics and beliefs about office politics</p>
<p>Children Their moods Their pressures Their behavior</p>	<p>Your thoughts and feelings about parenting Your beliefs about good parenting The demands you place on yourself as a parent Your desire to please your children and provide well for them The guilt, insecurity, and inadequacy you feel about parenting Your level of parenting skill Your acceptance of your children</p>
<p>Relationships The other person’s moods The other person’s pressures The other person’s behavior The other person’s history The other person’s capacities</p>	<p>Your thoughts and feelings about your relationships Your thoughts about pleasing your partner. The demands that are placed upon you as a partner, both from yourself and from your partner The people that you choose to have in your life Your demands on yourself as a friend Your level of relationship skill</p>
<p>Finances Income Outgo</p>	<p>Your own capacity to problem-solve financial problems Your knowledge of financial planning Your thoughts and feelings about financial security/insecurity Your spending habits</p>

Environment Noise Where you live	How you spend your time People and things that you choose to have in your life Where you choose to live
Politics & Religion	Who you choose to talk with and how honest you choose to be about your religious and political beliefs Your level of awareness and knowledge
The “List”	The things you choose to put on your list Your capacity to say “No” Your perfectionism Your expectations of self Your acceptance of the expectations of others
Not enough time	Your choices about your use of time Your choices about the things you find necessary or desirable
Emotional Exhaustion	Your level of emotional competency Your level of emotional over-reactivity Your level of over-personalization
Change in life Death Illness People that need “care-taking” Divorce or separation Children leaving the home Marriage Birth of a child Buying a home	Your beliefs about life changes Your personal, emotional, and cognitive responses to life changes Your capacity to “accept” life changes over which you have no control Your timing and direction of those changes that you have the power to “time” or “direct”

We can do little to change the external stressors in our life, except change our situation (quit our jobs, moves to another location, end our relationships, etc.). That may be, but isn't always, the best decision. We can always gain greater understanding and better skills for managing the internal stressors.

Good stress management is learned.