

Tips For Making Better Decisions

1. Zoom out and look at the big picture

Be a bit more mindful and start observing your thoughts from a distance. Rather than getting all caught up in the moment, observe your process and try to take the panic out of it. Simply noticing the restlessness of your mind without being swept away by that can help.

2. Write it down

If you don't have someone to talk your options through with, you can always talk them through with yourself—at least on paper. You'll be able to organize (and see) your thought process and perhaps see the situation much more clearly.

3. Stop thinking so much

Sometimes designating “no-thinking times” is the way to go. If you have trouble sleeping, for example, limit yourself to not thinking about stressful things after 8 p.m. Or, you could schedule specific thinking time (say in 20 minute sections) and try to keep the hamster wheel still the rest of your day. When your time is up, move on to something more productive and try again in your next designated time slot.

4. Walk away for a moment

It's really hard to concentrate on two things at once. Distract yourself from mental torture by doing literally anything else. Find an absorbing activity and use it as a cure-all for depressed or stressed moments.

5. Be proactive

Break a thought spiral by taking proactive steps towards getting something done. Pick one thing you can do now and focus on that. Do that one thing. And whenever you find yourself worrying endlessly about the future, take a break and repeat.




6. Listen to and trust yourself

Your own opinion matters. Respect it. Trust yourself to make the right choice. And let go of the doubts.

7. Know you can change your mind

Even if you do make the “wrong” choice, don't despair. It's not worth gnashing your teeth over a decision when you're really just worried you won't choose correctly. Take away that fear by realizing that, no matter what happens, you can always change the wrong decision and correct things. No decisions are final. So no decisions require agonizing deliberation.

Decision-Making Tree

PROBLEM		
		
SOLUTION 1	SOLUTION 2	SOLUTION 3
		
POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES	POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES	POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES
NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES	NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES	NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES
		
SOLUTION CHOSEN		

Symptoms of Stress



Stress is one way that our bodies respond to the day-to-day struggles and demands of life. A little bit of stress can be healthy—it keeps us alert and productive. However, when we experience too much stress, it can result in serious physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms.

Acute Symptoms

symptoms that occur before or during a stressful situation

Physical	Emotional / Cognitive	Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asthma Headaches Migraines Back pain Sweating Nausea Indigestion Chest pain Fatigue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worry Irritability Anger Loss of motivation Difficulty concentrating Mood instability Decreased sex drive Memory problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nail biting Constant thoughts about stressors Restlessness Teeth grinding Disrupted sleep, diet, and exercise Interpersonal conflict Social withdrawal Substance use Procrastination

Chronic Symptoms

symptoms and consequences of long-term stress

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heart disease Anxiety disorders Skin diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depression Memory impairment Substance use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleep disorders Weakened immune system Poor diet and exercise habits
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Stress Management Tips

Keep in mind that stress isn't a bad thing.

Stress motivates us to work toward solving our problems. Reframing thoughts to view stress as an acceptable emotion, or as a tool, has been found to reduce many of the negative symptoms associated with it. The goal is to *manage* stress, not to eliminate it.

Talk about your problems, even if they won't be solved.

Talking about your stressors—even if you don't solve them—releases hormones in your body that reduce the negative feelings associated with stress. Time spent talking with friends and loved ones is valuable, even when you have a lot on your plate.

Prioritize your responsibilities.

Focus on completing quick tasks first. Having too many "to-dos" can be stressful, even if none of them are very big. Quickly knocking out the small tasks will clear up your mind to focus on larger responsibilities.

Focus on the basics.

Stress can start a harmful cycle where basic needs are neglected, which leads to more stress. Make a point to focus on your basic needs, such as eating well, keeping a healthy sleep schedule, exercising, and other forms of self-care.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

People who are overinvolved in one aspect of their life often struggle to deal with stress when that area is threatened. Balance your time and energy between several areas, such as your career, family, friendships, and personal hobbies.

Set aside time for yourself.

Personal time usually gets moved to the bottom of the list when things get hectic. However, when personal time is neglected, everything else tends to suffer. Set aside time to relax and have fun every day, without interruptions.

Keep things in perspective.

In the heat of the moment, little problems can feel bigger than they are. Take a step back, and think about how important your stressors are in a broader context. Will they matter in a week? In a year? Writing about your stressors will help you develop a healthier perspective.

Recognizing Stress

1. List the ways you experience stress physically, emotionally, and behaviorally.

Physically	Emotionally	Behaviorally

2. Circle the ways stress affects you that are most troubling.

3. List two or three things you can do to reduce these symptoms or times when you notice these symptoms are less intense.