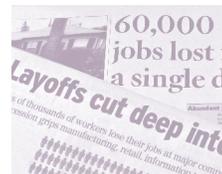


Tips in a Time of Economic Crisis

Managing Your Stress



Feeling stressed in these challenging economic times? You're not alone.

Today, most of us are worried about something. Almost half of all Americans think our stress levels have gone up over the past 5 years. The state of the economy is cited by nearly 80 percent of respondents as the leading cause of stress with job loss following closely behind.

The housing crisis is affecting us, too. More than half of us report that the cost of paying the rent or mortgage is a growing source of stress.

A little bit of stress isn't a bad thing in the short-term. However, too much stress over a long period of time is unhealthy and even dangerous.

That's why it's important to monitor our stress levels, to know how to manage stress, and to know when we need to ask for help to stay healthy.

Data Source: American Psychological Association, 2008.

Many Americans report experiencing heightened levels of stress during this time of financial crisis. Yet, few realize that this reaction to economic pressures closely resembles the psychological effects experienced after natural disasters, such as hurricanes, floods, wildfires, or even the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Stress reduction and mental health promotion are as important now for people affected directly or indirectly by the financial crisis as for those who suffered from effects of natural or man-made disasters.

You Should Know

Nearly every day, each of us experiences stress of some kind. Feelings of stress come from reactions that our bodies have to challenges, pressures, and demands that are not a usual part of our daily lives. We may feel stress before taking a test or speaking in public, and elated after we're successful. Simple things such as missing the bus, being late for a meeting, or working under a deadline for a project may also cause us to feel stress. That short-term stress may make us feel worried or anxious, but is relatively harmless to our overall health status. We also may face long-term stress in the form of severe

illness, divorce, unemployment, loss of a home, or trauma. These long-term stresses are real and increase our risk for some serious health problems.

Research suggests long-term stress can have serious effects. Stress triggers changes in our bodies and brains that may make us more likely to get sick. Problems we already have, such as high blood pressure, depression, anxiety, and diabetes can become worse. Over time, stress can become disabling, leading to stroke, heart attack, and even suicide.

Know the Signs of Stress

Stress may show itself in physical ways: muscle tension and pain, headaches, stomach upset, or rapid heartbeat. Some of us may overeat; some may feel tired. Stress also can affect us emotionally. Anxiety, the "jitters," and becoming short-tempered, forgetful, or unable to focus are all signs of stress.

While everyone reacts to stress differently, our bodies do send out signals to warn us when stress is becoming harmful. By paying attention to how our bodies and minds respond to stress—what our bodies are telling us—we can manage stress in better ways. And that can help reduce the risk to our long-term physical and emotional health.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Mental Health Services
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Stress Reduction

Once we understand how we experience stress and how it affects the way we feel and act, we can take action. We can learn to manage our stress in healthy ways, before we feel overwhelmed.

Pay attention to body and mind:

- Recognize the early signs of stress.
- Work to stay positive; know that stress, depression, guilt, and anger are feelings that can be managed.
- Recall past solutions to similar problems and build on them.

Attend to your health:

- Get enough sleep.
- Eat healthy foods; drink water.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Don't use tobacco or illegal drugs.
- Get regular physical exercise.

Practice relaxation:

- Relax your body and mind. Use deep breathing, stretching, meditation, listening to music—whatever works.
- Pace yourself by alternating stressful tasks with pleasant activities.
- Take time to do nothing; just relax.

Set priorities:

- Make a list of things that need to be done.
- Identify how you will do each item on the list.
- Do the most important things first to help reduce stress.
- Do not be discouraged if goals can't be accomplished immediately.

Share your concerns:

- Talk with family and friends; share with them the situation, the challenges, and your feelings and worries.
- Share your concerns with individuals in similar situations; communicating ideas and solutions is a positive way to reduce stress.

Helpful Resources

SAMHSA's Health Information Network

Toll-free: 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) (English and Español)

Web site: <http://www.samhsa.gov/shin>

Treatment Locators

Mental Health Services Locator

Toll-free: 800-789-2647 (English and Español)

Web site: <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases>

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

Toll-free: 800-662-HELP (4357) (24/7 English and Español)

Web site: <http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll-free: 800-273-TALK (8255)

TTY: 800-799-4TTY (4889)

Web site: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>

Workplace Helpline

Toll-free: 800-WORKPLACE (967-5752)

Web site: <http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov/helpline/helpline.htm>

Other Resources

Department of Veterans Affairs

National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Phone: 803-296-6300

Web site: <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov>

USA.gov: Personal Finance

Web site: www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Money/Personal_Finance.shtml

Note: This list is not exhaustive. Inclusion does not imply endorsement by the Center for Mental Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

ABOVE ALL: Know When To Get Help

Even when we do everything we can to reduce our stress, sometimes things may become so overwhelming that we need to reach out to others for help. We shouldn't feel embarrassed to seek help if we haven't been able to overcome feelings of stress, depression, or anxiety on our own. And we shouldn't be afraid to help someone we care about do the same.

Talking helps. Reach out to partners, other family members, or close friends. Help can come from a faith community, your doctor, or a staff member at your workplace health center. Referrals to mental health and substance abuse treatment professionals are readily available by contacting a local community mental health center or employee assistance program.

Most important, if thinking about suicide, GET HELP immediately by calling 911 or 800-273-TALK. If a friend or colleague threatens suicide, looks for ways to commit suicide, talks or writes about death or suicide, or feels rage, uncontrolled anger, or desires revenge, HELP THEM. Call 800-273-TALK immediately.

