
Fact sheet: Managing reactions to stress

Learn practical coping strategies to manage stress, improve your mood, and support your mental well-being with simple, effective techniques

Coping strategies are activities or exercises that can be used to manage stress, reduce unpleasant emotions, and help improve your mood. They can be internally directed activities or outward behaviours. They can be individual or social.

Engaging in coping strategies is one way to help maintain mental and emotional well-being. It can be hard to find the energy and time to do this. However, coping strategies do not need to be big or elaborate. Having a few easily accessible, go-to tools can be very helpful.

Here are some coping strategies you can begin to put in place right away:

- **Set and keep routines that help with work-life balance.** Focus on a healthy diet, enough sleep, exercise, and time with friends and family.
- **Set small goals for yourself.** These will give you a sense of accomplishment, and signal that you are taking care of yourself.
 - Find a sheet to assist with setting small, manageable goals here (<https://www.lssu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SMART-Goals-Worksheet-1.pdf>).
- **Pick up a hobby that gives you pleasure.** Set a goal to engage in this hobby regularly.
- **Practice deep breathing.** Inhale for four counts, exhale for four counts, practice for four minutes. Deep breathing (<https://canemerg-urgencecan.com/boxed-breathing/>) sends oxygen to the brain and helps relax the body.
 - Find several deep breathing exercises to try here (<https://www.ementalhealth.ca/Canada/Deep-Breathing/index.php?m=article&ID=62559>).
- **Positive self-talk.** Redirect negative thoughts by reframing them.



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- Learn more about reframing and positive self-talk here (<https://positivepsychology.com/challenging-automatic-thoughts-positive-thoughts-worksheets/>).
 - **Visualization and sensory grounding.** Pay attention to your five senses and visualize positive images. For example, imagine the sounds, smells, and sights of a calming scene.
 - Find a guided audio visualization here (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1rRo6cgM_E), and sensory grounding instructions here (<https://canemerg-urgencecan.com/5-4-3-2-1-grounding/>).
 - **Self-care.** Go for a walk, engage with your religion/spirituality, journal, read a book, take a nap or bath, listen to music. Do something that feels good!
 - **Self-compassion.** Show yourself the same kindness (<https://canemerg-urgencecan.com/practice-self-compassion/>) you would to a friend who is struggling.
 - Find guided self-compassion exercises here (<https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/>).
 - **Mental Health Continuum Model (MHCM).** This tool (<https://canemerg-urgencecan.com/mental-health-continuum-model/>) helps identify your current mental health status and provides relevant resources.