



Insights from SCA Staff

LESS STRESS

Joan Jones, PsyD, Licensed Psychologist
Staff Member of Southwest Counseling Associates

Everyone experiences stress at various times. However, some are more prone to stress than others. Here are some suggestions for handling stress.

1. FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS

- **Relationship with God**

If you have a relationship with God, talk with Him about your feelings of stress. Express your stress-situations to Him and ask Him to help you. Remember that He loves you without reservation, that He knows your situation, and that He is always good.

- **Spend Time with Family and/or Friends**

Supportive relationships will help you feel understood, and will also provide a wider focus for you in your current situation. Research has shown that people with strong social relationships do better under stress.

2. FOCUS ON PHYSICALLY POSITIVE HABITS

- **Exercise**

Exercise has been found to relieve stress. Habitual exercise can reduce your heart rate and lower blood pressure which tend to be higher when you are under stress.

- **Spend Time in Nature**

Walking and sitting in God's created world can help you feel surrounded by relaxing wonder. A small study found that people who spent 90 minutes in nature reported they experience less overthinking and over-focusing on negative situations.

- **Get Adequate Sleep**

Most adults require 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night to function at their best. If you have trouble staying asleep, keep distractions out of your bedroom. These can include pets, glowing screens, bright lights, or a too hot/too cold room temperature.

- **Relax with Deep Breathing**

Practice deep breathing several times each day until you can do this easily when you recognize you are experiencing stress. Get in a comfortable sitting or lying position. Close your eyes and take a deep breath, exhale slowly while you allow your body to relax. Maintain your relaxed state while continuing to breathe deeply. Each time you exhale let your body relax even more. (Warning: This process can put you to sleep!)

3. ADDRESS BAD HABITS

- **Evaluate How You Are Coping with Stress**

Using food (too much or too little), alcohol, drugs, and other substances may bring temporary relief but will lead to problems that cause you more stress in your life. If you need help dealing with these issues, seek professional help.

- **Take Breaks from Technology Use**

Too much technology time can disrupt sleep and increase stress.

4. HAVE REGULAR CHECKUPS WITH YOUR PHYSICIAN

Doctors and dentists recommend checkups once a year.