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# Self-care

## 3 strategies to reduce stress at work

Your physical and mental well-being, work environment, and the demands of your job can impact your stress levels. Reducing stressors and managing their impact by adopting coping mechanisms can help you regain a sense of control. Consider these three strategies to help you identify triggers and manage your mental health:

**Control your stress before it controls you.** There are many steps you can take to avoid or reduce stress, including promoting positive emotions, taking physical care of your brain, and becoming more organized.

- Socialize with the people you value. Schedule time for this if necessary.
- Break large tasks into smaller ones.
- Recognize when you do your best work, and plan your most demanding tasks for those times.
- Allocate time for lunch, and eat away from your desk.
- Get plenty of sleep. Adults should try to get at least 7 hours of sleep.

**Take care of yourself when you feel overwhelmed.**

It's easy to ignore feelings of burnout. It can be hard admit that you are overwhelmed. Acknowledge that you can't do everything, and there are ways to cope with feeling overwhelmed.

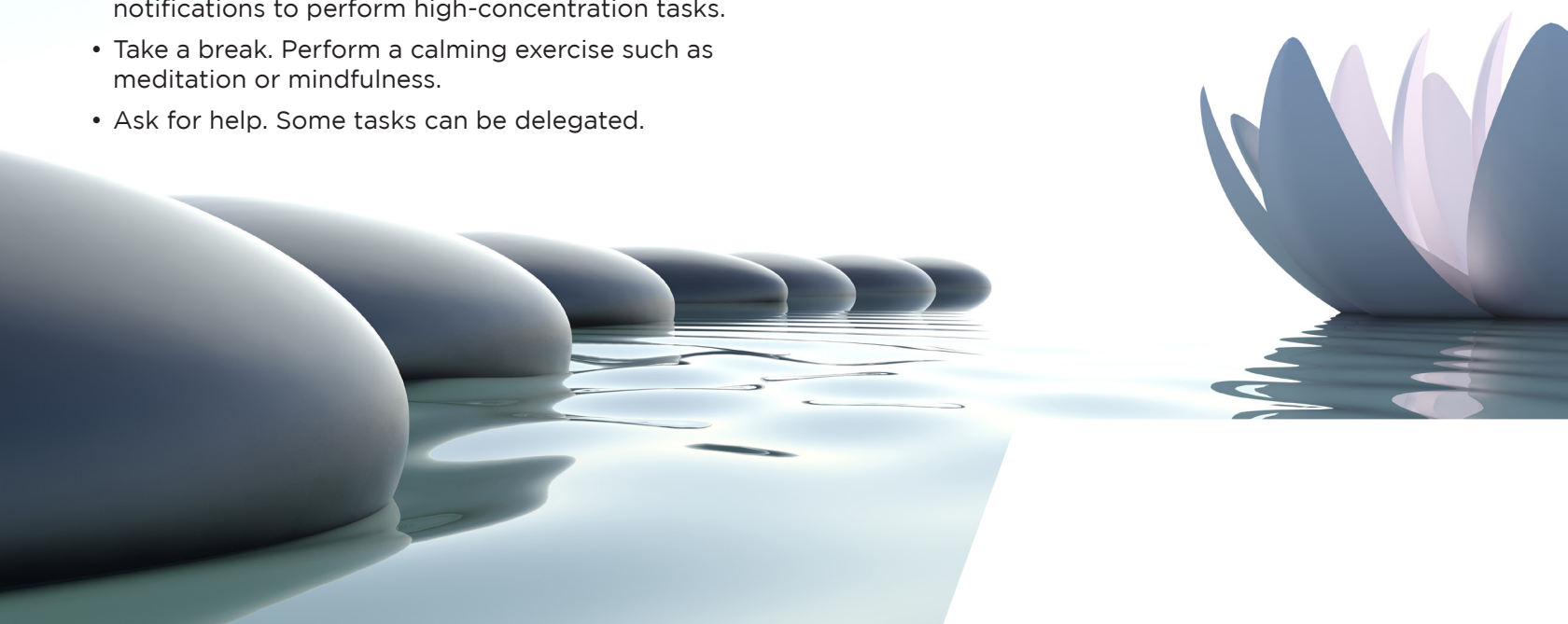
- Slow yourself down. When stressed, it's common to move into panic mode.
- Constant messages and distractions can be overwhelming. Switch off email and phone notifications to perform high-concentration tasks.
- Take a break. Perform a calming exercise such as meditation or mindfulness.
- Ask for help. Some tasks can be delegated.

**Manage your energy.** Creating a series of habits, practices, and rituals can promote your physical, emotional, and mental energy.

- Recognize times in the day when you feel tired or unable to concentrate. Battle these times by stepping away from the desk, chatting with colleagues, or doing something interesting.
- Aim to focus for 90 to 120 minutes at a time, taking regular breaks.
- Eat smaller, lighter meals during the day to maintain energy.
- At the end of each day, make a list of key actions for tomorrow.
- Leave work at work so you can transition into your home life.

While there are negative impacts of stress, achieving a stress-free life is unlikely. Some degree of stress is crucial to personal and professional growth. Stress reminds us that something is important to us, and that we care. Although it's difficult to avoid, with practice, you may be able to control it and reframe your stress into something more positive.

*Source: PositivePsychology.com, CDC.gov*



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How we handle stress is a choice. It is often perpetuated by negative, “vicious” cycles of thinking. It doesn’t have to be this way. Using a cognitive-behavioral approach, it is possible to reframe unhelpful beliefs and thinking to adopt a positive, “virtuous” cycle of thinking.

The following table helps you consider unhelpful versus helpful thinking regarding an event. Think of an event from the past or future. In the left-hand column, capture your negative (vicious) set of thoughts or feelings, and then record a more positive (virtuous) way of thinking about the same event in the right-hand column.

	Vicious	Virtuous
<b>Triggering event</b>	<i>Example: Traffic is busy and you will arrive late for a meeting.</i>	
<b>Thought/belief</b>	<i>Example: Life is so unfair. Traffic is always worse when I am in a hurry.</i>	<i>Example: I could have left earlier to be sure I would arrive on time.</i>
<b>Feeling</b>	<i>Example: Frustrated by the amount of traffic and increasingly anxious about the likelihood of being late.</i>	<i>Example: Disappointed that I will not create a good impression, but accept that I cannot change what is happening</i>
<b>Actions</b>	<i>Example: Apologize, blaming the terrible traffic, and remain upset throughout the meeting.</i>	<i>Example: Apologize, recognize that I could have left earlier, and add value to the meeting.</i>
<b>Outcome/results</b>	<i>Example: My continued annoyance about being late negatively impacts the meeting.</i>	<i>Example: After professionally handling being late, I participate in a successful meeting.</i>
<b>Reinforcing thoughts</b>	<i>Example: Life is unfair.</i>	<i>Example: I am usually on time. I made a mistake but will set off earlier next time.</i>

Contact the [NAMI HelpLine](#) to find out what services and supports are available in your community.

Read this [article](#) about tips for taking time for yourself.

Watch this [video](#) to practice a guided meditation.

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