



# BUILDING YOUR AWESOME...

TIPS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Calgary  
Mental health for all



# What is Stress?

**We all talk about stress, but what is it?** Stress comes from both the good and the bad things that happen to us, and it is a normal reaction to the demands in our lives. Stress may feel overwhelming at times, but there are many strategies to help you take control.

**What causes stress?** We become “stressed” when we feel the demands in our lives are too difficult for us to handle. When our brains perceive a situation to be threatening, our bodies release a sudden rush of hormones that send us into an automatic “**fight, flight or freeze**” instinct. This biological event is called the “**stress response.**”

For example, you might feel stressed before an exam, and may respond in one of three ways:

**Fight:** you may get really frustrated when writing the exam;

**Flight:** you may try to avoid the exam;

**Freeze:** you begin writing the exam and suddenly forget everything.

All three of these reactions are normal responses activated by the stress response. The causes and impacts of stress are different for everyone because people respond to their experiences and challenges differently.

**Stress is not always a bad thing!** Some stress can be a good for us. Sometimes stress can motivate us to focus on a task or take action to solve a problem. Other times, stress can bring us down and damage our concentration, making us feel poorly about ourselves and our abilities.

## **Positive stress (eustress):**

- Motivates and energizes;
- Adds moments of excitement;
- Helps us to accomplish tasks.

## **Negative stress (distress):**

- Negatively impacts our emotions, physical body and thoughts;
- Our response to negative stress is individual to us;
- The impact of negative stress may differ from situation to situation.

# Things that Stress Us Out

**“Stressors”** are the events, situations or people that cause us to feel stress or be stressed out.

Here are some things that might cause you stress:

**External stressors:** Life happens and sometimes we don’t have control over it! External stressors are just that – events or situations that cause stress, but are out of our control. Most of us will encounter many external stressors in our everyday life, but here are a few examples:

- Being embarrassed;
- Bullying;
- Rumors;
- Moving;
- Fighting with friends;
- Parents.

**Highly stressful external stressors include:**

- Death of a family member, friend or pet;
- A parent’s divorce;
- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse;
- Physical or mental illness;
- Physical or mental illness of a friend or family member;
- Sexual identity.

**Internal stressors:** Internal stressors are the things we do to ourselves, or the choices we make that lead to or increase stress. Although we do, we may feel we have no control over some of these stressors.

Some common examples include:

- Focusing on problems or situations;
- Procrastination;
- Worrying;
- Pressure to succeed;
- Not making decisions/avoidance;
- Low self-esteem;
- Negative thinking;
- Feeling disorganized.

**Feeling distressed? There is support!**  
**Distress Centre: (403) 266-HELP (4357)**  
**Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868**

# Stress Management

## 1 Am I feeling stressed?

**This is how I know I'm stressed:**

*Ex. I feel stressed about all the school work I have to get done. I know I feel stressed because I have a headache and my stomach is turning.*

## 2 Let's figure out why I'm feeling stressed.

**This is what's causing me to feel stress:**

*Ex. All of the work I have to do is piling up and I feel like I can't get it all done. I feel guilty because I procrastinated, so now I feel more stressed.*

## 3 Let's identify what I am able to do next and what I am in control of.

**What do I need to get past this?**

*Ex. I need to get my work done. I also want to get rid of my headache and stomach ache.*

**Here are my resources:**

Resources are the helpful tools we have in our lives (ex. Family, friends for support) and within ourselves (ex. Self talk, breathing, tools we've learned)

*Ex. I can take a shower and eat something which could help by body feel better. I could ask for help from my parents or sibling. I can ask my teacher for help, or maybe even an extension to get this homework done.*

## 4 Let's check our self-management tools

### **Mindfulness Activity**

- Deep breathing;
- Positive self-talk.

### **Distress Tolerance skills to help us distract our mind and calm our physical bodies, so we can manage the stressors**

- ACCEPTS;
- TIPS;
- Mindfulness tools to let us "check in" on our thoughts and emotions.

**Once we feel calmer and more ready to tackle our stress, we can use the below skills to deal with the stressful situation, while taking care of ourselves.**

### **Emotional Regulation Skills**

- ABC PLEASE

### **Interpersonal Effective Skills**

- DEAR MAN
- GIVE
- FAST

## Practice stress management and get creative!

Did you know health professional recommend colouring as a form of stress management because the part of the brain responsible for stress cannot function at the same time as the part of the brain responsible for creativity?

