

# More reasons why you must manage your stress

November 4 2019, by Len Canter

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If you've ever experienced an immobilizing sense of panic when faced

with a difficult or threatening situation, you're not alone. It turns out that the well-documented fight-or-flight instinct for self-preservation isn't a guaranteed reaction.

Research published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* has found that stress can actually lower your ability to effectively assess new threats because it can distract you, leading you to pay less attention to what's going on around you and impair your ability to react in your own best interests.

Furthermore, a study in the *Journal of Neuroscience* found that stress can keep you from making [positive changes](#) in your life by holding you back, as though your feet were stuck in mud. It can color your thinking, making situations seem worse than they really are. So, for instance, just when you should be taking steps to get out of a difficult situation, you end up doing nothing.

If stress has you paralyzed, it's important to take steps to "un-freeze" your thinking. While [relaxation techniques](#), like [deep breathing](#), can help you refocus in moments of high stress, everyday actions can work together to lower daily low-grade stress levels. Specifically, find ways to exercise more—physical activity redirects your energy. To keep [blood sugar](#) on an even keel, limit your intake of sugary foods. If caffeine gives you the jitters, cut back on the amount you drink. And watch alcohol consumption since booze can also increase anxiety levels.

**More information:** The American Psychological Association has more on these and other [tips](#) to manage stress.

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Citation: More reasons why you must manage your stress (2019, November 4) retrieved 25 April

2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-11-stress.html>

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