

A close-up photograph of a woman with curly hair, wearing a purple tank top, sitting on a white shaggy rug. She is smiling warmly as she reads a colorful children's book to a young boy. The boy, wearing a green long-sleeved shirt and pants, is sitting cross-legged and looking at the book with a happy expression. The background is a bright, out-of-focus window showing greenery outside. In the top right corner, there is a purple graphic element containing the text "Be Better".

Be  
Better

# Taking in the Good: Understanding and Managing Stress

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# Agenda

- Stress and how it affects you
- Stress management as a healthy habit
- Taking in the Good
- Intentional relaxation methods
- Resources

# Learning Objectives

- Understand the health consequences of chronic stress
- Find out what can trigger stress
- Explore ways to measure stress
- Add stress-relief techniques to your health and wellness tool box

# Types of stress

- Time stress.
- Anticipatory stress.
- Situational stress.
- Encounter stress.





Here are ways in which some key body systems react.

**1 NERVOUS SYSTEM**

When stressed — physically or psychologically — the body suddenly shifts its energy resources to fighting off the perceived threat. In what is known as the “fight or flight” response, the sympathetic nervous system signals the adrenal glands to release adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones make the heart beat faster, raise blood pressure, change the digestive process and boost glucose levels in the bloodstream. Once the crisis passes, body systems usually return to normal.

**2 MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM**

Under stress, muscles tense up. The contraction of muscles for extended periods can trigger tension headaches, migraines and various musculoskeletal conditions.

**3 RESPIRATORY SYSTEM**

Stress can make you breathe harder and cause rapid breathing — or hyperventilation — which can bring on panic attacks in some people.

**4 CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM**

Acute stress — stress that is momentary, such as being stuck in traffic — causes an increase in heart rate and stronger contractions of the heart muscle. Blood vessels that direct blood to the large muscles and to the heart dilate, increasing the amount of blood pumped to these parts of the body. Repeated episodes of acute stress can cause inflammation in the coronary arteries, thought to lead to heart attack.

**5 ENDOCRINE SYSTEM**

Adrenal glands

When the body is stressed, the brain sends signals from the hypothalamus, causing the adrenal cortex to produce cortisol and the adrenal medulla to produce epinephrine — sometimes called the “stress hormones.”

Liver

When cortisol and epinephrine are released, the liver produces more glucose, a blood sugar that would give you the energy for “fight or flight” in an emergency.

**6 GASTROINTESTINAL SYSTEM**

Esophagus

Stress may prompt you to eat much more or much less than you usually do. If you eat more or different foods or increase your use of tobacco or alcohol, you may experience heartburn, or acid reflux.

Stomach

Your stomach can react with “butterflies” or even nausea or pain. You may vomit if the stress is severe enough.

Bowels

Stress can affect digestion and which nutrients your intestines absorb. It can also affect how quickly food moves through your body. You may find that you have either diarrhea or constipation.

**7 REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM**

In men, excess amounts of cortisol, produced under stress, can affect the normal functioning of the reproductive system. Chronic stress can impair testosterone and sperm production and cause impotence.

In women stress can cause absent or irregular menstrual cycles or more-painful periods. It can also reduce sexual desire.



## Perceived Stress Scale

### INSTRUCTIONS:

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during THE LAST MONTH. In each case, you will be asked to indicate your response by placing an "X" over the circle representing HOW OFTEN you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way, but rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with day to day problems and annoyances?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Exploring Your Triggers



What triggers your stress reaction?

External (environmental)

Internal (self-generated)



# Exploring Relief from Stress

1. What do you do to cope with stress?
2. What do you want to be doing to cope with stress?
3. Think of someone you know who manages stress well.



# Healthy Habits



Your thoughts, moods, attitudes, and behaviors affect your health and well-being.

# Taking in the Good

- Negativity Bias - The brain reacts more to negative stimulus than to positive
  - > Animals learn faster from pain than from pleasure
  - > Most people will work harder to avoid losing something than they do to gain the same thing
- Positivity : Negativity ratio
- Consciously tilt toward the good

# Taking in the Good

- Look for good facts
  - > Positive events
  - > Positive aspects of the world

Feel the good!

- Really enjoy the experience
  - > Stay with it for several seconds, practice not getting distracted
- Sense the good experience sinking in to you
  - > Warmth in your chest

# Gratitude

People who express gratitude on a regular basis have better physical health, optimism, progress toward goals, well-being, and help others more.

Emmons & Crumpler, 2000

Feel good instantly: [Gratitude video](#)





# Expressing Gratitude

Spend 2 minutes writing what you are grateful for.



