

STRESSED?

Stress is a complex, dynamic process of interaction between a person and his or her life. It is the way we react physically, mentally, and emotionally to the various conditions, changes, and demands of life.

Stress can be:

- **Acute stress (immediate), which can be a one-time incident that usually comes and goes quickly. Its effect on us can last from minutes or hours to days or weeks. Examples of acute stress include narrowly avoiding an automobile crash or a violent incident with someone.**
- **Chronic stress (long-term), which can be caused by a continuing string of stressful incidences, or an ongoing situation. Examples of chronic stress include a difficult job environment, caring for someone with a chronic disease, or a state of loneliness.**

When you are faced with an immediate threat or stressful situation your body responds immediately to the threat by releasing chemicals that make it tense, alert, and ready for action. This is known as the “stress response” or the “fight-or-flight” response. Your body stays alert until your mind tells you that the situation has passed. Then your brain signals an "all clear" to your body, which stops producing the chemicals that caused the physical reaction and you gradually return to normal. The chemicals take 30 to 60 minutes to leave your system, so if you become stressed again within that time, your body will not recover between the two stressful events.

Tips for stress relief:

- **Deep breathing**
- **Meditation**
- **Yoga**
- **Exercise**
- **Laughing or Crying- Nature’s way of relieving stress**
- **Find a hobby or participate in an activity you enjoy**
- **Use relaxing imagery - almost like daydreaming; for example think of a warm summer day at the beach, all the sounds and sites that go along with that day.**
- **Carve out a few hours each week of “free time” just to be alone.**
- **Take several short vacations throughout the year instead of one long vacation**

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