

Learning to Deal with Stress

What is causing people the most stress in the New Year? A recent survey by the American Psychological Association said the following issues are the top vote getters:

- 63% of those surveyed said money issues;
- 44% said national security; and
- 31% said job security.

Younger Americans were more worried about money (74%) and national security (40%) than those over 35.

Many of us include getting a handle on stress as part of our New Years resolutions, and the survey also shows the most popular things we do to deal with our worries:

- One-third of us either eat (22%) or drink alcohol (14%) to cope with stress;
- Others rely on exercise (45%) and religious and spiritual activities (44%);
- 14% turn to massage and yoga to relieve stress.

If you've resolved to get a handle on stress in the new year, psychologists offer this bit of advice: The quickest fixes are rarely the best fixes. In fact, they can sometimes cause more harm than good.

While people tend to reduce stress in familiar ways they've learned over time, those ways may not be good for their health. In fact, these healthier behaviors can have added effects and be longer lasting when trying to deal with stress and build resilience:

- Make connections - Good relationships with family and friends are important. Make an attempt to reconnect with people. Accepting help and support from those who care about you can help alleviate stress.
- Set realistic goals - Take small concrete steps to deal with tasks instead of overwhelming yourself with goals that are too far-reaching for busy times.
- Keep things in perspective - Try to consider stressful situations in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing events out of proportion.
- Take decisive actions - Instead of letting stressors get the best of you, make a decision to address the underlying cause of a stressful situation.
- Take care of yourself - Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Taking care of yourself helps keep your mind and body primed to deal with stressful situations.

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