# Helping others buffers stress, reduces mortality

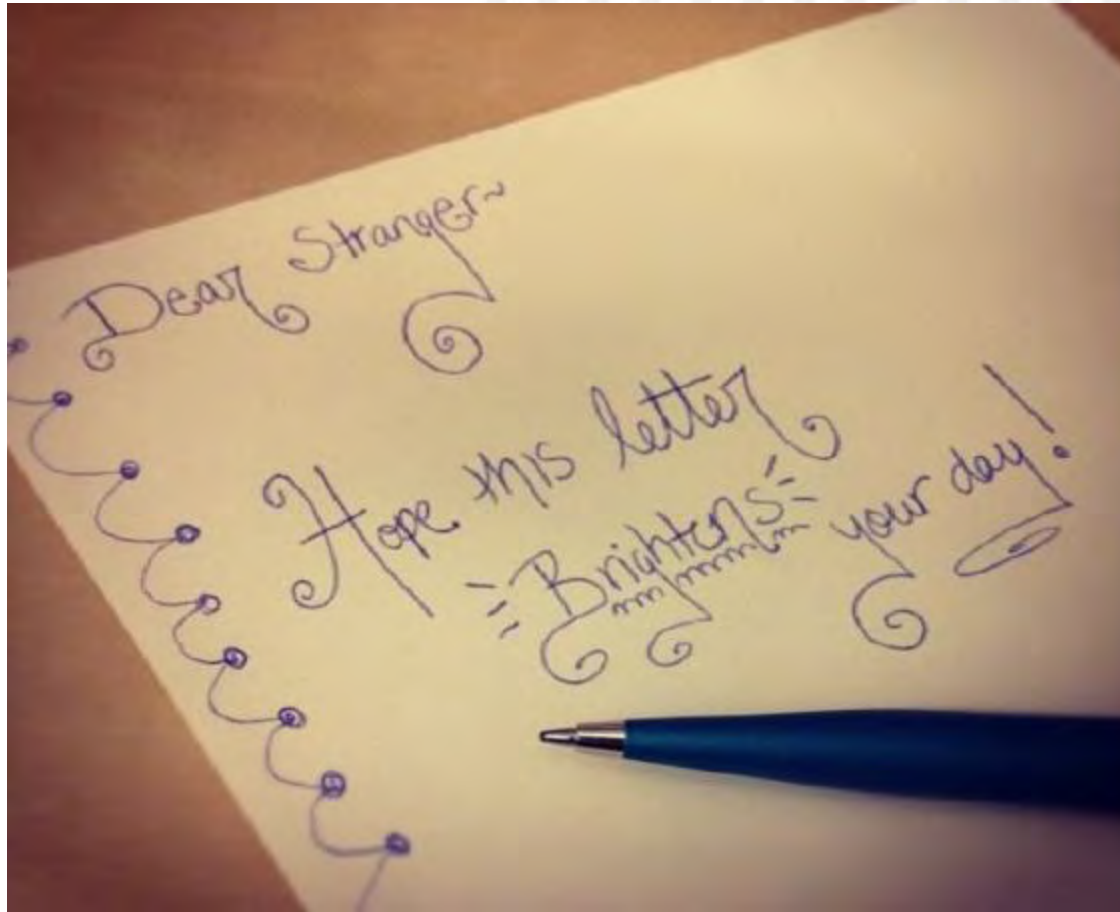
- Volunteering predicts self-rated health
- Helping your partner predicts reduced morbidity and mortality
- Helping behaviors serve as a stress buffer
  - > Sense of meaning
  - > Opportunities for generativity and contribution
  - > Improved social wellbeing
  - > Compassion
  - > Caregiving physiology

Our prime purpose in  
this life is to help  
others. And if you  
can't help them, at  
least **don't hurt** them.

Dalai Lama XIV

Giving to Others and the Association Between Stress and Mortality.  
Poulin, Brown, Dillard, Smith.

# Love Letters to Strangers



To whoever holds this letter -  
You and I have never met. We've never  
shared stories or even a cup of coffee  
together. None of this really matters to me  
and it certainly will not be the thing  
that keeps me from writing you  
this love letter.

Why?

Because you deserve it in the  
some way you deserve big friendships  
and a love story; we all do. Funny  
how we forget that so easily though.

Today, remember that to me  
that you deserve the best out of this  
crazy life. Remember always you  
are loved, valuable, needed, powerful.  
Able. Don't ever forget it.  
Sending light + love,  
V

# Loving Kindness Meditations

Being in the present moment by focusing attention on a repetitive action

## Loving Kindness Meditation

May you feel safe

May you feel happy

May you feel healthy

May you live with ease





# Stretching and Breathing Exercises

**Take time to pause...**

**breathe...**

**listen...**

**When you own your breath,  
nobody can steal your peace.**

Author unknown



# Humor as Stress Relief

- Ease muscle tension
- Increase endorphins
- Elevate mood
- Connect with others
- Great workout!

Procrastinator? No. I save all of my homework until the last minute because then I'll be older, therefore more wise.



