

SEL Tools to Thrive

Developing Positive Stress Management Techniques



Do something that makes you laugh.



Go outside.



Take a break from screens.



Talk to a friend.



Ask for help.



What causes you stress? There are different types of stress, and everyone can experience stress in different ways.

Pressure usually prompts the feelings of stress. “Pressure” refers to a situation in which you have too many things to do or think about — lots of demands and expectations but not enough time or energy to get them done.

Good stress, also known as **eustress**, can occur when you are safe and do not feel afraid. When pressure helps you adapt to new or demanding situations, that is good stress. Eustress also motivates you to improve a skill or learn something new.

For example, if you have been assigned to give a presentation, knowing you need to present may cause feelings of stress for you. This stress may motivate you to research your topic well, practice your presentation, and do your best. Good stress can increase your well-being and improve your performance on tasks.

Bad stress is different from good stress because it lingers and makes you feel overwhelmed. Sometimes this type of stress is also called **distress**, and happens if you don’t use coping strategies to help you overcome the negative feelings. Bad stress can weaken your immune system, make you feel sick, or impair your ability to perform well.

But you can manage your stress by training your brain to respond positively to the stress you experience. You can view stress as an opportunity to grow. As you study your stress, search for the source of the

stress, learn coping strategies, and discover what works best for you and resolves your feelings of negative emotions.

Healthy **coping strategies** help you self-regulate and manage your response to stress. Because everyone is unique, there is no perfect recipe for how to manage stress. You will need to try several ideas to learn what works best for you and helps you de-escalate feelings of distress.

When you feel stressed you can go outside, do something that makes you laugh, take a break from screens, talk to a friend, or ask for help. As you further develop positive coping strategies, focus on your physical, mental, social, emotional and academic well-being. Consider strategies that will support long-term health and well-being.

Here are a few examples of positive coping strategies you can practice:

- **Mental:** Repeat your strengths in your head
- **Social:** Invite a friend to join you in an activity
- **Physical:** Spend at least 30 minutes moving your body
- **Emotional:** Smile at yourself in the mirror, share it with others
- **Academic:** Read a book and share what you learned

As you take time to prepare and think about how you want to respond in stressful situations, you will be prepared to face any kind of pressure you encounter.