



Stress Management

Stress is defined as events that upset your usual balance. It can be positive stress like a new baby, a vacation, a job promotion or the purchase of a new home. It may be also be negative, such as the flu, death of a loved one, a child leaving home or a conflict with co-workers or neighbors.



What You Can Do

Learn to recognize your personal 'stress triggers'—all the things that cause you stress. Are they financial problems, quarreling with someone, being late for work or appointments or a cluttered environment? How do you react when you are stressed? When under stress, some people may compulsively shop; others may worry, overeat, yell and scream, cry, slam doors or remain silent. Once you understand how stress builds up and affects you, you can take steps to better manage it:

- It may be helpful to write down your feelings and what has or hasn't worked to make you more comfortable when under pressure.
- Find ways to take care of your body by exercising daily, eating a balanced diet, drinking enough water and sleeping at least eight hours every night. Try to get rid of bad habits like smoking, drinking and overeating, which may lead to guilt and added stress.
- Treat yourself to doing something you really want to do for at least 15 minutes every day. If you don't make time to take care of yourself, you won't be available to fulfill your own needs or those of your friends and family.
- Try not to dwell on things you cannot change or things that haven't happened yet. If you find yourself starting to worry about 'what ifs', pick up the phone and call a friend, start watching a movie, read a book, listen to music, or anything that allows you to stop the cycle of thought-induced stress.
- Find allies, whether a spouse, a friend, a support group, or people who share your love of antiques or baseball. Building a team of people you can turn to for support can make life easier and problem solving with others can decrease stress.
- Learn to manage your finances and live within your means. Personal finances are often one of the main stressors. Without a budget, it can be hard to see how much money you are actually spending... and wasting. Decide which luxuries are worth the splurge, and which can be eliminated or reduced to make room for important purchases or savings.
- Focus on the positive. Studies continue to show how positive thinking can help improve overall health, including stress management. Start by occasionally evaluating what you are thinking throughout the day. If you find that your thoughts are mainly negative, try to put a positive spin on them.
- Organize and de-clutter. Sometimes, stress increases as a result of feeling disorganized or scattered. Consider taking inventory and get rid of things you don't use or need and reorganize what you keep. You might be amazed at how our mental clutter is often connected to our visual clutter.

To contact UW CareLink Faculty and Staff Assistance Program:

