



Manage Stress



If you are having difficulty coping with the demands in your life, you are experiencing stress. Most of us like some challenges; however, too much stress creates problems in our lives. Read the information below to learn more about stress.

How do I know if I have too much stress?

- If you have too much stress in your life, your body will let you know. Stress may be experienced in different ways. Some things you may notice include:
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Feelings of worry and fear
 - Muscle tension
 - Sweaty palms
 - Heart pounding
 - Irritability toward others
 - Fatigue
- If you are overly stressed for a long period of time, it can put your health at risk.
- If you or someone you know is in an emotional crisis, you can call the **Veterans Crisis Line** at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

How can I better manage my stress?

- **Learn problem-solving skills.** Improving your problem-solving skills can help you cope. Your health care team may offer a class or information sessions on problem solving or you can visit www.startmovingforward.org.
- **Practice relaxation training.** Learning relaxation and mindfulness can help you manage stress. Daily relaxation may protect you from the impact of stress on your body. Your health care team may offer relaxation or mindfulness training or you can use the Manage Stress resources at [www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy Living/Manage Stress.asp](http://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Manage_Stress.asp).

A Better Way to
LIVE

*Talk with your
health care team
about your goals.*



- **Use technology.** There are many mobile apps available such as *PTSD Coach*, *Breathe2Relax*, and *Moving Forward*.
- **Be physically active.** Take a brisk walk or engage in other physical activities. Regular physical activity is best (see the *Be Physically Active* handout: www.prevention.va.gov/docs/VANCP_HL_Be_Physically_Active_508.pdf).
- **Learn to express yourself.** Learning to share your thoughts and feelings in an assertive and respectful manner can help reduce stress. Ask your health care team for guidance.
- **Manage your time.** Make a list of what you need to get done. Then make plans for addressing the items on the list, and stick to the plan.
- **Practice positive thinking.** Stress is often associated with negative, self-critical thinking. Focus your attention on positive thoughts about yourself, your accomplishments, things you feel proud of or grateful for, etc. It can help to list 3–5 things you feel grateful for each day.
- **Plan pleasant activities.** Make time for fun. Plan regular, enjoyable activities and see if this reduces your stress. This *Pleasant Activities Tip Sheet* includes ideas for you to consider: www.prevention.va.gov/docs/PleasantActivitiesTipSheet.doc.

FOR THE MOST CURRENT INFORMATION AND OTHER RESOURCES:

- VHA National Center for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention: www.prevention.va.gov
- Veterans Health Library: www.veteranshealthlibrary.org
- VHA Mental Health Services: www.mentalhealth.va.gov
- VA-DoD Problem-Solving Program*: www.startmovingforward.org

* Indicates that the link leads to a non-VA Web site. The VA is not responsible for content on the site.

If you have questions about how to make healthy living changes, please talk with your health care team.