

Replacing Stress with Peace <http://www.humsci.auburn.edu/parent/stress>

What makes you feel stressed?

Every person has bad days. Sometimes a person has lots of bad days. Think of the things that make you feel stressed. List as many things that cause you stress as you can, especially the ones that bother you most. Make your list as complete as you can.

Stressors:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What does stress do to you?

When stress builds up, it can result in anger, headaches, discouragement, depression, stomach aches, feelings of helplessness, self-hate, and other "terrible, horrible, no good, very bad" feelings. What are some of the reactions and feelings you have when you get too much stress?

Stress Reactions:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

One of the worst effects of stress can be a feeling of helplessness that comes when we feel there is nothing we can do. When we feel helpless, we may stop trying to solve problems. Then the problems get worse. And we feel worse. Then we get angry or discouraged. We do less. And things keep getting worse.

Suggestions for dealing with stress:

Read over the list below and mark the suggestions that will help you deal with your stress. You can use them to make a personal stress plan.

- Recognize the things that bother you. Becoming aware of your stresses is a first step to dealing with them. It also is part of showing respect for your own feelings.
- Recognize that you may not be able to fix everything at once, but there are things you can do that will help. Maybe they are little things, but they make a difference.
- Throw away stresses that you cannot change. For instance, you may worry that an earthquake or tornado is going to destroy you and your family. While it is possible that you could move to a safer house or city, it may be more appropriate to throw away that worry. Replace stressful thoughts with pleasant ones. Think of it as emotional gardening. You pull the ugly weeds out of your garden, and you cultivate the good plants. A beautiful garden is very satisfying. A garden of weeds can be very discouraging.
- Allow yourself to have vacations from stress. Sometimes we feel so worn-out or frustrated that we want to cry or scream. That's a good time for a mental vacation. Find a place where you can be alone.
- Use your sense of humor.
- Be sure you are keeping yourself strong. Are you eating well? Do you regularly get some exercise or relaxation? Make time in your schedule to keep yourself physically fit.
- Draw strength from friends and family members. You may have some friends who help you make decisions, feel loved, and feel hopeful. Talk to them.
- Focus on things you love to do. Go back to the list you made, and pick out some of the things you love to do most. Make time for them. Set aside money to do them. Ask people to help you do them.
- Anticipate problems and solve them. Prevent the troubles that drive you crazy by planning ahead.
- When you are feeling tired and discouraged and don't want to do anything, look for a little job. Maybe you could wipe off the cabinets. Maybe you could take out the trash. Once you finish the little job, give yourself credit for it. Don't beat yourself up with a long list of all the things you still need to do.
- Deal with rejection. One powerful stress for most people is the feeling that no one cares. Healthy people don't stay angry and upset with the past. They accept what has happened, and they live in the present. They build good friendships.
- Get outside yourself. Sometimes we worry so much about our problems that we can't see anything else. It may help to take some cookies to the neighbor, to volunteer some time for a church or community group. You don't need a lot of extra demands. But taking a little time to help others can bring peace and satisfaction.

- Be creative. Organize to solve problems. Look for good solutions.
- If you begin to feel overwhelmed – get help! Go to your minister or mental health clinic. Everyone gets discouraged from time to time. But if those feelings become severe, get help.
- Be patient. Some problems solve themselves with time.
- Work on the things you can change. Be patient with things that take time.
- Instead of dwelling on a mistake, learn what you can from it and then let the mistake go. Examine the expectations you have for yourself. Check to be sure they are reasonable.
- Take control of your life. Helplessness is a terrible feeling. While you may not be able to change everything, notice the things you can change.
- Discover meaning in your life. Some people find meaning through religion, some through learning, some through service. Enjoy the contribution you make. See the purpose of people doing good.
- Don't compare yourself to others. No one has every talent. Discover your talents. Enjoy them.

How can you deal with stress?

What can you do to deal with the stresses in your life? There are many things that can help. A first thing is to think about things you love to do. Do you love to sing? Do you love to be alone in nature? Do you love to talk to friends? Do you love to play with your children? Do you love to exercise?

10 things I love to do:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

What can you do to make time for the things you love to do?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Make a stress plan.

As you read over this list of ideas, have you marked those that seem most helpful to you? Then you are ready to pick one of your stresses and come up with a plan for dealing with it. Don't plan how to deal with all your stresses. Just start with one. The stress that I am going to start with is:

1. **Stressor:** _____
2. What I plan to do to prevent or deal with that stress: _____
3. Do I need to involve others in helping with my plan? _____
4. How will I involve them? _____
5. What is my goal? How do I hope to change things? _____

After you have tried out your plan, see how well it works. Praise yourself of your success. Plan how to be successful in dealing with other stresses.

As you make room in your life for things you love and replace stressful feelings with feelings of peace and calmness, you will find your personal and family life more satisfying.