

# TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

All change, whether planned or unplanned, makes demands on us to cope and adapt. These added demands cause stress. Often the very things that could help us reduce stress get sidelined by it. We end up neglecting healthy, stress-reducing actions. Use this checklist to prioritize the self-care that can make you more stress-resistant during change.

## Mindset

- Notice self-defeating self-talk: “This is too much for me.” “I can’t manage.” “I always lose.” Watch for common themes.
- Use positive self-talk to remind yourself of strengths and abilities: “This is hard, but I’m strong. I can get through it.”
- Set aside a limited time each day to review your worries and how to respond. Then let them go until the next day.
- Avoid turning to alcohol, drugs, or unhealthy behaviors as a way of coping.

## Activity and rest

- Find time for some type of physical activity every day to tame stress and improve health and stamina.
- Try moderate to vigorous exercise sessions several times per week for an even greater impact on stress.
- Find an activity that you truly enjoy. Build it into your schedule or do it with a friend to make it harder to dismiss.
- Be active early in the day (at least several hours before going to bed) to avoid insomnia and other sleep issues.
- Prioritize sleep. You should get enough to awake feeling well-rested and energized.
- Find one or more enjoyable ways to embrace relaxation of mind and body: walks, hobbies, meditation, etc.
- Remember that it’s okay to simply do nothing sometimes.

## Nutrition

- Be aware that stress can push you to reach for carbohydrates because they trigger comforting brain chemicals.
- Be ready for cravings; stock low-fat, complex carbs like air-popped popcorn or whole-wheat products.
- Plan ahead with meals and snacks to avoid making stress-induced decisions.
- Nurture yourself with non-food items when stressed. Identify things you enjoy that don’t involve food to use instead.

## Support

- Be open to turning to others for emotional and practical support. It’s a strength, not a weakness to reach out.
- Build a strong support system. Look for listeners, givers of honest feedback, and nurturers to build you up.
- Understand that mental health professionals can help you problem-solve and learn how to manage your stress.

**Together, all the way.®**



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