



1 SMALL ACT



RESOURCES

RESPOND TO STRESS

HOW TO RESPOND TO STRESS in a healthy way

Sometimes, it might feel like stress comes from all directions at once – from juggling responsibilities at work, to navigating family life, to keeping up with friends or running errands, there's often a lot to get done or make decisions on. Even though you can't often control what life throws your way, you do have the power to manage how you respond and react to daily stressors. Controllability, one of the key Principles of Resilience, is about making choices that restore a sense of empowerment during adversity.

Rather than responding to stress with unhealthy behaviors, like binge drinking alcohol or isolating yourself, controllability is about recognizing emotions as they come, identifying problem-solving actions and feeling confident in ways you can cope and practice self-care. Finding out ways that work for you to respond to stress might take practice, but it'll help prevent stress from escalating to distress.



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CONTROLLABILITY: Keep an Even Keel

You may not be able to control every aspect of a challenging event, but you can control your response. Controllability is about making choices that help restore a sense of empowerment during adversity—from emotional responses to problem-solving actions.



RESPOND TO STRESS

To begin determining what types of habits you can incorporate into your stress management plan, consider the following ACTions:

TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO PAUSE. When faced with a difficult situation and the tension escalates (e.g., you accidentally miss a deadline at work, argue with a family member), it might feel natural to lash out, place blame or quickly act on the initial gut feelings. Instead, take a moment to push pause and organize your thoughts. Tune into the moment and your basic needs and consider how you feel before you react to a situation. Take inventory on whether or not you've gotten enough sleep, moved much throughout the day or found ways to connect with others effectively. When your basic needs aren't met, rational thinking can go out the door. Instead of working to address what might be an outcome in the long-term, focus on short-term, manageable next steps and ask yourself a few questions: Should I ask a few clarifying questions to get some information? What are the facts? What parts of this situation can I control?

CREATE A LIST OF MICROBREAK IDEAS. Write down the feasible activities you could quickly do in about five minutes to recharge and trigger your body's relaxation response. When you feel overwhelmed, refer to the list and give yourself permission to take a brief break from the stressor. It might seem hard to step away from a big project or a large bill, but even a few minutes of doing something else can help you gain new perspective on the challenge. Consider these types of activities: going for a walk, calling a friend, drinking a glass of water, doing a deep breathing exercise, eating a healthy snack, stretching, or journaling.

THINK OF THE BIGGER CONTEXT. Think about what motivates you and your values the next time you face a stressful event. Can a particular affirmation, meditative practice, or internal value be helpful to use when responding to stress? If there's something you've found that has helped you feel grounded in the past, write it down on a piece of paper and put it somewhere visible (e.g., next to your bed, on your bathroom mirror). Elements of spirituality, like gratitude and patience, can also help you cope with stress by connecting you to something bigger than yourself.

The more that you're able to think through how to respond to stress when you're in a mindful and relaxed state, the easier it'll be to tackle stress when it comes up. Try keeping the other Principles of Resilience (Predictability, Relationships, Trust and Meaning) in mind as well to build confidence in yourself and your responses.

WHERE TO GET HELP:

- Your local Navy chaplain, Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) or medical
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:**
Call: 988, press 1
Text: 838255
- **Chat online:** <https://988lifeline.org/chat/>
- Military OneSource: call (800) 342 9647 or visit www.militaryonesource.mil
- Sailor Assistance and Intercept for Life (SAIL)
- Crisis Text Line: text 741741

For access to more resources:



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