

Dial down the stress

December 28 2018



(HealthDay)—Stress and uncertainty plague many Americans, but there are a number of steps you can take to cope, a psychiatrist suggests.

"In this day and age of 'digital' perfection, the [stress](#) of daily living can take a toll on our health, causing anxiety and depression, leading to relationship difficulties, problems at work, and the feeling that you have little control over your life," said Dr. Smita Agarkar. She is chief at the Crisis Stabilization Unit at Gracie Square Hospital in New York City.

"The good news is that there are many effective ways to manage and reduce stress," she added.

Be mindful or aware of your [feelings](#). Try to be compassionate towards yourself, accept the current situation, and let it go. There are many exercises for mindfulness.

Keep a stress diary. It can help you identify when and why stress strikes, so that you can focus your efforts on managing stress, according to Agarkar.

Regular exercise helps improve your ability to fight stress. After [stressful events](#), eat healthful, well-balanced meals and get enough rest and sleep. Don't turn to drugs, alcohol or compulsive behaviors, such as eating, to combat stress.

Set limits and learn to say no to things that cause you stress. Make time for hobbies, interests and relaxation, and spend time with people you enjoy. Consider joining a support group.

If stress and anxiety become too much to handle on your own, get professional help, Agarkar said. Therapy and medications can help.

"While living through difficult times, a can-do attitude toward happiness can help," Agarkar said. "No one should let stress and [anxiety](#) take over their lives. It's important to be aware of your own feelings, and vigilant about friends and loved ones. Take steps to manage and relieve stress,

and seek out professional help if necessary."

More information: The U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion has more on [managing stress](#).

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Citation: Dial down the stress (2018, December 28) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-12-dial-stress.html>

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