

COPING WITH STRESS THROUGH JOURNALING



Stress is a normal – even helpful – part of life. By revving up important body systems like your heart and muscles while slowing down “non-essential” systems like digestion, immunity, and reproduction, **your body’s “fight or flight” response protects you from anything that seems like a threat (stressors)**. However, when stressors are always present, or you regularly feel under attack (even from something that isn’t dangerous), it causes major wear and tear on your body. Research also suggests that women feel stronger symptoms or get more of the symptoms of stress than men do.

Thankfully, **positive coping techniques like journaling are a way to help manage chronic stress** and promote better health.

Dangers of uncontrolled (chronic) stress:

- Higher risk or worsening of heart disease, diabetes, obesity
- Higher risk or worsening of depression and anxiety
- More frequent illness
- Digestion/weight problems
- Sleep problems
- Sexual/fertility problems
- Headaches or other aches and pains
- Feelings of sadness, restlessness, anger
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, focusing

Causes of stress:

Routine stress: work, school, home and family responsibilities

Distress: job loss, breakup, death of a loved one, major accident or illness

Eustress (good stress): marriage, having a baby, retirement

Measure your stressors: www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_82.htm

Keep in mind, this is a prediction tool only. If you have concerns about how you react to situations, or if stress is affecting your ability to carry out daily tasks, please speak with a healthcare provider.

Coping with stress:

A coping technique is an activity or behavior that helps the body relax and become more resistant to stress. In addition to journaling, examples would be physical activity, deep breathing, meditation, and talking with friends.

Tips for journaling success:

Set aside a time and time limit.

Long or short, morning or night. The key is making it a routine.

Choose your tool.

Pen and paper, digital device, voice recorder, or by thought.

Create the right environment.

Choose somewhere quiet, private, and free from distraction.

Just write.

Be honest and write whatever comes to mind. Forget about spelling, grammar, or editing.

Journaling exercises to try:

1. Write a letter to someone to thank them for something they gave or taught you.
2. List 100 things you want to do. Reflect on your list.
3. Write for 5 minutes without stopping.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Center for Journal Therapy:
<https://journaltherapy.com/>

UW-Madison Integrative Health:
fammed.wisc.edu/integrative/

American Psychological Association:
<https://www.apa.org/>



