



## Exercising Self-Care That Works!

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Many of us during periods of prolonged stress find that our healthy habits can fall by the wayside. Here are some techniques that can help you respond to challenging times, without taking a lot of your time.

- Breathe.** Short circuit stress by breathing through your nose. Concentrate on making your belly move out as you inhale and in as you exhale. Slow down, take a moment to pause, and create a routine around centering yourself at the beginning and end of each day.
- Pinpoint the cause(s).** What are you actually stressed about? Once you identify this, you're closer to figuring out what is within your control. By focusing on that you can determine the best ways to take action and regain a sense of control.
- Connect with others.** Reach out to those in your circle who are good listeners and with whom you feel safe and understood. Giving social support is important, too. We all have the ability to impact those around us positively, one relationship or one act at a time.
- Take care of your body.** Moderate your intake of caffeine, sugar and other foods that can alter your mood and elevate anxiety levels. Find an activity that you enjoy doing and commit to doing it on a regular basis to get a mental and physical change of pace. Protect your need for sufficient sleep.
- Relax and Re-energize.** Find time throughout the day to clear your mind. This might mean going for a run, reading something inspirational or simply closing your eyes and focusing on your breathing.
- Play.** Laughter and fun are great for adults to relax, rejuvenate and boost creativity. It can also foster empathy, compassion and intimacy with others. It doesn't have to be a specific activity; it can also be a state of mind.
- Rein in your imagination.** A side effect of our being able to imagine and project into the future is that we can focus on things going wrong and amplify our fears and anxieties. Instead, use this ability to imagine yourself being calm, composed, cool and comfortable, and things going well.
- Don't join the crisis.** Every day we are invited to conflicts, we may encounter rude behavior from others, or people may try to draw us in to their personal drama. Resist the urge to create a mountain out of a molehill. Ask yourself if it will matter five years from now – or even five weeks from now?
- Adjust your expectations.** A lot of stress can arise from perfectionistic demands of others and ourselves, and can lead to chronic disappointment and frustration. Check to see if you can change these demands into more realistic attitudes.
- Shift from worrying to caring.** Change your mindset from worrying about a problem, to taking action. Fretting about your finances does nothing but get you worked up. Caring about your finances, however, means paying bills on time, creating a budget and managing debt.
- Ask for help.** You don't always have to go it alone. When you could benefit from an objective perspective, reach out to the following resources:

**EAO** offers confidential counseling, resources and problem solving for work-related or personal problems – [www.eao.wisc.edu](http://www.eao.wisc.edu)  
**UHS** offers individual stress management sessions – [www.uhs.wisc.edu/wellness/stress](http://www.uhs.wisc.edu/wellness/stress)  
Participate in the **ETF Financial Fitness Challenge** – [www.etf.wi.gov/financialfitness](http://www.etf.wi.gov/financialfitness)