

Reframe Stress

During the past several months, people have experienced increased levels of stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic and all the changes it has brought about. When stress levels increase and people ignore or choose unhealthy coping mechanisms, it can lead to feelings of fatigue and burnout, and increases one's risk for physical and emotional health issues.

Stress is the body's reaction to change. This can be due to a change in the environment, body, or mind. When someone is experiencing stress, it can be felt physically, mentally, and emotionally. Our bodies are designed to experience stress and in many cases, the stress response is what keeps us alert, motivated, and "on our toes."

Stress Reduction Strategies

While it is common to experience stress during times like these, it is important to remember there are ways to reduce stress and often they don't take much time or effort. If you are experiencing feelings or changes associated with stress, the first step in addressing them is by acknowledging what is causing stress then consider:

- Can the stressor be avoided?
- Can you adapt to the stressor?
- Can you accept the stressor?
- Do you need assistance to avoid, adapt to, or accept the stressor?

After acknowledging the sources of stress in your life, try using this method to help put situations in perspective and work towards a solution. Taking the time to think through your options can help improve your outlook and many areas of well-being. Remember, many times things that cause stress are beyond your control and accepting them, while difficult, can provide a lot of relief.

Stress related to the COVID-19 pandemic is a great example of how change truly is the trigger for the stress response to kick in. Due to the pandemic, there has been a change in the way we work, live, and play. Relationship dynamics have changed; there is a fear of the unknown and the constant uncertainty of when life will return to the way it once was. In this case, adaptation is the primary tool but there are resources, such as Employee Assistance Programs, that can help you, too. Turning to an expert to help you reduce stress is not a sign of weakness; it is a step in the right direction. While a stress-free life is unrealistic, it is possible to have less stress and find more opportunities for joy.

