

## Coping with Stress

**Find out how to manage stress after a traumatic event by following CDC's tips for self-care.**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides the following information to help individuals cope with stress.



Strong emotions like fear, sadness, or other symptoms of depression are normal, as long as they are temporary and don't interfere with daily activities. If these emotions last too long or cause other problems, it's a different story.

Sometimes stress can be good. It can help you develop skills needed to manage potentially threatening situations. Stress can be harmful, however, when it is prolonged or severe enough to make you feel overwhelmed and out of control.

Physical or emotional tension are often signs of stress. They can be reactions to a situation that cause you to feel threatened or anxious. Stress can be related to positive events (such as planning your wedding) or negative events (such as dealing with the effects of a natural disaster).

### Symptoms of Stress

Common reactions to a stressful event include

- Disbelief and shock
- Tension and irritability
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Difficulty making decisions
- Feeling numb
- Loss of interest in normal activities

- Loss of appetite
- Nightmares and recurring thoughts about the event
- Anger
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Sadness and other symptoms of depression
- Feeling powerless
- Crying
- Sleep problems
- Headaches, back pains, and stomach problems
- Trouble concentrating



Make sure that you spend time with loved ones after a stressful event.

## **Tips for Self-Care**

The best ways to manage stress in hard times are through self-care.

- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** They may seem to be a temporary fix to feel better, but in the long run drugs and alcohol can create more problems and add to your stress—instead of taking it away.

- **Find support.** Seek help from a partner, family member, friend, counselor, doctor, or clergy person. Having someone with a sympathetic, listening ear and sharing about your problems and stress really can lighten the burden.
- **Connect socially.** After a stressful event, it is easy to isolate yourself. Make sure that you are spending time with loved ones. Consider planning fun activities with your partner, children, or friends.
- **Take care of yourself.**
  - Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet
  - Exercise regularly
  - Get plenty of sleep
  - Give yourself a break if you feel stressed out—for example, treat yourself to a therapeutic massage
  - Maintain a normal routine
- **Stay active.** You can take your mind off your problems with activities like helping a neighbor, volunteering in the community, and taking the dog on a long walk. These can be positive ways to cope with stressful feelings.

\*Information provided by [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)\*