

Coping With Stress Fact Sheet

Signs of Stress

Stress occurs when a situation or multiple demands overwhelm an individual's ability to cope. Individuals display stress in different ways. Be aware of the symptoms and signs of stress so that you can take action when you feel stressed.

NORMAL STRESS SYMPTOMS

Physical Symptoms

- Chest pain
- Pounding heart
- Dryness of mouth and throat
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle aches (e.g., pain in neck or lower back)
- Trembling, nervous tics, easily startled
- Stuttering, other speech difficulties
- High-pitched nervous laughter
- Grinding teeth; clenched jaw
- Fatigue
- Frequent need to urinate
- Excessive sweating
- Stomach problems (e.g., diarrhea, indigestion, queasiness, vomiting)
- Headache
- Muscle tension
- High blood pressure

Emotional Symptoms

- Difficulty sleeping
- Nightmares
- Feeling powerless, helpless or insecure
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Depression
- Restlessness
- Worrying
- Anger
- Mood swings
- Confusion
- Forgetfulness

Behavioral Symptoms

- Loss of appetite or excessive appetite
- Inability to concentrate
- Impulsive behavior
- Irritability; decreased anger control
- Increased alcohol, tobacco or drug use
- Apathy; inactivity
- Withdrawal or isolation
- Crying spells; crying for no reason; overpowering urge to cry or run

Tips For Managing Stress

It is important to deal with stress in effective ways. When stress is not addressed, it can affect your health, job, relationships with other people, and other aspects of your life. Here are some tips on ways to manage stress. These tips are designed to increase your ability to cope with situations and reduce your level of stress.

Maintain health and well-being

- ☆ Take good care of yourself. Exercise, eat properly, and get enough sleep. Maintaining your health is very important, especially in highly stressful situations.
- ☆ Avoid using alcohol and drugs.
- ☆ Try to have a sense of humor. Laughter is a helpful way to relieve stress.

Manage your time or change situation

- ☆ Take one thing at a time. Determine priorities and pace yourself accordingly.
- ☆ Be realistic about what you can and can't do. Ask for help when you need it.
- ☆ Know your limits. Say "no" when you need to do so.
- ☆ Be flexible. Accept that you don't have control over some situations. Give in occasionally.
- ☆ Avoid things that make you feel worse. For example, limit the time spent watching the news.

Take action when "stressed out"

- ☆ Do activities that help you relax. Meditate, walk, listen to music, write in a journal, or whatever works for you to help you relax.
- ☆ Do something fun and enjoyable.
- ☆ Take a break. When possible, take a few days off. In busy times, taking a five minute break or brief walk can be helpful to reenergize.
- ☆ Talk with others about your feelings. Talk to family, friends, and others. You may find that other people are experiencing the same feelings, and you are not alone.
- ☆ Get professional help, if necessary. Seek professional help if you are feeling too stressed or experiencing thoughts of suicide, hopelessness or extreme anger. Seeking help is a healthy thing to do. Contact your local religious leader, mental health association, or other agencies in your community that provide counseling services.

Military One Source (MOS)

MOS is also available to you. This military resource provides confidential counseling and assistance 24 hours a day through a toll-free number and Internet access:

- From the United States: 1-800-342-9647.
- From outside the United States ONLY: (toll free) 800-3429-6477 or call collect: 484-530-5908.
- Online: <http://www.militaryonesource.com>

Sources: National Mental Health Association; Mayo Clinic; AE PAM 600-8-109-1, Family-Focused Deployment Guide; Family Readiness Guide: A Deployment Guide for 3rd COSCOM Soldiers, Civilians and Families