

# Take Care of Yourself: Reduce Stress

Stress is a normal part of life for most people. But too much of it can affect your health, the way you feel, and your ability to perform well at work and at home. That's why it's so important to learn ways to deal with stress.

In some cases, the best way to deal with stress is to go straight to its source. If you've been worrying about tackling your to-do list, you can take a minute to prioritize it. If you're anxious about what your manager thinks of your job performance, you can ask and find out.



All of us need to learn to live with some stress. The first step in managing it is becoming aware of how you react to it. Once you learn how stress affects you, you can start treating it. Common symptoms of stress include:

- Fatigue
- Depression
- Anger or irritability, particularly with respect to some of life's little annoyances
- Headaches or neck or back pain
- Stomach pain
- Changes in appetite (eating too much or too little)
- Drug or alcohol abuse, or increase in use
- Increase in smoking
- Sleep problems, such as insomnia or sleep apnea.

Different techniques for dealing with stress, work for different people. You may need to try several different approaches before you find one that works for you.

**Learn some relaxation techniques.** Deep breathing and meditation are two of the most widely used relaxation techniques. To do deep breathing, try inhaling as you slowly count to five and exhaling as you reverse the count. It may also help to relax each part of your body in succession, starting with the right foot, right leg, right shoulder, right hand, and so on, back down the left side. You could also look into courses that teach mindfulness, which can help you focus on the present instead of worrying about the future.

**Use exercise to relieve stress.** The next time you feel frustrated or overwhelmed at work or home, try going for a walk or bike ride. Many people find that physical activity relieves stress.

**Express your emotions.** Talking with a trusted friend or writing in a journal can help you release strong feelings instead of keeping them bottled up, which can lead to more stress.

**Do things that make you feel good.** Whether it's going to a movie, spending time with a relative or friend, or reading a good book, it's important that you schedule time to do things that you enjoy and make you feel good so that you can cope with the pressures that cause you stress.

**Reach out to others who care about you.** During times of stress, don't be afraid to ask friends and relatives for help and support. They may not realize that you're under a lot of stress. And they may be able to help you find solutions to some of your concerns.

**Nurture your spiritual side.** Many people find strength and support through prayer, meditation, talking with clergy, or in a support group in their faith community. No matter what your belief system is, make sure that you don't neglect your spiritual side.

**Contact your health care provider or the Caterpillar Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for help with stress reduction.** Health care and mental health providers have resources for reducing stress. If stress is interfering with your work, relationships, or sleep, consider talking with a therapist or counselor about how to handle the tension. A fresh perspective from someone not intimately involved in your life may help you to find other ways to cope or relieve some of the stress. To contact the EAP, visit [CaterpillarEAP.com](https://www.caterpillar.com/eap) or call **866-CAT(228)-0565**.

Taking care of yourself means paying attention to your physical and emotional needs. It also means learning ways to cope with feelings of stress so that you're able to handle whatever challenges come your way with resilience and flexibility.

*Monica Tomalka – Health Coach*  
© LifeWorks 2023