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# Busy-ness



- Cognitive overload
- Impairs our ability to think, plan, organize

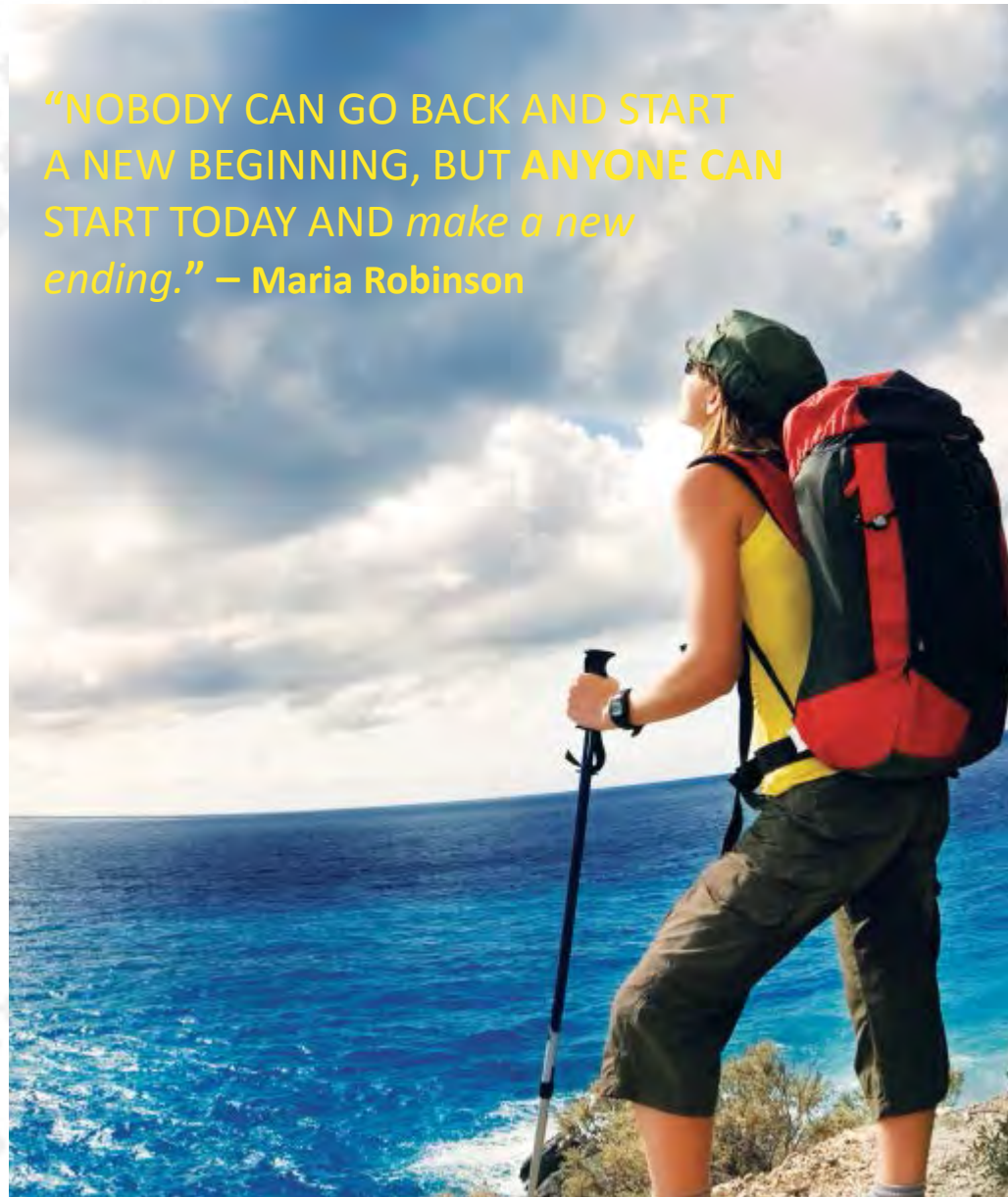
Here are 5 tactics to help dial back the overwhelm:

- Stare into Space
- Find the “Minimum Effective Dose”
- Change Your Mantra
- Single Task
- Clear Mental Clutter by Making a Plan

# Your Next Step

- Try the simplest thing first.
- Focus on *one step* at a time.
- Each action completed is a success!
- What is *one thing* you are ready to do to manage stress better?

“NOBODY CAN GO BACK AND START A NEW BEGINNING, BUT ANYONE CAN START TODAY AND *make a new ending.*” – Maria Robinson





# Action Plan

- What will you do?
  - > S M A R T
- Who will support you?
- Track it!
- Reward Yourself!





# Resources for support

- *Your guide to better health* - Moda Health Lifestyle Coaching Workbook
- Barbara Frederickson *Positivity* and *Love 2.0*
- Rick Hanson *Buddha Brain* and *Hardwiring Happiness*
- Christine Carter *Raising Happiness* and *The Sweet Spot*
- TED Talks
  - Shawn Achor
  - Brene Brown *Power of Vulnerability*
  - Kelly McGonigal
- Health Coach **877-277-7281** or [careprograms@modahealth.com](mailto:careprograms@modahealth.com)



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