

# STRESS AWARENESS

## RELIEF IS IN REACH

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**What is stress?** Stress is a normal reaction to everyday pressures, but can become unhealthy when it upsets your day-to-day functioning.

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### WHAT DOES STRESS LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

Everyone reacts to stress differently in different situations. You might be able to tell right away when you're under stress, but other times you might keep going without recognizing the signs.

Here are a few:

- Irritability or short fuse
- Aches and pains
- Racing thoughts
- Digestive issues
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Shallow breath or hyperventilating
- Eating too much or too little
- Difficulty sleeping
- Nail biting or teeth grinding
- Avoiding troubling situations

### WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST SOURCES OF STRESS IN YOUR LIFE TODAY?

Each person has their own set of stressors. These typically fall into several overarching categories:

- Work
- Family/relationships
- Conflict/trauma
- Money/finances
- Health/illness
- Change/transition



## THE FOUR A's TO HELP LOWER STRESS

### AVOID.

Believe it or not, it is possible and healthy to create distance between you and something that is causing stress.

- Say no when necessary.
- Take a media break.
- Try noise-cancelling headphones.

### ALTER.

Clearly communicating your needs and expectations can make a world of difference:

- Respectfully ask someone to alter how they are treating you. Remember to use "I" statements when addressing someone about how you feel.
- State your limitations in advance. For example, you can say, "I only have five minutes to talk."

### ACCEPT.

Accepting the situation can ease stress when avoiding and altering doesn't work:

- Talk with someone about how you are feeling to gain perspective. This could be a trusted friend, colleague, relative, spiritual leader, or therapist.
- Forgive yourself or others. Moving on is easier than stressing over uncontrollable situations.

### ADAPT.

Changing your standards and expectations of situations can help you cope with stress:

- Instead of striving for perfection, make reasonable substitutes throughout your daily life.
- Don't replay stressful situations over and over in your head.
- Focus on the positive aspects in your life.

Stress is a part of everyday life. An important part of managing stress is understanding what your stressors are and what you have the power to change. Practicing the four A's can help to provide balance for a healthier, happier lifestyle.

Whether you're experiencing everyday stress or a major life challenge, let the **Johns Hopkins Employee Assistance** help. The program provides you and your household members free, around-the-clock access to a range of stress management and work-life balance resources.

**PHONE: 888-978-1262**

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