

Men: Get Ahead of Stress



Health and Wellness

Men are less likely than women to talk about their feelings or be concerned about the effect stress is having on their health. The decision not to talk can have severe and even deadly consequences. Recent research has confirmed that stress at work contributes to higher death rates among men with cardiometabolic disease, which is a group of conditions that includes heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

Notice What's Stressing You Out and How

The emotions associated with stress can be overwhelming. Sometimes, you may feel like “everything is piling on at once.” Other times, you may feel stress (and even anticipate it) in specific situations. Stress can be caused by small or big things, from traffic to relationship conflicts to health concerns, work pressure, and financial struggles. Life changes, positive or negative, can also cause stress.

To manage or reduce stress, you have to identify the stressors and symptoms.

- **Take note.** Take a week and jot down situations you perceive as stressful, including the setting, people, and your reaction. This can help you see where change is needed.
- **Do a ‘Stress Check.’** Are you experiencing any of these emotional or physical symptoms of stress?

Emotional symptoms include:

- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated and moody
- Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control
- Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- Feeling lonely and/or depressed and avoiding others

Physical symptoms include:

- Low energy and insomnia
- Headaches, aches, pains, tense muscles, rapid heartbeat
- Upset stomach, including diarrhea, constipation, nausea
- Frequent colds and infections
- Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear, cold or sweaty hands and feet
- Dry mouth, difficulty swallowing, clenched jaw, grinding teeth

Reduce Stress: Talk About It

It can be uncomfortable to open up, especially for men, as mental health issues are often viewed by society as a “weakness.” Mental health issues are the same as other medical issues and deserve the same attention.

- **Talk to your doctor.** Check your embarrassment at the door; your healthcare provider is used to dealing with mental health concerns and can get the treatment you need.
- **Consider counseling.** Find a therapist with whom you feel comfortable. Be honest about your feelings and concerns. Work together to develop goals and healthy ways of coping.
- **Buddy up.** We all need people we can lean on. When you share your concerns or feelings with a trusted friend or colleague, it helps relieve stress.

Healthy Lifestyle: Be About It

In addition to listening to your body and tuning into its signals, consider making small, positive lifestyle changes.

- **Take a break from the stressor.** When you give yourself permission to step away from a pressing issue, you can form a new perspective or practice techniques to feel less overwhelmed. Breathe deeply, count to 10, and give yourself some time to calm down.
- **Exercise and practice self-care.** Exercise benefits your mind as well as your body. Even a 20-minute walk or run can give an immediate effect that can last for several hours. Make healthy choices about what you eat and drink, take time for yourself, and get enough sleep.

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