

# Stress Management

Unfortunately, many people experience stress on a daily basis. Stress can range from mild i.e. receiving a parking ticket or being late to work to severe i.e. coping with the loss of a loved one or going through a divorce. Low to moderate levels of stress can be positive if it is short-term and viewed as challenging or exciting. However, chronic, ongoing stress can be unhealthy and take a physical and emotional toll on the individual.

As an educator, you may be struggling with how to effectively manage your stress. Due to education funding cuts, worries about job security, the impact of increased class sizes and termination of elective subjects such as art and music are real concerns. Departments are leaner and budgets are slimmer, leaving schools with the challenge of doing more with less. Therefore, it is imperative that you learn to manage your stress so you remain productive and efficient at work, achieve set goals and maintain your health and well-being.

The American Psychological Association offers the following tips on how to manage your stress:

**Understand how you experience stress.** **Find healthy ways to manage stress.** Consider Everyone experiences stress differently. How do you know when you are stressed? How are your thoughts or behaviors different from times when you do not feel stressed?

**Identify your sources of stress.** What events or situations trigger stressful feelings? Are they related to your children, family, health, financial decisions, work, relationships or something else?

**Learn your own stress signals.** People experience stress in different ways. You may have a hard time concentrating or making decisions, feel angry, irritable or out of control, or experience headaches, muscle tension or a lack of energy.

**Gauge your stress signals.** Recognize how you deal with stress. Determine if you are using unhealthy behaviors (such as smoking, drinking alcohol and over/under eating) to cope. Is this a routine behavior, or is it specific to certain events or situations? Do you make unhealthy choices as a result of feeling rushed and overwhelmed?

healthy, stress-reducing activities such as meditation, exercising or talking things out with friends or family. Keep in mind that unhealthy behaviors develop over time and can be difficult to change. Don't take on too much at once. Focus on changing only one behavior at a time.

**Take care of yourself.** Eat right, get enough sleep, drink plenty of water and engage in regular physical activity. Ensure you have a healthy mind and body through activities like yoga, taking a short walk, going to the gym or playing sports that will enhance both your physical and mental health. Take regular vacations or other breaks from work. No matter how hectic life gets, make time for yourself — even if it's just simple things like reading a good book or listening to your favorite music.

**Reach out for support.** Accepting help from supportive friends and family can improve your ability to manage stress. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by stress, you may want to talk to a psychologist, who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behaviors.

Excerpt from the American Psychological Association  
Source: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/stress-tips.aspx>

*If you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, your EAP can help.  
Call Deer Oaks for free confidential assistance.*

