

# Managing Stress

## Checklist for Handling Stress or Traumatic Situations

► Techniques and strategies can help reduce the stress in your life during difficult times or in traumatic situations.

**Acknowledge your stress.**

**Be open to learning new ways of coping.**

**Stay connected.**

**Help others.**

**Develop an attitude of hope.**

**Find meaning in your life experiences.**

**Know your strengths in coping with stress.**

- What skills worked for you in the past?
- How can you use these strengths more effectively?

**Set goals from the here and now. Ask yourself the following:**

- What are my goals for today, this week, this month, this year?
- What are my assets and resources?
- What are the barriers that keep me from my goals?
- Should I plan to overcome those barriers, or do I need to modify my goals?

**Engage in deep breathing exercises.**

- Take a short break and just breathe.
- Breathe deep, filling your lungs.
- Let the air out slowly.



- Do this once—get immediate relief.
- Do this five times. It's even better.
- Repeat as necessary. It's painless.

**Be physically active.**

- Even if you are tired from a long day, a nice walk for 30 minutes, a bicycle ride, or even a trip to the gym can be surprisingly refreshing.
- While a planned, scheduled routine is good, an impulsive “I need to take a walk” can have a significant impact.
- Use free exercise videos on YouTube or with apps.

**Maintain good sleep hygiene.**

- Set your sleep routine (bedtime and waking).
- Create an environment that helps you sleep.
  - Keep the bedroom dark and quiet.
  - Have a comfortable bed.
  - Use the bed for sleep and sex only.

- In bed, think about something relaxing.
- Pay attention to what and when you eat and drink.
- Watch out for naps, even when you feel sleepy during the day or evening.
- If you are restless and don't fall asleep within 20 to 30 minutes, try one of the following:
  - Go to another room.
  - Get out of bed until you feel sleepy again (usually within 20 to 60 minutes).
  - Watch TV, read, or write in a journal about how you are feeling.
  - As soon as you feel sleepy again, go to bed.
  - Repeat as necessary.
- Remember: It may take days or weeks to re-establish your sleep routine after it has been disrupted.

### Eat a healthy diet.

- Keep a good nutritional balance. It will help you cope.
- Eat regular meals and controlled amounts at regular times.
- Watch out for snacks and eating late in the evening, which can affect sleep.

## Managing Stress Requires Action Now and a Commitment for the Future

- Skills help most when used routinely, but you may find it hard to remember to use these skills.
- Practicing will help you get better at managing your stress.
- Practicing bad behaviors will cause you to get better at them too. So avoid them!
- If you deliberately practice positive skills, you are more likely to remember that you have these tools in your toolbox.

Never be ashamed to seek professional help from a licensed counselor, therapist, or psychologist. He or she may be able to help you build or improve on these life skills.

## National and State Resources

National Crisis Hotline  
(1-800) 273-TALK (8255)

Alabama Department of Public Health  
(1-800) 252-1818  
2-1-1 Connects Alabama  
Dial 211 or (1-) 888 421-1266

For more information on stress and trauma, see Alabama Extension's "Managing Stress: Guide for Understanding Stressful Situations."



**Katrina Akande**, *Extension Specialist*, Assistant Professor, and **Joelle Smith**, Graduate Student, both in Human Development and Family Studies, Auburn University; and **David K. Buys**, Extension State Health Specialist, Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion, Mississippi State University

For more information, contact your county Extension office. Visit [www.aces.edu/directory](http://www.aces.edu/directory).

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