

Making Stress Management Make Sense

by Amanda Patterson
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Since roughly three-quarters of the American population reported feeling stressed in a recent American Psychological Association study, it makes sense that most of us are also trying to understand and manage our stress as much as possible.

What is stress?

Stress is the body's response, in the form of worry or mental tension, to different challenges or situations. While we think of stress as being negative, it can also have benefits as well. Eustress is positive stress that helps motivate and build a person's confidence. For example, starting a new job can be challenging but it can also help a person grow and feel empowered in their position, making it a positive experience. On the other hand, distress is negative stress which can cause feelings of dread and overwhelm such as feelings of burnout at work. "Often times, burnout can be overwhelming and hard to overcome as it can be accompanied by a feeling that it will

not come to an end any time soon,” says Oriana Thomas, Quality Improvement Specialist at Centerstone.

How does stress affect us?

Eustress can be beneficial to our bodies both physically and emotionally. Eustress can help inspire us to enhance our performance in certain areas and motivate us to expand our knowledge, as well as build self-efficacy, autonomy, and resilience.

Distress can be harmful to the body and can have major physical impacts. Prolonged distress can cause chronic conditions such as stroke, hypertension, heart attack, anxiety, and TMJ.

What is stress management?

Stress management consists of different techniques to help lower stress levels. “There is no one perfect formula for stress management, as every person is unique,” adds Thomas, “when it comes to stress management, it may be beneficial to do some trial and error until you find the techniques that work best for you.” Some stress management techniques can seem daunting or time consuming, which can make them unappealing to a busy person on the go. However, there are many tried and true techniques that can be done in just five minutes from the comfort of your desk at work. Consider the following quick and easy stress management techniques:

- **Take a walk outside or around the office.** Even five to ten minutes can reduce stress levels.
- **Utilize a meditation app**, such as Calm, for a quick five-minute deep breathing or meditation session.
- **Incorporate progressive muscle relaxation** by tightening or contracting one muscle group at a time while inhaling, and releasing the tension on the exhale. You can do this while moving through different muscle groups in the body.
- **Stretch**
- **Listen to music**
- **Journal**
- **Practice box breathing.** Inhale for four seconds, hold for four, exhale for four, and hold for four. Repeat the process for as long as you’d like until you feel your stress diminish.

Learning how to cope with stress is an important tool that helps improve our health and quality of life. If you are overwhelmed with feelings of stress or need help with managing your stress, Centerstone can help. **Call us at 877-HOPE123 (1-877-467-3123) or visit our [counseling services page](#) to learn more.**

