

# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF IN STRESSFUL TIMES

It can be hard to prioritize self-care in challenging times, but this is exactly when it's needed most. This checklist can remind you to take time for moves that can help you be more stress-resistant.

## Body

- Fit exercise in. It lowers stress and can help you sleep better. Even a short 15-minute stint can make a difference.
- Fold exercise into daily activities, such as jogging when walking the dog or spending time with your kids on a bike ride.
- Don't let sleep be optional. You should get enough rest each night to awake feeling well-rested and energized.
- Before bed, take a moment to write down or mentally inventory your worries; then set them aside until the next day.
- Relaxation techniques, such as progressive relaxation or mindful meditation, can help calm you for sleep.
- Make time to eat and stay hydrated. Regular meals give you the fuel you need to stay strong and focused.
- Be aware that stress can push you to reach for carbohydrates because they trigger comforting brain chemicals.
- Be ready to meet cravings with healthy snacks, such as fruit, veggies, nuts, popcorn, or whole-grain crackers.
- Avoid turning to alcohol, drugs, or unhealthy behaviors as a way of coping.

## Mind

- Stay informed, but don't overdo news exposure. Notice the impact news stories have and limit accordingly.
- Take mental "breaks" during the day to focus on something distracting, uplifting, or soothing.
- Notice signs that anxiety or stress is building for you. Recognize this as normal, but have strategies ready to reduce it.
- Use positive self-talk to remind yourself of strengths and abilities: "This is hard, but I'm strong. I can get through it."
- Be open to turning to others for emotional and practical support. It's a strength, not a weakness, to reach out.
- Know that mental health professionals can help you problem-solve and identify strategies to manage difficult feelings.

## Spirit

- Think about how you've coped with hard times before. Try to re-deploy the strengths and strategies that helped then.
- Do something that is relaxing and rejuvenating for you. Give yourself permission to recharge your spirit in this way.
- Lean on your support network. Look for listeners, givers of honest feedback, and nurturers to build you up.
- Get outdoors. The fresh air and sunlight can renew both health and spirit, as well as help regulate sleep cycles.

**Together, all the way.®**



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